

Directed Studies: Literature

Prof. Luke Bender

Lecture: Fridays, 11:35–12:25 in the Whitney Humanities Center Auditorium

Seminar: Wednesdays and Fridays at 2:30–3:45 in 81 Wall St, room 401



Gustave Doré (1832–1883), Dante meets with Virgil, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan

Course Goals

This class will introduce you to a select group of the literary and religious works that lie at the foundation of the Western tradition. Our goal is to learn to read deeply: to recognize our texts' underlying concerns, unstated anxieties, motivating questions, and discomfiting answers—many of which will be foreign to those of us who identify most closely with the Western tradition, and some of which will be startlingly close to those of us who feel most alienated from it. Reading well is a difficult discipline, one that you do not know you lack until you begin to acquire it. The texts we read in this course have remained vital through the centuries in large measure because they demand and train this sort of reading.

The course will also provide extensive practice and training in academic writing, a skill that will serve you well throughout your college career, and beyond. Thinking and writing are, for most of us, inextricably intertwined, and in learning to write well, we learn to think more clearly, more precisely, and with greater complexity and nuance. Although you may or may not write papers about literature after college, the organizational and intellectual skills that are involved in writing successful literature papers will transfer over both to whatever sorts of writing you will have to do, and to your general clarity and perspicacity in thinking about human relationships, systems of meaning, and the world at large.

Requirements

- weekly readings, completed before class
- weekly response papers, posted on the course website by 9pm the day before class
- attendance at *all* seminar meetings
- participation in seminar (both voicing your thoughts and listening to others)
- three papers, each 5 pages long on topics that will be assigned
- final exam

Grading Rubric

- seminar participation: 20%
- weekly response papers: 20%
- papers: 3 x 15%
- final exam: 15%

Readings

The required readings for this course can be purchased from the World Language Center at the Yale Bookstore, 77 Broadway, New Haven CT, (203) 776-3431.

- Homer, *Iliad*, Robert Fagles, trans. (Penguin)
- Homer, *Odyssey*, Robert Fagles, trans. (Penguin)
- *Jewish Study Bible* (Jewish Publication Society)
- Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, Alan Shapiro and Peter Burian, trans. (The Complete Aeschylus, Vol. 1, Oxford)
- Sophocles, *Antigone*, Reginald Gibbons and Charles Segal, trans. (in The Complete Sophocles, Vol. 1, Oxford)
- Euripides, *Bacchae*, Reginald Gibbons and Charles Segal, trans. (in The Complete Euripides, Vol. 4, Oxford)
- Ovid, *Metamorphosis* (Raeburn)
- Virgil, *Aeneid*, Robert Fitzgerald, trans. (Vintage Classics)
- *HarperCollins Study Bible NRSV*, Student Version
- Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 3 vols., Allen Mandelbaum, trans. (Bantam Classics)

Response Papers

Beginning the second class of the semester, you will be asked to write a short response once per week on the topic of the text we will be talking about in seminar the next day. These responses should be one to two paragraphs in length. You will be assigned to post by 9pm on either Tuesday or Thursday afternoon throughout the semester. You may miss one response paper over the course of the semester without being docked points.

Responses should be posted to the “Discussions” section of the website. Before coming to seminar, all participants should read through the discussions posted by your classmates. Although you are not required to do so, please reply to any posts that you find interesting with substantive responses supporting, disagreeing with, offering evidence for, nuancing, or extending your classmates’ arguments, or helping to answer their questions. Thoughtful responses to classmates’ postings will count for extra credit, up to a full letter grade (e.g. B+ to A–) over the course of the semester.

Response papers should articulate your thought-out reaction to, a debatable observation about, a question concerning, or an argument about some specific aspect of the text we will be discussing in the next day’s seminar. Good response papers will often cite one or two passages from the text and either make a claim about those passages or ask a question about them. You can also express your personal feelings about a particular passage or recurring theme in the text (e.g., this theme upsets me because...) though you should do your best to persuade the rest of us why we might take that feeling seriously, or feel that way ourselves.

Seminar Participation

It is possible for everyone in the course to receive a perfect participation score. Participation is not a competition: it is not about saying the most brilliant things, or “winning” the argument, or having the final word. Instead, it is about being engaged with the texts we read, willing to share your thoughts with the class, and willing to listen thoughtfully to what your classmates have to say. You may participate well by making several comments per class, or by making only one, if it is a comment that shows you are listening and thinking about the class discussion.

Attendance in class is required, as is promptness. Undocumented absences past the second time will negatively affect your participation grade, as will repeated tardiness.

Seminar Papers

You will write three short papers (each no more than five pages in length) over the course of the semester. Topics for these papers will be assigned; if there is another issue that you want to write about, please consult the instructor at least five days before the paper is due. For each paper, you will have a choice among several topics.

Before each paper, I will hand out a brief writing guide that will focus on a specific mechanical issue. I will not deduct points for mechanical issues that I have not discussed in one of these guides (besides general sloppiness, of course). Many other guides for academic writing can be found online at the Yale Center for Teaching and Learning website, ctl.yale.edu/writing.

I will read and give comments on thesis statements or outlines of your papers, if you send them via email or set up a time to meet with me at least four days before the paper is due. I cannot read or comment on full drafts, but extensive writing assistance is available through the DS writing tutors, the Wednesday night DS study halls, the Writing Center, and your college's writing tutor. I encourage you to take full advantage of these resources while you have them!

Instructor Contact Information

Luke Bender, Assistant Professor of Chinese Literature and of the Humanities

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Office hour: Tuesday, 2–4 and by appointment

During the first four weeks of the semester, I encourage every student in the class to either drop by my office hour or to set up a time to meet with me.

Statement to Students on their Academic Integrity

You may not under any circumstances present anyone else's work, words, or ideas as your own. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and Yale punishes academic dishonesty severely. Please be sure to review Yale's Academic Integrity Policy (<http://yalecollege.yale.edu/new-students/class-2019/academic-information/intro-undergrad-education/academic-honesty>) and the resources for understanding and avoiding plagiarism available at the Center for Teaching and Learning (<http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources>). If you are ever unsure as to whether a particular example does or does not constitute plagiarism, please consult one of the instructors first.

Policy on Electronics in the Classroom

No laptops, tablets, or cellular phones may be used during seminar. If you need special accommodations, in this or in any other aspect of the course, please reach out to the instructor.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1

Wednesday, August 30 Seminar: Course Introduction, *Iliad*, Books I–VIII

Thursday, August 31 Lecture: *Iliad*

Week 2

Tuesday, September 5 Lecture: *Iliad*

Wednesday, September 6 Seminar: *Iliad*, Books IX–XVI

Friday, September 8 Lecture: *Odyssey*

Friday, September 8 Seminar: *Iliad*, Books XVII–XXIV

Week 3

Wednesday, September 13 Seminar: *Odyssey*, Books I–VIII

Friday, September 15 Lecture: *Odyssey*

Friday, September 15 Seminar: *Odyssey*, Books IX–XVI

Week 4

Wednesday, September 20 Seminar: *Odyssey*, Books XVII–XXIV

Friday, September 22 Lecture: Hebrew Bible

Friday, September 22 Seminar: *Genesis*, entire

Week 5

Wednesday, September 27 Seminar: *Exodus*, chapter 1 to 25.22, 31.12 to the end of chapter 34, and chapter 40

Friday, September 29 Lecture: Sappho

Friday, September 29 Seminar: Sappho, entire

Week 6

Wednesday, October 4 Seminar: *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers*

Friday, October 6 Lecture: *Oresteia*

Friday, October 6 Seminar: *Eumenides*

Week 7

Wednesday, October 11 Seminar: *Antigone*

Friday, October 13 Lecture: *Bacchae*

Friday, October 13 Seminar: *Bacchae*

October 18–23: Fall Recess, No Class

Week 9

Wednesday, October 25 Seminar: *Aeneid*, Books I–III

Friday, October 27 Lecture: *Aeneid*

Friday, October 27 Seminar: *Aeneid*, Books IV–VI

Week 10

Wednesday, November 1 Seminar: *Aeneid*, Books VII–IX

Friday, November 3 Lecture: *Aeneid*

Friday, November 3 Seminar: *Aeneid*, Books X–XII

Week 11

Wednesday, November 8 Seminar: *The Gospel According to Matthew*

Friday, November 10 Lecture: New Testament

Friday, November 10 Seminar: *Letter to the Romans*

Week 12

Wednesday, November 15 Seminar: *Metamorphoses*, Book 1; Book 2, pp. 28-40 (Phaethon); Book 3, pp. 108-16 (Echo & Narcissus); Book 6; Book 10; Book 11, pp. 423-25 (Death of Orpheus); Book 12, pp. 291-301 (centaurs); Book 13, pp. 305-318 (Ajax and Ulysses)

Friday, November 17 Lecture: *Metamorphoses*

Friday, November 17 Seminar: *Metamorphoses*, from the Romulus story at the end of Book 14 to end of Book 15 (pp. 587-636).

November 18–26: Thanksgiving Recess, No Class

Week 13

Wednesday, November 29 Seminar: *Inferno*, Canti I–XVII

Friday, December 1 Lecture: *Inferno*

Friday, December 1 Seminar: *Inferno*, Canti XVIII–XXXIV

Week 14

Wednesday, December 6 Seminar: *Purgatorio*, Canti I–II, IX–XII, and XXI–XXXIII

Friday, December 8 Lecture: *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*

Wednesday, November 23 Seminar: *Paradiso*, I–IV, XIX–XX, and XXVII–XXXIII