Nebraska Wesleyan University

ENG 2010 Masterpieces of Literature

Catalog

2015-2016

Course Description

An introductory course designed to help students appreciate the literary record of human relationships with nature, the supernatural, and each other. Each course examines a particular question or condition as it is represented in a restricted number of literary works, with core readings from the Bible, Greek or Roman classical literature, Shakespeare, literature by women, and literature by writers of color. Current offerings include the following.
Prerequisite(s): First Year Writing.
Encountering Others- This course looks at texts that represent moments of contact, conflict, or exchange between different cultures, or between a society and those individuals the society has designated as 'different' in some crucial way.
Coming of Age- Becoming Women, Becoming Men This course looks at texts that represent the forces and processes that are part of maturation, especially those related to gender identity. This course focuses on gender issues and includes feminist perspectives. Note: This course also counts for Gender Studies credit.
Families and Relationships- This course will examine how writers from different historical eras and cultural contexts write about family, in every sense of that word.
Writing the Self 'Who am I?'- This is the quintessential question that all human beings ask. This course examines how writers from different historical eras and cultural contexts use various narrative strategies to construct a sense of self. We will also examine numerous theories that seek to explain what constitutes the 'I' that locates the self as a palpable center of self-awareness, as well as how genre influences the accounting of personal history.
Sexualities- This course is designed to help students appreciate the literary record of romantic relationships. Specifically, the course will explore how writers from different historical periods and cultural milieus address the issue of human sexuality. Note: same-sex relationships will be routinely read about and discussed in the class. Note: This course also counts for Gender Studies credit.
Law and Justice- The courtroom is a place where one's telling and interpretation of stories can mean the difference between life and death, so the analysis of literature and the practice of the law are already intertwined. This course explores the connection further by focusing on literary works that deal with the principle of justice and the application of law.
Revolution- This course looks at texts that represent moments of sudden change, upheaval, and transformation, both within societies and within individuals.
Religion and Spirituality- Religion is a virtually universal constant in recorded human history, but with answers of different religions to humankind's big questions have varied enormously. What is the origin and purpose of evil? What is death? What things should be held sacred? What is the nature of the divine? How should we treat other people - and should we distinguish between those who share our beliefs and those who do not? This course will study some of the ways these questions have been answered, from most ancient times to the present.
The Environment- How are nature and the natural world imagined through literary texts? In the western tradition, "nature" is usually considered separate from humanity - a passive landscape designed to be dominated and used by humans for human purposes. What is the origin of this cultural attitude? What alternative views do we find in the history of western literature? What does the literary record of nature look like in some non-western cultural traditions? Is nature best understood as a universal category apart from human culture or is the idea of nature created by human culture? This course will explore such questions by reading texts from different eras and cultural traditions.
War- Virtually every culture has experienced war, and cultures often define and understand themselves through the memories of their wars. Literature about war, from western civilization's founding epic, Homer's Iliad, to blogs maintained by contemporary soldiers, provides us with not only some of our most memorable images of courage, loyalty, and self-sacrifice, but also compelling evidence of war's cruelty, horror, and senselessness; its themes encompass both enormous historical and cultural change and the most intimate, personal suffering.

Course Hours

3 hours

Departments

1. English