

## BRILLIANT MINDS

Humanities X07.9305, Fall 2010

Section 1: Tuesdays, September 28 – December 14, 10:00 – 11:40 a.m. (Midtown)

Section 2: Wednesdays, September 22 – December 15, 6:45 – 8:25 p.m. (Cooper Square)

Instructor: Peter Arcese (646-261-1200 / [peter.arcese@nyu.edu](mailto:peter.arcese@nyu.edu))

Office hours by appointment

### New York University

School of Continuing and Professional Studies

Arts, Humanities, and Writing Programs

10 Astor Place, Room 504, New York, NY 10003

**Course Description** LITERARY GENIUS, the burden of greatness, takes innumerable shapes and forms. From book to play to poetry, brilliant minds use their extraordinary gifts to entertain, inspire, enrage, and enlighten us of philosophical and artistic concerns, social trappings, and human conceit, among others.

Topics to be discussed include point of view, allusion, symbolism, and theme in poetry, drama, and the novel; literary periods and movements including the Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, Romantic, Modernist and Postmodern; and studies of specific genres, such as tragedy and history. The course will teach students the value of close reading and the necessity of evidence in discussion and debate. No prior knowledge or experience is required for this course.

**Objectives** Students will be encouraged to analyze the structure and content of the poem, drama, or novel under discussion and to speculate about its author's motivation in including and excluding various techniques. As a result of having taken this course, students will have the skills and confidence to navigate comparably sophisticated and challenging works of literature.

**Requirements** Students will be expected to read (and, ideally, reread) the assigned selections prior to the class period when those works will be studied, and to contribute to the discussion thereon. No tests or quizzes will be given, nor will written work of any kind be assigned.

### Required Texts (available at the NYU bookstore, 18 Washington Place)

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Arcese (Athnata Arts, Ltd.)

Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. Melville (Oxford)

Anonymous, *Njal's Saga*, trans. Cook (Penguin)

Shakespeare, *All's Well That's Ends Well*, ed. Orgel (Pelican/Penguin)

Behn, *Oroonoko*, ed. Todd (Penguin)

Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. Falen (Oxford)

Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Cardwell (Penguin)

Maugham, *Of Human Bondage* (Penguin)

Millay, *Selected Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Milford (Modern Library)

Oates, *The Falls* (HarperPerennial)

**Grading** No grades will be given for this class.

**Policies** Students are required to respect one another by attending regularly, arriving on time, and engaging courteously with one another in class discussions.

<b>Schedule</b>	<b>(Sec. 2)</b>	
<i>Week 1</i>	Sept. 22	Aeschylus, <i>Agamemnon</i> Topic: The Classical Tragic Chorus
<i>Week 2</i>	Sept. 29	Aeschylus, <i>Agamemnon</i> Topic: Vengeance in Classical Tragedy
<i>Week 3</i>	Oct. 6	Lucretius, <i>On the Nature of the Universe</i> Topic: Roman Poetry of Philosophy
<i>Week 4</i>	Oct. 13	Anon., <i>Njal's Saga</i> Topic: Life & Law in the North Country
<i>Week 5</i>	Oct. 20	Shakespeare, <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> Topic: The Elizabethan Stage
<i>Week 6</i>	Oct. 27	Behn, <i>Oroonoko</i> Topic: Slavery, Women, & the British Novel
<i>Week 7</i>	Nov. 3	Pushkin, <i>Eugene Onegin</i> Topic: Masterpiece of Russian Poetry
<i>Week 8</i>	Nov. 10	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> Topic: The American Experience I
<i>Week 9</i>	Nov. 17	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> Topic: The American Experience II
<i>Week 10</i>	Dec. 1	Maugham, <i>Of Human Bondage</i> Topic: Biographical Influences in the Novel
<i>Week 11</i>	Dec. 8	Millay, <i>Selected Poems</i> Topic: Modernism & Poetic Form
<i>Week 12</i>	Dec. 15	Oates, <i>The Falls</i> Topic: The Contemporary American Novel