

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND WRITING PROGRAM
7 EAST 12TH STREET, 7TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10003

BRILLIANT MINDS

Course No: LITR1-CE9305, Spring 2018

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

Office hours by appointment

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 epic, drama, poetry, and the novel. The course will teach students the value of close reading and the necessity of textual 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 literary work 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, Grading, & Policies. 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. No grades will be given for this class. Students are required to respect one another by attending regularly, arriving on time, and engaging courteously with one another in class discussions.

Recommended Editions of Texts (available at the NYU bookstore, 726 Broadway)

1. Sappho, *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, trans. Carson (Vintage)
2. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Ruden (Modern Library)
3. Murasaki, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Washburn (Norton)
4. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Holland (Pelican)
5. Burke, *Reflections of the Revolution in France*, ed. Mitchell (Oxford)
6. Hồ Xuân Hương, *Spring Essence: Poetry*, trans. Balaban (Copper Canyon)
7. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. Falen (Oxford)
8. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper)
9. Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March* (Pelican)
10. Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (Knopf)

Reading Schedule

Week 1: Feb 6	Sappho, <i>If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho</i> The supreme culmination of lyric poetry and personae
Week 2: Feb 13	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> The individual's existential quest for meaning in narrative
Week 3: Feb 20	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> Life-writing and the transmission of classical philosophy
Week 4: Feb 27	Murasaki, <i>The Tale of Genji</i> The invention of the novel in Medieval Japan
Week 5: Mar 6	Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> Representing intolerable revenge in Elizabethan drama
Week 6: Mar 13	Burke, <i>Reflections of the Revolution in France</i> The continuity of covenant in social contract theory
Week 7: Mar 20	Hô Xuân Huong, <i>Spring Essence: Poetry</i> The eroticism of social critique in Vietnamese poetry
Week 8: Mar 27	Pushkin, <i>Eugene Onegin</i> Negotiating fact and fiction in verse narrative
Week 9: Apr 3	Pushkin, <i>Eugene Onegin</i> Tragic social convention in the absence of empathy
Week 10: Apr 10	Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> Self-determination in the contexts of gender and race
Week 11: Apr 17	Bellow, <i>The Adventures of Augie March</i> Re-envisioning the hero through picaresque pastiche
Week 12: Apr 24	Roy, <i>The Ministry of Utmost Happiness</i> The future of community beyond violence and religion