
ENLIGHTENMENT FRONTIERS (LIT 246)**Autumn 2017****Rob Browning****M,W,F 11:00-11:50****e-mail: rob.browning@mso.umt.edu****Office Hours: (LA 217) MWF 12:10-1:50 and by appointment**

"I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

--Sir Isaac Newton

In this course we will study literature concerned with the philosophical idea of "enlightenment" and the promises of the cultural phenomenon that has come to be known as "the Enlightenment," a period of mounting optimism about the power of reason to advance knowledge in science and philosophy, to reform religion, and to promote social justice. We will examine how our authors variously define and represent "reason," usually in relation to their respective notions of the powers and perils of the imagination. Beginning in the late 17th century and concluding at the start of the 21st century, we will follow the adventures of a variety of heroic—often tragic—figures who actively explore at or beyond the present edges of human knowledge. In each instance, we will examine how the text prompts readers to reflect on the lawfulness of the venture in theological or ethical terms and we'll observe the aesthetic dimensions of imaginative portrayals of the unknown. A major purpose of the course will be to provide instruction in the art and practice of essay writing as one of the most effective ways we have for thinking through our engagements with texts, ideas, and the world beyond ourselves.

Required Texts:

- John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Gordon Teskey, 2005. ISBN: 978-0393924282. Alternative editions will be fine.
- Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Penguin Classics, 2003. ISBN: 9780141439495
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 2nd Norton Critical Edition. Ed. J. Paul Hunter. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. ISBN: 978-0393927931
- Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, Anchor, 2004. ISBN: 978-0385721677

An important requirement of this class is that you have with you in class a hard copy of the literature we're reading for each day. Our culture is on the cusp of print and electronic technologies, but until electronic texts can allow us to mark them up with the same facility that we can annotate a paper text with a pencil they're not sufficient for our purposes. A physical text is a basic tool that allows you to read literature more engagingly.

Graded Work:

Short papers (5) -----	40%
Formal essays (2) -----	50%
Participation, quizzes -----	10%

Short papers: These are informal, one page, single-spaced explorations of some aspect of a text we have read recently. A total of five are required. You should use these papers to help you think through your own interpretations of the texts and as forums for generating interesting questions and topics you might pursue in either of your two formal papers. Otherwise, you have considerable freedom in how you go about these papers. My evaluation will focus on the quality of your engagement with the text: in other words, the extent to which your thinking about the text is active, aware, thoughtful, creative, interesting, and thought-provoking.

Formal Essays: These are formal papers devoted to responding to one of the prompts I have provided you. Essays earning a grade of “C” or higher will have a strong, clearly stated thesis (a focused claim that requires the work of your body paragraphs to demonstrate) and supports your main claims with specific evidence from the literary texts that are your focus.

Participation: Exploring literature in the company of other readers is an opportunity to learn about the texts in ways that we never could as solitary individuals. Consistent preparation and thoughtful participation is valuable to the class as a whole, and so such effort will raise a final grade by one-third of a letter grade. My sense of your level of “participation” is based on your attendance, how well you appear to be keeping up with reading assignments (based on your involvement in discussions and performance on any quizzes), and any discussions I have with you during office hours.

Attendance is an indication of your commitment to your studies. I become concerned after a student has missed more than four classes *and expect anyone in this position to see me so we can discuss your status in the class. Ordinarily (and certainly if I hear nothing from you), each absence beyond four will reduce the final grade by one third of a letter grade.* I will take attendance promptly at the start of each class, so if you arrive late for any reason, be sure to check in with me at the end of class.

Please arrive to class on time. While I understand that the most conscientious of us sometimes are delayed by circumstances beyond our control (and in those instances, please do come to class rather than not at all), persistent late arrivals will be a distraction for the rest of us. You may dismiss yourself during class time, *but please do so only if you have an urgent reason.*

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of scholarly trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/page/1321>.” If after studying the university’s Conduct Code you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism you should let me know. Violators of the Student Conduct Code will probably fail the course.

Specific objectives for students of this course:

1. To gain understanding of what philosophers and other authors mean by “Enlightenment,” and to learn how a selection of writers engage with these concepts by way of imaginative literature.
2. To learn the distinguishing characteristics of the major kinds of literature we will be studying (epic, satire, lyric poetry, gothic novel, science fiction) and to gain appreciation of how authors variously utilize and deviate from these characteristics to make their texts meaningful.
3. To learn how to perform a meaningful, interesting close reading of a literary text.
4. To practice revising and developing informal short papers into formal analytical essays.
5. To become proficient in writing rhetorically effective essays (well-reasoned and grammatically sound), driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument.

CLASS SCHEDULE

According to the pace of our discussions, we will deviate from the following schedule from time to time. Each class I will confirm the assignment for the next class. It’s important that you exchange contact information with one of your classmates. Anytime you miss a class you should get in touch with that person to learn if there have been any changes to the schedule.

9/1 Fri. Introductions: witches and scientists

9/4 Mon. Labor day – no class

- 9/6 Weds. Michel de Montaigne, "Of Experience" (1570-92); Francis Bacon, "In Praise of Knowledge" (1597); Galileo, *Sidereus Nuncius (Starry Messenger)* (1610). Selections from these three texts are posted on Moodle.
- 9/8 Fri. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667)
- 9/11 Mon. **Short paper #1 due.** *Paradise Lost*
- 9/13 Weds. *Paradise Lost*
- 9/15 Fri. *Paradise Lost*
- 9/18 Mon. *Paradise Lost*
- 9/20 Weds. *Paradise Lost*
- 9/22 Fri. Writing workshop: developing an interpretive argument
- 9/25 Mon. **Short paper #2 due.** *Paradise Lost*
- 9/27 Weds. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726/35)
- 9/28 Thurs. **Festival of the Book session on rare texts:** at the Mansfield Library in the Archives and Special Collection area (one floor up). 3:30-5:00. Please come if you can! Extra credit will be awarded to those who attend and write a short paper (one page) reflecting on the session. If you can't make the event, you can earn extra credit by writing on Kerry MacLennan's article "John Milton's Contract for *Paradise Lost*" (posted on Moodle)
- 9/29 Fri. *Gulliver's Travels*
- 10/2 Mon. *Gulliver's Travels*
- 10/4 Weds. *Gulliver's Travels*
- 10/6 Fri. *Gulliver's Travels*
- 10/9 Mon. **Short paper #3 due.** Anthony Pagden, "What is Enlightenment?" (Moodle)
- 10/11 Weds. Anna Letitia Barbauld, "The Mouse's Petition," "An Inventory of the Furniture in Dr. Priestley's Study" (Moodle)
- 10/13 Fri. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Moodle): read Part II, sections 1-4 and Part III, section 27
- 10/16 Mon. Barbauld, "A Summer Evening's Meditation" (1773) (Moodle)
- 10/18 Weds. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (1784) (Moodle)
- 10/20 Fri. **First formal essay due.** Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)
- 10/23 Mon. *Frankenstein*
- 10/25 Weds. *Frankenstein*
- 10/27 Fri. *Frankenstein*
- 10/30 Mon. *Frankenstein*
- 11/1 Weds. Writing workshop
- 11/3 Fri. **Short paper #4 due.** *Frankenstein*
- 11/6 Mon. E.M. Forster, "The Machine Stops" (1909) (Moodle)
- 11/8 Weds. "The Machine Stops" and Plato's Allegory of the Cave (Moodle)
- 11/10 Fri. **Veterans Day - no class**
- 11/13 Mon. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) (Moodle)
- 11/15 Weds. Reading to be announced
- 11/17 Fri. Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (2003)
- 11/20 Mon. *Oryx and Crake*

11/22 Weds. Student travel day - no class

11/24 Fri. Thanksgiving break - no class

11/27 Mon. *Oryx and Crake*

11/29 Weds. *Oryx and Crake*

12/1 Fri. Short paper #5 due. *Oryx and Crake*

12/4 Mon. *Oryx and Crake*

12/6 Weds. Writing workshop

12/8 Fri. Ted Chiang, "Exhalation" (2008) (Moodle)

12/11 Mon. Second formal essay due. Conclusions and extrapolations.

There is no final exam for this class.