

Professor Francus  
English 170HN: *Literature of Minds and Nature: The Epic Hero*  
Spring 2020  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45  
G-15 Woodburn Hall  
Office: 227 Colson Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:15 and by appointment.  
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Course Description: In 1977, George Lucas' film *Star Wars* was released—and set in motion a cascade of films about quests, heroes, and wars that have shaped modern cinema and culture. As George Lucas studied the epic hero as he was crafting *Star Wars*, so too we will focus on the classical epic, its conventions, and its heroes in English 170HN. We will study the foundational epics of the Western tradition—*The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Aeneid*—and then turn to modern adaptations of the classical epic, to excavate the ongoing appeal of the epic as well as the ways that the epic hero evolves over time.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the genre of the classical epic in Western literature.
- To introduce students to theories of adaptation and adaptation studies.
- To study instances of the epic and the epic hero in the context of its history and culture.
- To introduce critical methodologies to guide students through literary and cultural texts.
- To provide practice in critical thinking and writing about literature and culture.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify and analyze the characteristics of a Western epic.
- Identify and analyze the characteristics of Western heroism.
- Identify and analyze strategies of adaptation.
- Develop a thesis about a literary or cultural text, and support that thesis with textual evidence.
- Recognize and develop multiple analyses for a single literary or cultural text.
- Analyze a text in light of other literary and/or cultural texts.

English 170HN fulfills an elective requirement for the English major and the English minor, and the GEF Area 6 requirement (Arts & Creativity Requirement).

Books available at the University Bookstore:

Homer, *The Iliad*, translated by Robert Fagles  
Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fagles  
Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald

Films available on eReserves (<https://reserves.lib.wvu.edu/>):

Jon Favreau (dir.), *Iron Man*  
Patty Jenkins (dir.), *Wonder Woman*

## Course Schedule

January 14	Introduction
January 16	<i>The Iliad</i> (Book 1)
January 21	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 2-4)
January 23	<i>The Iliad</i> (Book 5) in-class close reading exercise
January 28	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 6-8)
January 30	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 9-10)
February 4	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 11-14)
February 6	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 15-16) <b>Close Reading Assignment Due</b>
February 11	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 17-20) in-class multiple reading exercise
February 13	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 21-22)
February 18	<i>The Iliad</i> (Books 23-24)
February 20	<i>Star Wars: A New Hope</i> (in-class viewing)
February 25	<i>Star Wars: A New Hope</i> (in-class viewing) <b>Multiple Reading Assignment Due</b>
February 27	<i>Star Wars: A New Hope</i> in-class film analysis exercise
March 3	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 1-4)
March 5	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 5-6)
March 10	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 7-10)
March 12	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 11-12) <b>Film Analysis Assignment Due</b>
March 17-19	Spring Break
March 24	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 13-16)
March 26	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 17-18) in-class adaptation exercise
March 31	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 19-22)
April 2	<i>The Odyssey</i> (Books 23-24)
April 7	<i>The Aeneid</i> (Books 1-4)
April 9	Class Canceled
April 14	<i>Iron Man</i> <b>Adaptation Assignment Due</b>

April 16	Class Canceled
April 21	<i>Iron Man</i>
April 23	<i>Wonder Woman</i>
April 28	<i>Wonder Woman</i>
April 30	Course Conclusions
May 4	<b>Final Exam Due via Email</b>

The course schedule may change at the instructor's discretion.

### Assignments:

1. Close reading assignment: You will be asked to write a short essay, in which you analyze a passage from *The Iliad*. Your analysis must include a thesis, in which you take a position regarding the passage, and evidence from the passage to support your thesis. External research is not necessary. Close reading is central to all critical and analytical thinking—not only in literary studies—and this assignment provides practice in assessing and evaluating specific, detailed information, and an opportunity to hone your analytical skills.
2. Multiple reading assignment: You will be asked to provide two brief interpretations of a passage by using a variety of critical methods (ex. feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic, etc.) and then in a short response, decide which interpretation is more illuminating, and why. The purpose of this assignment is to reinforce that there are multiple strategies of interpretation; that the same text can be interpreted in a variety of ways; that the viability of a method of interpretation is a matter of argument and analysis.
3. Film analysis assignment. You will be asked to write a short analysis in which you analyze a film clip in detail. This assignment reinforces the skills of the close reading assignment (in terms of close reading of details) and emphasizes the unique elements of film that need to be taken into account in order to understand and evaluate film as a medium.
4. Adaptation assignment. You will be asked to outline an adaptation of a course text. Your adaptation may transpose the narrative and characters to a different time or a different place (or both); or insert a new character into the narrative and envision the effects; or create a mash-up between two genres; or re-envision the narrative from a minor character's point of view; or develop an adaptation strategy of your own. You will be asked to include a brief commentary on the modes and methods of adaptation based on your work. The purpose of this exercise is to provide an opportunity for you to work through methods of adaptation, and to think about the challenges that adaptors face when working with an established text.
5. Final exam. The final exam will consist of three parts: a detailed analysis of a literary text; a multiple reading analysis, in which you will analyze a text from more than one methodology; and an adaptation analysis, in which you evaluate one of the course films as an adaptation of epic conventions. Your final, like your assignments, should reflect careful reading and thinking about your subject. The final is designed to showcase the skills that you have learned during English 170 HN.

**Grading:**

The close reading assignment: 15% of your final grade  
 The multiple reading assignment: 20% of your final grade  
 The adaptation assignment: 15% of your grade  
 The film analysis assignment: 20% of your final grade  
 The take-home final: 30% of your final grade

Class participation will be taken into consideration for students with borderline grades. If a student's final grade falls between a B and a B+, and the student has been an active, insightful class participant, the student will receive a B+ for the course. This policy only holds for final grade calculations, and only raises the student's borderline grade to the next immediate grade level (so a B will not be raised to an A- or an A based on class participation).

**Grading Criteria:**

A (90-100) – Excellent work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The assignment has a clear, relevant thesis and organization, chooses compelling evidence to substantiate the analysis, and engages with the subject at hand in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner. Written work requires no substantive or stylistic revisions.

B (80-89) – Good work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The assignment has a viable thesis and shows substantial engagement with the subject at hand, but the analysis is partially incomplete, involving weak evidence, or manifests some difficulty with organization. Written work requires substantive revisions, but few or no stylistic ones.

C (70-79) – Average work; the assignment has been completed, but not necessarily in a professional or timely manner. The assignment shows effort by the student, but the analysis is incomplete, includes inappropriate evidence (or a lack of evidence), or shows significant difficulties with organization. Written work requires significant substantive or stylistic revisions.

D (60-69) - Less than average work; the assignment has not been completed in a professional or timely manner. The assignment shows a lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment. Written work lacks analysis, evidence, and organization; extensive substantive and stylistic revisions are needed.

F (<59) – Inadequate work; the assignment has not been completed. Work, when submitted, shows a significant lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment and the subject matter of the course. Such work is marked by the absence of analysis, evidence, and organization; engagement with the course materials is necessary before extensive revisions are even possible.

**Submission of Assignments:**

1. Your assignments should be typed (11- or 12-point font), with one-inch margins for comments. Papers should be double-spaced, stapled, and paginated, and include your name.
2. Please keep a copy or a back-up of every assignment that you hand in.
3. Hand in assignments on time. Late submissions will receive a lower grade unless the student has a viable reason (such as illness, familial emergency) for his/her lateness and notifies me in advance. Your grade will be lowered a fraction for every day your work is late (ex. B to B- for one day late).
4. Do not summarize the plot of a work or rephrase your class notes in your assignments. The assignments do not require external research. They require knowledge of the course texts; clear, careful thinking; and writing.

**Professional Responsibility:**

1. Students who attend classes regularly tend to succeed. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. You are granted a maximum of three absences during the course of the semester before absenteeism affects your grade. If you accumulate more than seven absences (excused and unexcused), you will automatically fail the course.
2. It is your responsibility to contact me regarding your absences. If you disappear—if you miss class for three or four sessions in a row, or more—it is not my responsibility to find you. It is also your responsibility to make up missed work; see WVU's attendance policy:  
<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/enrollmentandregistration/#enrollmenttext>.
3. If you send me an e-mail, I will respond within 24 or 48 hours. If I have not responded in that time, I have not received your posting. Please e-mail me again.
4. Please come to class on time. Do not leave in the middle of class; it is distracting and disrespectful. Do not schedule appointments (medical, advising, etc.) during class time.
5. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class, unless I request that you use them.
6. You will be expected to complete the reading/viewing before coming to class, and to bring the relevant volume to class, since we will often be analyzing text in detail in class.
7. Should you need assistance during a time of difficulty or crisis, please contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall, 304-293-5811.

### Academic Dishonesty:

West Virginia University's definition of academic dishonesty is available in the Undergraduate Catalog (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification/#definitionsandtypesofacademicpenalties>):

“The term “academic dishonesty” means plagiarism; cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and/or projects; and forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud as it relates to academic or educational matters. In addition to the definitions and examples provided below, [supplementary information about types and examples of academic dishonesty is available](#).

1. **“Plagiarism”** means the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment, including, but not limited to, the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another individual.
2. **“Cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and/or projects”** include, but are not limited to, (i) giving or receiving of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or any other assignment for a grade; (ii) depending upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor or supervisor in quizzes, tests, examinations, writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (iii) the acquisition or use, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff; and (iv) engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion.
3. **“Forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud as it relates to academic or educational matters”** includes, but is not limited to, (i) wrongfully altering, or causing to be altered, any records; (ii) use of University documents or instruments of identification with the intent to defraud; (iii) presenting false data or information or intentionally misrepresenting records; (iv) furnishing the results of research projects or experiments for the inclusion in another's work without proper citation; or (v) furnishing false statements in any University academic proceeding; and (vi) providing false or misleading information to gain an academic advantage.

A student at West Virginia University who engages in academic dishonesty will be subject to one or more of the following academic penalties (see the previous section for full descriptions of those penalties that can also be imposed for failure to meet academic requirements or standards):

1. Course-level academic penalties. When academic dishonesty occurs within the context of a course (including individually supervised courses), the course instructor/coordinator has the option of imposing the following academic penalties, including but not limited to:
  1. Change in assignment or test grade.
  2. A lower final grade, including failure of a course.
  3. A final grade of unforgivable failure (UF). The UF penalty can be recommended by the course instructor/coordinator but must be reported to the appropriate office by the dean of the college or school offering the course after the time limit for a student appeal has expired or the appeal process has been completed, upholding the UF penalty. The student may repeat the course, but the undergraduate D/F repeat process will not be applied to the UF.
  4. Required repetition or revision of the assignment or test.
  5. Exclusion from further participation in class, including laboratories or clinical experiences.
  6. Other course resolutions within the discretion of the course instructor/coordinator.

2. Other academic penalties. If academic dishonesty occurs either in a course or within the context of program requirements, the academic penalties below may be imposed.
  1. Required repetition or revision of a program requirement, or termination of the student's participation in specific program-related activities. When academic dishonesty occurs within the context of program requirements and expectations not associated with a specific course (including, but not limited to, completing qualifying exams, conducting research, performing duties associated with a graduate assistantship, performing required service or professional activities, etc.), the student's program director, supervisor, or chair of an appropriate committee may impose these or similar academic penalties.
  2. Failure of a program requirement or failure to meet academic standards.
  3. Academic probation or suspension at the program, college, or school level for failure to meet program requirements and academic standards.
  4. Dismissal from a program, college, school, or the university."

The following University Policy Statements are available on the WVU Teaching and Learning Commons Syllabus Policies and Statements Page (<https://tlcommons.wvu.edu/syllabus-policies-and-statements>):

**WVU Academic Integrity Statement:**

"The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, instructors will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of their courses. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University [Academic Standards Policy](http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification) (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecredittermsclassification>). Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see your instructor before the assignment is due to discuss the matter."

**WVU's Sale of Course Material Syllabus Statement:**

"All course materials, including lectures, class notes, quizzes, exams, handouts, presentations, and other course materials provided to students for their courses are protected intellectual property. As such, the unauthorized purchase or sale of these materials may result in disciplinary sanctions under the [Student Conduct Code](https://studentconduct.wvu.edu/policies-and-procedures). (<https://studentconduct.wvu.edu/policies-and-procedures>)"

**Student Evaluation of Instruction Statement:**

"Effective teaching is a primary mission of West Virginia University. Student evaluation of instruction provides the university and the instructor with feedback about your experiences in the course for review and course improvement. Your participation in the evaluation of course instruction is both strongly encouraged and highly valued. Results are strictly confidential, anonymous, and not available to the instructor until after final grades are released by Admissions and Records. Information about how you can complete this evaluation will be provided by your instructor."

**Inclusivity Statement:**

“The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise your instructors and make appropriate arrangements with [the Office of Accessibility Services](https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/). (https://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/)

More information is available at the [Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](https://diversity.wvu.edu/) (https://diversity.wvu.edu/) as well.”

**Sexual Misconduct Statement:**

“West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [[BOG Rule 1.6](#)]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the [Title IX Coordinator](https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff).(https://titleix.wvu.edu/staff)

If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the [Carruth Center](#), 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the [Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center](#) (RDVIC), 304-292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline).”

**Appropriate Use of Technology Statement:**

“Use of technology in the classroom should always be directly related to class activities and/or course learning outcomes. Inappropriate technology use can be an impediment to learning and a distraction to all members of the class. As such, inappropriate use of technology in the classroom may be considered a disruption of the class and constitute a violation of the [WVU Student Conduct Code](#) and could potentially result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct. Use of technology in the classroom when specifically prohibited by the instructor may also constitute a violation of WVU’s [Academic Integrity](#) policy.”

**Adverse Weather Statement:**

“In the event of inclement or threatening weather, everyone should use his or her best judgment regarding travel to and from campus. Safety should be the main concern. If you cannot get to class because of adverse weather conditions, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible. Similarly, if your instructor(s) are unable to reach the class location, they will notify you of any cancellation or change as soon as possible, using agreed upon methods to prevent students from embarking on any unnecessary travel. If you cannot get to class because of weather conditions, instructors will make allowances relative to required attendance policies, as well as any scheduled tests, quizzes, or other assessments.”