

LIT 4930: Variable Topics: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Contemporary Poetry

Section 16647

Mondays Period 9-11 (4:05-7:05 pm), Live via Zoom 4:05-6:20 or later, approx. 40 minutes in small groups for presentation research (scheduled for remainder of class time)

Office hours: Mondays 3:00-3:45 in Burlington (in the Creative Writing Suite), 4211E; on Zoom by appointment

Professor Ange Mlinko

Contact through course website on Canvas
or amlinko@ufl.edu in urgent cases

Required Texts:

Tales from Ovid by Ted Hughes

After Ovid edited by Hofmann/Lasdun

The Last World by Christoph Ransmayr

A PDF packet of additional poems is posted to Canvas, including poems from the recommended books by Paisley Rekdal and A.E. Stallings. It is also recommended that you obtain a standard translation of Ovid for reference, such as the Penguin paperback edition.

Please also read my brief précis on how to read poems, which I have posted to Canvas.

All the books we touch upon are available through Library West. Remember that interlibrary loans (ILL) are a valuable resource and that our librarians are glad to help you.

Course description

This is a seminar on Ovid's influence on contemporary poets. We will use Ted Hughes' *Tales from Ovid* as a foundation, then compare his versions with other poets'. Along the way, we will visit films, paintings, and musical compositions that also draw on this treasury of myth. At the end, we will read a novel about Ovid's final years in exile on the far edge of the Roman empire.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as we will see, has exerted an enormous influence on European (and now, American) arts. Part of its grip on our imagination has to do with its confrontation with the extremities of our experience. Gods go after what they want with impunity; lovers are torn apart for no reason; when humans get what they wish for, it's a double-edged sword. Yet this fatalism is also countered by the knowledge that nothing in nature is fixed forever. The cosmos is in a state of constant flux, and Ovid had an intuitive sense that we are fundamentally one with the creatures and features of our planet and indeed the stars. The story is ultimately a joyful one: existence is a mystery and a treasure.

1) Because this class is a seminar, not a lecture course, I need each of you to be present and prepared. If you are late to class, that is a 5-point deduction. You should draft at least one single-spaced page worth of notes while doing your reading, to use as a launching pad for class discussion. I may ask you to turn in these notes on a random basis; there will be a 5-point deduction if I find you lack a set of notes. I will regularly call on silent participants. (Presence/participation is 50% of your grade.) Sensitive class discussions will **not** be recorded.

2) You will be put in groups to create one creative presentation. You will be responsible for brainstorming with your group in the asynchronous portion of the class, which may follow our synchronous meeting. I will be available on Zoom for consultation after the synchronous portion of the class until 7 pm. (Presentation is 25% of your grade.)

3) In our final meeting, you will hand in a final paper (2000 words) on any aspect of Ovid covered in this course, using the poems we have read. (The critical paper is 25% of your grade.)

I regret that we have to meet through Zoom. We will all have to work together to make it as lively as possible, despite the flattening effect of the medium. Please feel free to come to me with any concerns. This is new to me too and I am learning as I go!

Semester Schedule

Class	Topic	Reading
Aug 31	Introduction to course. Background on Ovid. How to read a poem.	
Sept 7	Labor Day - no class	
Sept 14	The capriciousness of the gods: Actaeon, Semele, Marsyas, Arachne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch Jean Cocteau's <i>Orphee</i> (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vo9GmMsriQ) for reference to Merrill and next class • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: "Introduction," "Actaeon," "Arachne," "Semele" • <i>After Ovid</i>: "Introduction," "Arachne" by Gunn, "Spiderwoman" by Longley, "The Flaying of Marsyas" by Robertson, "Down Under" by Carson • PDF packet: Merrill, Leviston, Lasdun, Phillips ("Apollo and Marsyas"), Rekdal ("Marsyas,") and Stallings ("Arachne") • [Total of 1 film, 2 introductions, 13 poems]
Sept 21	Orpheus and the dueling powers of song and death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>After Ovid</i>: "Orpheus and Eurydice" and "Death of Orpheus" by Heaney • PDF: Graham ("Orpheus and Eurydice"), Phillips ("Eurydice," "The Double Death of Orpheus," "Reverse Orpheus," "Reverse Eurydice"), Stallings ("Song for the Women Poets") • Class presentation #1: Research Cocteau and his film

Class	Topic	Reading
Sept 28	Phaeton (climate catastrophe), Midas (greed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: “Phaethon,” “Midas” • <i>After Ovid</i>: “Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun” by Glyn Maxwell, “In Phrygia, Birthplace of Embroidery” by Les Murray, “Mrs Midas” by Carol Ann Duffy • Class presentation #2: Research Ted Hughes
Oct 5	Love and Idealization: Narcissus and Echo, Pygmalion and Galatea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: “Echo and Narcissus,” “Pygmalion” • <i>After Ovid</i>: “Ivory and Water” by Longley, “Pygmalion and Galatea” by Mahon • PDF: Riley • Class presentation #3: Research Leonard Barkan’s <i>Mute Poetry, Speaking Pictures</i>
Oct 12	Tragic love: Apollo/Hyacinthus, Venus/Adonis, Hero/Leander, Thisbe/Pyramus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: “Venus and Adonis,” “Pyramus and Thisbe” • <i>After Ovid</i>: “A Flowering” by Longley, “Pyramus and Thisbe” by D’Aguiar, “Apollo and Hyacinthus” by McClatchy • Class presentation #3: Research connection between Ovid and Shakespeare
Oct 19	Seduction, abduction, rape I: Daphne, Arethusa, Thetis, Europa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: “Arethusa,” “Peleus and Thetis” • <i>After Ovid</i>: “Daphne and Apollo” by Fulton, “Jupiter and Europa” by Armitage, “Arethusa Saved” by Gunn, “Peleus and Thetis” by Shapcott • PDF: Graham, “Self-Portrait as Apollo and Daphne”
Oct 26	Seduction, abduction, rape II: Persephone, Philomela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: “The Tale of Proserpina” • <i>After Ovid</i>: “The Pomegranate” by Boland, “Tereus, Procne, Philomela,” by Wheatley/Quinn • PDF: “Hades Welcomes His Bride,” “Persephone Writes a Letter to Her Mother,” “First Love: A Quiz” by Stallings; “Philomela” and “Nightingale: A Gloss” by Rekdal

Class	Topic	Reading
Nov 2	Taboo women: Medea, Myrrha, Scylla, Pasiphae	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tales from Ovid</i>: “Myrrha” • <i>After Ovid</i>: “Medea” by Clampitt, “Scylla and Minos,” Hofmann • PDF: “Medea, Homesick” by Stallings, “Pasiphae” by Rekdal • Pasolini’s film <i>Medea</i> • Class presentation #4: Research Pasolini’s <i>Medea</i>
Nov 9	Ovid in literary history	PDFs to come: Golding, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Shelley/Duncan, Rilke, Yeats, Pound, Auden et al.
Nov 16	Ovid in painting and music	Links TK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class presentation #5: Research Poussin’s <i>Poesie</i>
Nov 23	The life of Ovid, posthumous and otherwise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDFs: Curdy, “Ovid in America,” and Mahon, “Ovid in Tomis” • Excerpts from “Tristia” • Class presentation #6: Research Ovid as emblem of “writer in exile” touching on others such as Dante, Shelley, Byron, Brodsky, et al.
Nov 30	<i>The Last World</i> part I (Ransmayr)	Chapters I-VI
Dec 7	<i>The Last World</i> part II. Critical papers due.	Chapters VII-XV

Grading Rubric:

Assignment	Length	Points available
Presence and Participation	-	36 (x 14)
Group Presentations	20-25 minutes	250
Critical paper	2000 words	250
Total		1,004

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699

B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

"A" A paper at this level is truly high quality. It demonstrates a clear understanding of critical concepts, creatively addresses the subject matter, and exceeds the expectations of critical analysis. A paper with this grade will be free of grammatical errors.

"B" A paper with this grade has met the standards of the assignment at a high quality level. This assignment may need revision but is organized in a logical way and avoids fallacies or mistakes in critical analysis. A paper with this grade may contain grammatical errors but will be readable.

"C" A paper that earns a "C" has done everything that was required, but no more. This assignment may require significant revision to more thoroughly examine critical elements, or it may need reorganization. A paper with this grade will generally contain a few grammatical errors but will still be readable.

"D" This paper does not adequately fulfill the assignment to a satisfactory degree. One portion of an assignment may not have been touched upon or there may be a misused critical element. Papers with this grade tend to be disorganized and contain many grammatical errors.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

If I give a lecture, it may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate verbally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared.

As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

(I will not be recording our group discussions, which can have an inhibiting effect on our freedom to converse and share personal opinions and experiences.)

Requirements for class attendance and make-up assignments are consistent with university policies. [Click here to read the university attendance policies.](#)

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.