

LIT 3031: Studies in Poetry:
Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Contemporary Poetry

Section 16647
Tuesday Period 9-11 (4:05-7:05 pm)

Professor Ange Mlinko
Contact through course website on Canvas
(or amlinko@ufl.edu if time-sensitive)

Office hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 2:30-3:30 in Turlington (in the Creative Writing Suite), 4211E; or on Zoom by appointment

Required Texts:

After Ovid edited by Hofmann/Lasdun
The Last World by Christoph Ransmayr

PDFs of additional poems will be posted to Canvas every week. I recommend that you obtain a standard translation of Ovid for reference, or bookmark an online translation. This [website](#) is particularly fun, as it offers the Latin with a built-in dictionary. I also recommend a new translation forthcoming in October from Penguin, by Stephanie McCarter, who offers a feminist perspective on Ovid.

Also recommended: *Rhyme's Reason* by John Hollander, a small handbook on poetic form. You can also use this "Glossary of Poetic Terms" at the [Poetry Foundation](#).

All the books we touch upon are available through Library West. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is available online through your Gatorlink password. Remember that interlibrary loans (ILL) are a valuable resource and that our librarians are glad to help you.

Course Description:

*"There is nothing exempt from the peril of mutation;
the earth, heavens, and whole world is thereunto subject."
— Sir Walter Raleigh*

This is a seminar on Ovid's influence on contemporary English-language poetry. 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* has been a resource for European (and now, American) arts for two thousand years. Poetry, painting, sculpture, and opera would look vastly different without these personages and their stories. It is important to remember that Ovid did not invent these myths; they have far older origins in ancient Greek, and they did not come from one author or even one region or language. What Ovid did was preserve and interpret these myths—and we continue that work when we reinterpret the myths for ourselves. In some cases, across the ancient world, there are multiple versions of the same myths; sometimes they are even contradictory. Remember, when going to the source, the source here for this class is Ovid.

Metamorphoses confronts the extremities of human experience and emotion. Gods go after what they want with impunity; men and women are punished for overreaching; when people get what they wish for, there are usually unintended consequences. 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 intuits 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 itself is a mystery and a treasure.

That said, this class is not exclusively focused on the Latin poem, but on contemporary English language interpretations of it. Therefore we will be learning as much about [reading poems](#) as about the myths and what they

might mean. We will pay close attention to how poets use form to convey meanings, as well as linguistic registers and rhetorical devices. Many of these poems can be classified as dramatic monologues, in which the poet inhabits a persona in the myth.

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 come to class with print-outs of the poems annotated, to use as a prompt 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 call on silent participants.

Annotations must include:

- Formal aspects of the poem (is it free verse or in a form? Does it seem to be metered? Does it rhyme? Whose point of view is it told from, and who is speaking? Does the vocabulary strike you as unusual?)
- Meanings of words you had to look up in the OED, or other cultural and geographical references
- Rhetorical devices: double-entendres, metaphors, similes, personification, litotes or hyperbole
- Comparisons between Ovid's version and contemporary version—does the contemporary version depart significantly in any way?
- Author's dates, country of origin (basic biography)
- Outstanding questions or ambiguities

On the last day of class, you will hand in an essay (1500-2000 words) on any aspect of Ovid covered in this course, based on the poems we have read. (The critical essay is 25% of your grade.) You'll be asked to turn in a first draft in the middle of the semester.

Semester Schedule

Class	Topic	Reading
Aug 30	Introduction to course. Background on Ovid. How to read a poem.	
Sept 6	Daphne and Apollo Diana and Actaeon	<i>After Ovid</i> : Alice Fulton PDF: Mark Ford, Louise Glück, James Lasdun, Frances Leviston
Sept 13	Io Europa Pasiphae	<i>After Ovid</i> : Kenneth Koch, Simon Armitage PDF: Fiona Benson, Derek Walcott
Sept 20	Bacchus and Pentheus Jupiter and Semele	<i>After Ovid</i> : Ted Hughes PDF: Hughes, Ezra Pound
Sept 27	Marsyas and Apollo Minerva and Arachne Pyreneus and the Muses	<i>After Ovid</i> : Lawrence Joseph, Robin Robertson, Thom Gunn PDF: James Merrill, Ange Mlinko, Paisley Rekdal
Oct 4	Narcissus and Echo	PDF: Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Denise Riley, Don Paterson
Oct 11	No class — draft of term paper due at midnight	
Oct 18	Orpheus and Eurydice	Film : Orphée by Jean Cocteau <i>After Ovid</i> : Seamus Heaney, Peter Redgrove PDF: Rowan Ricardo Phillips
Oct 25	Phaeton Midas Icarus	<i>After Ovid</i> : Glyn Maxwell, Les Murray, Robin Robertson, Carol Ann Duffy PDF: Ange Mlinko, W.H. Auden

Class	Topic	Reading
Nov 1	Hades, Persephone and Demeter Tereus, Philomela and Procne	<i>After Ovid</i> : David Wheatley and Justin Qunn, Eavan Boland PDF: A.E. Stallings
Nov 8	Medea Myrrha Scylla Medusa	Film : Medea by Pier Paolo Pasolini <i>After Ovid</i> : Amy Clampitt, Michael Hofmann, Frederick Seidel PDF: Fiona Benson, Amy Clampitt
Nov 15	Apollo and Hyacinthus Venus and Adonis Pygmalion and Galatea Baucis and Philemon	<i>After Ovid</i> : J.D. McClatchy, Ted Hughes, Michael Longley, Derek Mahon PDF: Paisley Rekdal, Louise Glück
Nov 22	Ovid in literary history, painting and music; Ovid's exile	PDF: Averill Curdy, "Ovid in America," and Derek Mahon, "Ovid in Tomis"
Nov 29	<i>The Last World</i> part I (Ransmayr)	Chapters I-VI
Dec 6	<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)
Critical paper (first draft)	1500-2000 words	250
Critical paper (final draft)	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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because this is a seminar, your presence and participation are crucial for the success of the class. However, if you are feeling ill, you should skip class to avoid possibly infecting your classmates. A doctor's note is required for excused absences; more than two unexcused absences will result in you failing the course.

Please note that I will be monitoring absences on Canvas regardless of whether they are excused or not.

MAKE-UP POLICY

For any given absence, you must turn in your annotations at the next class meeting. No exceptions.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Your comportment in class matters. Your focus should be on the conversation at all times—therefore no electronic devices should be open. Keep your bathroom breaks to the appointed times. Do not bring food to class. Be patient and respectful in class discussions.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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

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.