

# Classics: Homer to Dante

DAVID WILSON-OKAMURA · ENGL 3600 · AUTUMN 2018 · EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Aug. 20	M	What is a classic?	
22	W	HOMER, <i>Odyssey</i> , books 1–3. Use glossary for names.	
24	F	<i>Od.</i> 4–6	
27	M	<i>Od.</i> 7–9	
29	W	<i>Od.</i> 10–12	
31	F	<i>Od.</i> 13–15	
<b>Sept. 3</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Labor Day</b>	
5	W	<i>Od.</i> 16–18;	
7	F	<i>Od.</i> 19–21	
10	M	<i>Od.</i> 22–24	
12	W		<i>Campus closed for Hurricane Florence</i>
14	F		<i>Campus closed for Hurricane Florence</i>
17	M		<i>Campus closed for Hurricane Florence</i>
19	W	VIRGIL, <i>Aeneid</i> , book 1. Use glossary for names.	
21	F	<i>Aen.</i> 2	
24	M	<i>Aen.</i> 3	<b>Synthesis 2 due</b>
26	W	<i>Aen.</i> 4	
28	F	<i>Aen.</i> 5	
Oct. 1	M	<i>Aen.</i> 6	<b>Synthesis 3 due</b>
3	W	<i>Aen.</i> 6 (cont.)	
5	F	<i>Aen.</i> 7	
<b>8</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Fall Break</b>	
10	W	<i>Aen.</i> 8	
12	F	<i>Aen.</i> 9, 10	
15	M	<i>Aen.</i> 11	<b>Synthesis 4 due</b>
17	W	<i>Aen.</i> 12	
19	F	<i>Aen.</i> 12 (cont.)	
22	M	DANTE, <i>Inferno</i> , cantos 1–4 (prologue and pre-hell). Read the notes for each canto as well.	
24	W	<i>Inf.</i> 5–9 (lust, gluttony, greed, wrath, the gate of Dis)	
26	F	<i>Inf.</i> 10–13 (heresy, violence against people and property, suicide)	
29	M	<i>Inf.</i> 14–17 (violence against God)	<b>Synthesis 5 due</b>
31	W	<i>Inf.</i> 18–22 (seduction, flattery, simony, sorcery, barratry)	
Nov. 2	F	<i>Inf.</i> 23–27 (hypocrisy, thieves, fraudulent counselors)	
5	M	<i>Inf.</i> 28–31 (sowers of discord, alchemists, forgers, liars)	
7	W	<i>Inf.</i> 32–34 (traitors)	
9	F	<i>Purgatorio</i> 1–3 (shores of Mt. Purgatory)	
12	M	<i>Purg.</i> 9–13 (terrace of pride)	<b>Synthesis 6 due</b>
14	W	<i>Purg.</i> 17–21 (organization of purgatory; Virgil and Statius)	
16	F	<i>Purg.</i> 22, 25–27 (gluttony; terrace of the lustful; Virgil's leave-taking).	
19	M	<i>Purg.</i> 28–31 (arrival of Beatrice)	
<b>21, 23</b>	<b>WF</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
26	M	<i>Paradiso</i> 1	
28	W	<i>Par.</i> 21–22 (Saturn)	
30	F	<i>Par.</i> 31–33 (beatific vision)	
Dec. 3	M	What is a classic? <b>Final deadline for all work.</b>	<b>Synthesis 7 due</b>
10	M	Exam-period activity (11:00–1:30)	

## Aims

1. To quicken your powers of observation, inquiry, and argument by means of study, conversation, and continual practice.
2. To make the acquaintance of three authors who will give you images to think with for the rest of your life.

**Synthesis 1 due**

**Synthesis 2 due**

**Synthesis 3 due**

**Synthesis 4 due**

**Synthesis 5 due**

**Synthesis 6 due**

**Synthesis 7 due**

## REQUIREMENTS

**Biweekly Synthesis (75%).** Every other Monday (plus Sept. 5, which is the Wednesday after Labor Day), you will submit a written synthesis of the previous two weeks' discussion.

What does a good synthesis look like? First, it is not a response or reaction paper. If you find yourself writing a sentence that begins "I believe" or "I feel," back up and delete. Second, it's not a plot summary; you don't need a college-level class to write a plot summary. If you find yourself retelling the story, back up and delete. What is it, then, if it's not a response or plot summary? An A-level synthesis will do two things:

1. Summarize the big ideas from the previous two weeks of discussion.  
The maximum length is only 1,200 words, so choose your words and examples carefully. Combine topics wherever possible; that's why it's called a synthesis. You don't need to record who said what.
2. Evaluate the previous two weeks of discussion.  
Skip the generalities ("It was a good discussion"). Instead, get in the habit of asking yourself, "What did we leave out?" With rich books like these, omissions are inevitable. Don't stop, though, with saying "We didn't talk about *x*." That's too easy. Make an observation about *x* and push the conversation forward.

As a general rule, one part evaluation to three parts summary is a good balance.

- Length: 900–1,200 words. Write the total word count on p. 1.
- Staple. Get in the habit of numbering pages in all your documents.
- Use spell-check. If you need to review some punctuation or grammar, I recommend *Grammar in Plain English* by Harriet Diamond and Phyllis Dutwin.
- Double-space. Take pity on my eyes and use 12 point Times Roman.

Essays must be typed and are due in printed, hard-copy form at the beginning of the class period. Essays delivered after that will receive a lower grade according to the following schedule: an A-essay that is delivered up to 24 hours late will receive a B+, an A- essay that is delivered between 24 and 48 hours late will receive a B, and so on.

Essays will be graded according to the following characteristics:

<b>Characteristics of an F Paper</b>	<b>Characteristics of a D Paper</b>	<b>Characteristics of a C Paper</b>	<b>Characteristics of a B Paper</b>	<b>Characteristics of an A Paper</b>
Summarizes plot rather than class discussion; you could have written most of this paper without actually taking the class.	Material from class discussion is scanty or disorganized. The cure is usually better notetaking during class.	Several points from the previous two weeks of class discussion are summarized accurately.	Material from class discussion is reorganized to make some larger points (=synthesis). Argument has room to accommodate the full two weeks.	Includes all the content of a B paper, but ventures something more: e.g., examines an episode or perspective we have not discussed.
No word count or too short.	No word count or too short.	Word count $\geq$ assigned length.	Word count $\geq$ assigned length.	Word count $\geq$ assigned length.
If your college admissions essay had been written like this, you would not be at ECU.	Numerous errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation distract from content. Reads like a first draft.	Written in complete sentences. Topic sentence begins each paragraph. Transitions sometimes abrupt.	First paragraph is an introduction to the paper as a whole. Paragraphs are sequenced to form an argument.	The writing is finely crafted, elegant as well as clean.

**Quizzes (25%).** On most days there will be a reading quiz. Each quiz is worth 1% and there will be 27 quizzes. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes. However, because there are two extra quizzes (#26 and #27), you can miss two quizzes without harming your grade. Think of the extra points as free passes: you can use them to go to the beach, or you can use them when you're sick. Because this system is based on numbers, you don't need to explain why you missed class; the math will take care of it automatically. Of course, you'll still be responsible for the material discussed in class. But once you've used the two free passes, they're gone. My advice is to save them for when you're sick or need to care for a relative.

**Midterm and Final Exams.** There will be no midterm or final exams in this course. However, all work for this course must be completed on or before the last day of class.

Please turn off your **cell phone ringer** before class begins. **Smart phones, laptops, and tablets** might be helpful in some courses, but not this one: please put them out of sight before class. If you need to monitor your phone during class, because a relative is ill or a spouse is pregnant, please tell me about it privately before class begins.

#### EXTENSIONS

Everyone gets a 48-hour extension on two analyses over the course of the semester. You choose which ones. You don't need to ask me ahead of time: instead, when you hand in your paper at the next class, just staple a separate page on top with your name, the date, and this statement: "I'm taking my first (or second) extension on this paper." In the interest of fairness, no one will be granted a third extension.

#### PLAGIARISM

If you plagiarize another person's words or ideas, expect an F for the course. All plagiarism will be reported to the university. If you have questions about plagiarism, ask them before the assignment is due. If versions become an issue, the version that was submitted for a grade will be considered final.

#### GRADING SCALE

A = 94–100, A- = 90–93, B+ = 87–89, B = 84–86, B- = 80–83, C+ = 77–79, C = 74–76, C- = 70–73, D+ = 67–69, D = 64–66, D- = 60–63, F = 0–59. Decimals  $\geq .5$  are rounded up.

#### OFFICE HOURS, PHONE, EMAIL

Office: Bate 2137. Office phone: 252-328-6714

Office hours: MF 2:00–4:00, W 2:00–3:00. If you need to contact me on days with no office hours, call me at home. Google knows my number. Please: no calls after 9 p.m.

Email: david@virgil.org. I use email every day, but instead of exchanging messages, let's have a conversation during office hours.

#### ACCOMMODATIONS

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (Voice/TTY 252-737-1016).

#### EMERGENCIES, UNIV. CLOSURES, CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION

If classes are postponed for any reason, I will give instructions by email. If email is not available, follow the schedule of readings in the syllabus until email service is restored.

#### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

If you leave class after taking a reading quiz, the quiz will come back to you ungraded. If you need to miss a class meeting, negotiate with a classmate to borrow notes on what we discussed: you'll need these to write your synthesis papers. Participation in class discussion is encouraged but not required: I will invite you to comment, but won't insist.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Dante. *Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso*.

Homer. *The Odyssey*.

Virgil. *The Aeneid*.

ISBNs are omitted because, while I recommend the translations by Allen Mandelbaum available from the bookstore, I don't insist that you purchase the editions I ordered. For Dante, you'll need something with notes; Mandelbaum's notes are good, because there aren't so many that they overwhelm the text. But for Homer and Virgil, there's a wide range of excellent choices; I also like Fitzgerald's *Aeneid* and the prose translation of Homer's *Odyssey* by T. E. Lawrence (a.k.a., Lawrence of Arabia).

## HUMANITIES COMPETENCY

The following language is uniform for all Humanities Competency (HUC) courses:

Courses in the Humanities and in interdisciplinary areas linked to subjects in the humanities challenge students to critically examine their beliefs and the beliefs of others about what can broadly be called "human existence" or referred to as "what it is to exist as a human being." Humanities courses address a range of issues that ancient texts show have captured people's attention for over 3000 years. These problems include matters of value, and the courses that address them require students to critically assess diverse understandings of life's aesthetic, ethical and moral dimensions. Humanities courses require students to learn one or more methods of critical analysis and to understand the value of knowledge both for its own sake and for its application. The knowledge gained by taking courses in the Humanities contributes to each student's understanding of how to choose a life worth living.

The following program learning outcomes define the Humanities Competency. Students who have completed the General Education Humanities requirement can:

1. Distinguish artistic, literary, philosophical, or religious creations from other types of work and describe how they address enduring human concerns and the human condition.
2. Apply discipline-specific criteria and evaluate the significance of specific literary, artistic, philosophical or religious works to enduring human concerns and the human condition.
3. Apply discipline-specific knowledge in the humanities to contrast their understanding with that of others of the significance of specific artistic, literary, philosophical or religious works to enduring human concerns and the human condition.

These outcomes are implemented in ENGL 3600 as follows. Students who have successfully completed this course are able to:

1. Distinguish epic poems such as Homer's *Odyssey* from philosophic treatments of the same questions. E.g., what is the purpose of life? how is happiness achieved? (HUC1)
2. Apply the methods of literary analysis to interpret fictional presentations of enduring problems. E.g., in the *Aeneid*, how does a republic dwindle into a dictatorship? (HUC2)
3. Apply the methods of literary history to show how the use of epic conventions such as invocation varies in response to different social needs and cultural norms. (HUC3)