

Classics: Homer to Dante

DAVID WILSON-OKAMURA · ENGL 3600 · AUTUMN 2017 · EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

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

Essays will be graded according to the following characteristics:

Characteristics of an F Paper	Characteristics of a D Paper	Characteristics of a C Paper	Characteristics of a B Paper	Characteristics of an A Paper
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.	Main points from 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.	Synthesis + evaluation. Poses fresh questions, offers new hypotheses. Includes, and then ranges beyond, what was said in class.
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.	Individual sentences are clear, but paragraphs start abruptly; transition sentences are the fix.	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 them 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, Dec. 4.

Please don't read, send, or monitor **text messages** in class. Please do turn off your **cell phone ringer** before class begins. **Laptops and tablets** might be helpful in some courses, but not this one; please keep them shut during class.

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: MWF 2:00–3:50. If you need to contact me on days when I don't have office hours, you can 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

The requirements of this course are impossible to fulfill if you don't attend class. But I don't take roll or require that students participate in class discussion. I might invite you to comment, but I won't insist.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Dante. *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.

Homer. *The Odyssey*.
Virgil. *The Aeneid*.

I recommend the translations by Allen Mandelbaum, which I have ordered from the bookstore, but I'm not picky. 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).