English 313—The Bible as Literature: Genesis, Job, and Apocalypse

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If only my words could be written!
If only be engraved in a record!
With a stylus of iron or lead,
Let them be hewn in rock as a witness!
—Job 19:23-24

The course teaches how to read the Bible as literature through three focal points—the books of Genesis, Job, and Revelation—and examines their reach into literary genres ranging from metaphysical and Romantic poetry to postmodern adaptations of the apocalypse. Literary counterparts to the Bible range from Mesopotamian creation myth (*Enuma Elish*) and epic poem (*Gilgamesh*), Milton's *Paradise Lost*, poetry by John Donne, William Blake, George Gordon Byron, and Gerard Manley Hopkins to works by Tolkien (*The Silmarillion*) and Cormac McCarthy (*The Road*). The course thematically pairs pertinent verbal and visual texts. Films include *Ex Machina*, *The Seventh Seal*, and *Children of Men*.

Texts

1. ***The New Oxford Annotated Bible***, 4th ed., ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)
2. C.S. Lewis, ***Perelandra*** (New York: Scribner, 2003) (optional reading)
3. J.R.R. Tolkien, ***The Silmarillion***, 2nd ed., ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999)
4. Cormac McCarthy, ***The Road*** (New York: Vintage, 2006)

Please purchase all required texts (above) for the spring term. Excerpts of *Paradise Lost* and other poems on the syllabus (by Donne, Blake, Byron, and Hopkins) will be available electronically on Schoology. **You are **required** to come to class *having closely read the text(s) assigned for that day* and *with hard copies of all readings*. **Check the Schoology site for updated homework assignments at 5pm the evening before class**. I will post readings for Monday by 5pm on the preceding Friday.

Evaluation

Your final course grade will integrate your able fulfillment of the following requirements—

1. **Completion of reading assignments**,
2. **Prompt attendance** of class,
3. **Thoughtful, involved, and respectful class participation**,
4. **Timely submission** of written work and projects,
5. ***Congeniality! How you regard your peers and your literary surround with the strength of your imagination, intuition, and nature is as significant as the compassion and discernment with which you approach literature**, and
6. **Enactment of CA's mission statement** in the context of this course.

I will heed all genres of your self-expression in my final assessment. The required components above will not be designated numeric values, but you will receive grades on your written submissions, which will alert you to your standing in the course. **Your final grade will predominantly take into account the evolution of your (verbal & written) analytic skills over the arc of the term**.

Belatedness

As a general rule, I will dock late work a third of a letter grade for every day that it is late. For example, if you hand a B+ paper in a day late, its grade will drop to a B. *Formal papers and projects are requirements of the course, and you must complete them in order for you to receive credit for this course*. In special circumstances, I am flexible about the due dates of longer assignments (i.e. essays) so long as you make your request to me *early* and *in person*. ***Extensions will NOT be granted the day before an assignment is due.***

Faux Pas

Computers & phones will not be permitted in the course. The only exception to laptop use will be for purposes of delivering in-class writing assignments. On these rare occasions, I will explicitly instruct you to use them.

Plagiarism

…is simply not allowed as it dishonors not only the efforts of your cohort and our collective aims to learn together, but also because it negates your individuality. There is a marked (not subtle) difference between drawing from someone else's consciousness (thoughts, ideas, persuasions) in order to expand your own and the act of appropriating another imagination and calling it your own. The former is crucial for the act of learning; the latter is theft. ***Reach out to me fearlessly if you are having trouble with an assignment, and we will find a happier alternative.*** For the best possible experience at CA, observe common trust in all your interactions with the CA community.

I expect you to apprise yourself with the Chicago Manual of Style method of citation and formatting. Despair not! I will methodically teach you how to cite your sources before the submission of your formal essays.

Contact

E-mail (sabrina_sadique@concordacademy.org) is the best way to set up a meeting. Send me a message *two days in advance of your preferred time of appointment*. We will typically meet at my office (Room 341a, English Department, South School or the Stu-Fac) during **A, B, or F** block unless I inform you of an alternate time or venue.

SCHEDULE

Note that the numbers below (1, 2, and so on) per week correspond to the number of times we will meet as a class. Generally, we will convene thrice a week (with few exceptions to integrate holidays)—twice for roughly 75 minutes and once for approximately 40 minutes.

I will alert you to major assignments at least two weeks in advance. Occasionally, I will ask you to respond to a prompt on given texts and engage with your peers' responses on discussion threads in Schoology.

Please check the Schoology page for the course by 5pm on the day before class to apprise yourself of reading assignments.

Week 1—January 7-10

1. Intro to **Genesis**
2. Genesis 1-3, *Enuma Elish* (excerpts)

Week 2—January 13-17—**Genesis & Tolkien**

1. Genesis 1-3, *Gilgamesh* (excerpts)
2. Genesis 1-3, *Understanding Genesis* (Introduction & "Creation")
3. **J.R.R. Tolkien**, "Ainulindalë: The Music of the Ainur" in ***The Silmarillion*** (Pages 3-12)

Week 3—January 20-24—**John Milton**, ***Paradise Lost***, "Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit/ Of that Forbidden Tree"

1. ***Paradise Lost***—Book 1 (excerpt); Book 4 (gender hierarchy; Eve's reflection)
2. *Paradise Lost*—Book 8 (excerpts; emphasis—lines 8.494-98/Genesis 2:23-24)

Week 4—January 27-31

1. *Paradise Lost*— Book 9 (temptation & fall)
2. *Paradise Lost*—Book 9
3. *Paradise Lost*—Book 10 (Punishment), Book 2 (Sin); **Mark Twain**, ***The Adam + Eve Diaries***

Week 5—February 3-7

1. Film—***Ex Machina***, dir. Alex Garland (2015)
2. *Ex Machina*
3. *Ex Machina* | **Emily Dickinson**, "A Weight with Needles on the pounds—"

Week 6—February 10-14—**Book of Job**

1. Intro to **Job**; **William Blake**'s *Illustrations of the Book of Job*
2. **Job** 1-14
3. Job 15-30

Week 7—February 18-21—**Job & Blake**

1. Job 31-42
2. William Blake, **"The Tyger"**

Week 8—February 24-28—**Gospel of Matthew**

1. William Blake, "The Tyger"
2. **Gospel of Matthew** 1-7
3. Matthew 8-15

Week 9—March 2-6—**Gospel of Matthew**

1. Matthew 16-23
2. Matthew 24-28; **John Milton**, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" & **Emily Dickinson**, "Proud of my broken heart")

SPRING BREAK | March 6 (noon)—March 22

Week 10—March 23-27—**Hopkins, Byron, and Apocalypse**

1. **Gerard Manley Hopkins**, "**That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection**"
2. **George Gordon Byron**, "**Darkness**"
3. George Gordon Byron, "Darkness"

Week 11—March 30-April 3—**Revelation & Donne**

1. **Revelation** 1-10
2. Revelation 11-22
3. **John Donne**, **Holy Sonnet XVIII** (Revelation 17:9)

Week 12—April 6-10—***The Seventh Seal***

1. Film—***The Seventh Seal***, dir. Ingmar Bergman (1958)
2. *The Seventh Seal*
3. *The Seventh Seal*

Week 13—April 13-17—**Cormac McCarthy, *The Road***

1. ***The Road***, 3-33
2. *The Road*, 3-33
3. *The Road*, 33-67

Week 14—April 21-24

1. *The Road*, 67-97
2. *The Road*, 97-119

Week 15—April 27-May 1

1. *The Road*, 119-150
2. *The Road*, 150-180
3. *The Road*, 180-210

Week 16—May 4-8

1. *The Road*, 211-240
2. *The Road*, 240-287
3. Complete *The Road*

Week 17—May 11-15—***Children of Men***

1. Film—***Children of Men***, dir. Alfonso Cuarón (2006)
2. *Children of Men*
3. *Children of Men*

Week 18—May 18-21

1. Synthesis
2. Synthesis

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."—Revelation 22:13

William Blake, "Job and his Daughters"
From *Illustrations to The Book of Job* (1825, reprinted 1874)

"This is an illustration to chapter 42, verses 13-15 of the Book of Job. The main title comes from verse 15. The names of Job's daughters were Jemima, Kezia and Kerenhappuch. They are all seen against a background which depicts some of the trials Job has passed through. On the left is the destruction of his servants by the Chaldeans, described in Job, chapter 1, verse 17. On the right is the destruction of Job's ploughmen, described in chapter 1, verses 14-15. Behind Job's head God appears in the whirlwind. Blake treated this subject in his Job series…" –*Tate Britain*