CLASSES 4370/WCL 6370: COMPARATIVE EPIC

This course examines epic poetry from ancient Greece and Rome with a comparative approach that draws on other cultures both more ancient and more modern. Readings include the Homeric Iliad and Odyssey, Virgil’s Aeneid, and Ovid’s Metamorphoses together with the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh.

Professor: Casey Dué Hackney (e-mail: Casey.Due@mail.uh.edu). Office hours: Fridays 9-11am and by appointment, Agnes Arnold Hall room 454. MCL Dept. phone number: (713) 743-8350.

Texts: These are all available at the UH bookstore, but because of the high number of different works we read in this class, I recommend that you try to get some used/on-line or from the library. Except for Gilgamesh and Beye’s Ancient Epic Poetry, it is completely fine to substitute another translation/edition for the ones listed here.


*Be sure to get this edition of the Epic of Gilgamesh*

Components of Course Grade: 2 exams, 1 take home essay (33% each)
8/23 Introduction and overview
Recommended follow up reading (for those interested in learning more): “Proto-Indo-
Europeans” (Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proto-Indo-Europeans); C. Watkins,

8/25 The Iliad and Oral Poetry
Assignment: Iliad 1; begin reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “Oral Poetry”
Recommended follow up reading (for those interested in learning more and graduate
students): A. B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; 2nd edition, 2000) — this is a very readable and
incredibly illuminating book! See also http://chs.harvard.edu/mpc for the Milman Parry
Collection of Oral Literature.

8/30 The Iliad and Oral Poetry (cont.)
Assignment: Complete reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “Oral Poetry”

9/1 Iliad
Assignment: Iliad 3, 6, 9; Begin reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “The Iliad.”

9/1 Iliad
Assignment: Iliad 10, 16, 18

9/3 Iliad
Assignment: Iliad 19, 22, 24; complete reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “The Iliad”

9/6 LABOR DAY

9/8 NO CLASS MEETING

9/13 Gilgamesh
Assignment: The Standard Version of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, tablets I-VI (= George
1999 pp. 1-53); Begin reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “Gilgamesh”

9/15 Gilgamesh
Assignment: The Standard Version of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, tablets VII-XII (= George
1999 pp. 54-100); Complete reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “Gilgamesh”

9/20 Gilgamesh
Assignment: The Sumerian Poems of Gilgamesh, Bilgames and the Bull of Heaven, Bilgames and the
Netherworld, The Death of Bilgames (= George 1999 pp. 166-208)

9/22 Exam 1 (covers Gilgamesh and Iliad)

9/27 Odyssey
Assignment: Odyssey 1-6; begin reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “The Odyssey”

9/29 Odyssey
Assignment: Odyssey 7-12
10/4 Odyssey
Assignment: Odyssey 13-18

10/6 Odyssey
Assignment: Odyssey 19-24; complete reading Ancient Epic Poetry: “The Odyssey”

10/11 Medea

10/13 Jason and the Golden Fleece
Assignment: Jason and the Golden Fleece 1-2; Ancient Epic Poetry: “The Argonautica”

10/18 Jason and the Golden Fleece
Assignment: Jason and the Golden Fleece 3-4

10/20 Catullus 64

10/25 Introduction to the Aeneid
Assignment: Aeneid 1 and 2

10/27 Aeneid
Assignment: Aeneid 3-5

11/1 Aeneid
Assignment: Aeneid 6; Ancient Epic Poetry: “The Aeneid”

11/3 Aeneid; introduction to Jason and the Golden Fleece
Assignment: selections (TBA) from Aeneid 7-12

11/8 Exam 2

11/10 Metamorphoses 1-5

11/15 Metamorphoses 6-10

11/17 Metamorphoses 11-15

11/22 NO CLASS - please use the time to read Daphnis and Chloe in its entirety

11/24 - 11/28 THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/29 Daphnis and Chloe

12/1 Daphnis and Chloe

Take home essay due