

ENGL 2325: Great Works of Literature 2



Course Description

Great Works of Literature II is a reading course in the literary heritage of western civilization. This course includes readings from the early modern era to the present.

Executive Summary

ENGL 2325 is designed to introduce students to consequential texts of western literature from the early modern period through the 20th century. Our students will explore many genres, including drama (both tragedy and comedy in the online course; tragedy in the residential course), epic poetry, lyric poetry, a novel, and short fiction. Reflecting that all people bear the image of God, this class includes a diverse author list: male, female, black, white, English, American, and Russian. This class explores the question, “What does it mean to be ‘great’?” We call these texts great, but they also have a lot to say about what true greatness entails. Does greatness come from achieving power at any cost, as in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*? Does greatness mean achieving social position and influence in one’s community, as in Jane Austen’s *Emma*? Or is sacrifice the essence of true greatness, as in Leo Tolstoy’s “Master and Man”? This class will focus on the **human dignity** of image-bearers as seen in these texts (a core outcome); examine the **interdependence** between people and texts and between texts and other media (also a core outcome); and increase students’ **aesthetic literacy** by examining different genres and experiencing literature in different ways (another core outcome). In all the course modules, connections are made between these literary texts and Scripture, reinforcing for students the truth that all knowledge ultimately comes from God.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze works of literature through practice of reading comprehension, detection of themes, motifs, symbols, and figurative expressions, awareness of varying interpretations, and organized presentation of supporting evidence for a particular interpretation of a text;
2. Identify works of literature within the genres of drama, epic poetry, lyric poetry, short fiction, and the novel;
3. Trace cultural, literary, and thematic connections among the readings for this course;
4. Construct effective analytical arguments about literature through coherent, well-organized, grammatically correct essays in standard English;
5. Examine the foundations of Western Civilization through an exploration of its greatest literature;
6. Engage these key works intellectually, spiritually, and morally, through discussion and written analysis.

Course Distinctives

Valuing Students' Authentic Voices (Human Dignity):

Many students turn to using AI on their assignments not out of laziness but because of a fear that their own writing voices aren't "academic" enough. To push back against that fear, the online version of this course explicitly affirms the value of each student's authentic voice and encourages scholars to bring their own unique viewpoints into the discussion board assignments. As we say in the introduction to discussion assignments: slang is okay; hot takes are encouraged; and questions or expressions of confusion are always welcome. We want students to feel at ease while exploring these texts so that they can truly engage with the material. Residential sections will continue to promote courage and charity in class discussions.

Active Engagement with the Sounds of Poetry (Aesthetic Literacy, Human Dignity)

In the online course, every module provides students with audio or video excerpts from that week's reading, in some cases read by the authors themselves. Students develop an ear for poetry. In the final week, students choose a poem from the assigned readings and create a video recording of themselves reading the poem aloud, accompanied by written commentary. The posts are visible to others, normalizing the audible reading of poetry, cultivating attention to beauty within sound, and allowing students to be courageous and charitable in engaging with others' readings, affirming the dignity of all students.

Missionally-Aligned Essay Prompts (Human Dignity, Interdependence)

This course guides students to craft essays that engage with the great texts of this course in relation to the mission and core outcomes of our liberal arts core curriculum. The Signature Assignment in all sections of ENGL 2325 is a literary analysis essay that asks students to consider key texts in relation to human dignity (understood as related to the creation of humans in the image of God and presented with the gifts of reason, wonder, and moral agency). In the online course, this is accomplished through an essay examining moral agency in *Paradise Lost* and *King Lear*.

The online class culminates in the Exploring Adaptation Research Essay, a Signature Assignment that requires students to view a film adaptation of one of the culturally significant, perennially meaningful literary works studied in this course, and then evaluate that adaptation. Comparing the adaptation to the original text and researching the history of the adaptation will increase students' aesthetic literacy and critical thinking skills. This assignment also reflects interdependence, both between texts and visual mediums and between the artistic endeavors of different cultures (as in *Throne of Blood*, Akira Kurosawa's medieval Japanese film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*). In residential sections of ENGL 2325, the essay counterpart to this online assignment will vary based on instructor preference, but these essays will always support critical thinking, reading, and writing skills in alignment with our core curriculum mission, its 3 dimensions of Knowing and Making Known God, His Creation, and Humans as God's Image-Bearers, and its core outcomes.