

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Humanities and the Arts
Department of English and Comparative Literature
English 125: European Literature (Homer through Dante), Section 02, Fall 2020

COURSE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor(s):	Dr. Erik L. Johnson
Office Location:	Zoom; online appointment booking at https://erikjohnson-sjsu-humenglish.youcanbook.me
Telephone:	(408) 924-5110
Email:	erik.johnson@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Tuesday/Thursday 2–3 pm and by appointment (usually free after class)
Class Days/Time:	Monday/Wednesday 3 pm–4:15 pm
Classroom:	Online; access Zoom sessions through Canvas at https://sjsu.instructure.com/
Prerequisites:	Upper-division standing

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The catalog description reads, “Classical and medieval literature in translation: Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Virgil, and Dante.” To some of you, these may sound like names recalling a distant and dusty past, one dominated by dead male writers mostly hailing from the continent we now call Europe. But we will be studying the texts “in translation,” and that means more than simply that we’ll be reading them in English. We will be looking for the underlying patterns (of story, of form, and of thought) that connect these texts. Our ultimate goal is to unlock new historical perspectives that will allow us to see contemporary literatures, and our present more broadly, in a richer comparative light.

COURSE FORMAT

Technology Intensive, Hybrid, and Online Courses

This course will be conducted synchronously online (synchronously means, with regular live video meetings). The key software to be familiar with is Canvas (online platform for assignments, exams, text-based discussion forums, and up-to-date syllabus information) and Zoom (for video course sessions and office hour meetings). You will also need reliable Internet access and a computer with a webcam.

You can join Zoom sessions through links in Canvas, but you will need the Zoom software installed. For instructions on installing and using Zoom, see the eCampus Zoom pages at <https://www.sjsu.edu/teachanywhere/student-resources/zoom-for-students.php>

Faculty Communication and MYSJSU Messaging

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, and assignment instructions can be found on the Canvas Learning Management System course login website at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. **You are responsible for checking your SJSU email regularly and for ensuring that you receive announcements posted to Canvas.**

For info on changing your notification preferences and viewing comments on Canvas, see the eCampus tutorial pages at https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources/index.html

Emailing erik.johnson@sjsu.edu is the best way to reach me. I usually respond to student emails within 24 hours, but if you email me after 9 pm or on the weekend, I may not see your email until the next business day. You are always welcome in my office hours, which are student-centered time. You can book appointments at <https://erikjohnson-sjsu-humenglish.youcanbook.me> up to minutes before if a slot is open, or you can email me to set up meetings at other times. If you have a quick question, I am also usually available right after class.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures and modes;
- 2) Analyze major works, genres, and periods of a world literary tradition;
- 3) Discuss literature in translation with sensitivity to its original linguistic, historical, and cultural contexts;
- 4) Compare world literature-based and national literature-based critical approaches;
- 5) Integrate textual evidence and close reading into creative and critical projects;
- 6) Articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.

REQUIRED TEXTS, READINGS, AND EQUIPMENT

Textbooks

1. Norton Anthology of World Literature, 4th edition, package 1 (vols. A–C), 978-0-393-26590-3
2. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, trans. Douglass Parker. Signet Classics. 978-0451531247
3. Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, trans. Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics. 978-0140443332.
4. Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, ISBN 978-0446574754 (recommended)

A Note about Textbooks

We will often refer to specific passages by page number, and, since none of the texts we are studying this semester were originally written in English, we will also at times discuss points of translation or compare different translations. For these reasons, it's important to have access to works in the editions and translations listed. Books are available for purchase or rental from the Spartan Bookstore. If you are purchasing from third-party vendors, double-check the ISBN to make sure you are getting the assigned edition!

Most of the works we will study this semester are grounded in Greek and Roman mythology. In case you are not already familiar with these myths and with the names of Greek gods and heroes, I've recommended Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* as a handy reference to the subject. I will occasionally mention relevant pages from it as optional reading to help contextualize the primary texts. Additional short readings will be posted to Canvas.

Other technology requirements / equipment / material

You will need stable Internet access and a computer that has a webcam and a microphone to participate in Zoom discussions and to make required video presentations. Headphones are recommended — they can help you concentrate and filter out background noise.

You can borrow laptops, tablets, headphones, and other equipment from Student Computing Services for free on a first-come, first-served basis. For details and to make a checkout appointment, see the IT Equipment Loaning webpage at <https://www.sjsu.edu/it/services/academic-tech/equipment-loaning/index.php>

Library Liaison

Peggy Cabrera, peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This is a reading-intensive course. The key to success is to keep up with the reading load and to prioritize deep, direct engagement with the assigned texts. Assignments fall into five categories:

- 1) **Weekly discussion posts and responses:** Much of the writing will take place in Canvas discussion groups whose members read and comment on each other's work. During the semester, each of you will write and post **10** short (300- to 400-word) reading response papers that serve as discussion starters. You will also reply at least **10 times** to colleagues' papers with substantive (paragraph-long) comments or questions. We will form groups and a rotation during the first few weeks, but, basically, most weeks, you will write a response paper before one class, and respond to someone else's before the other class.

Response papers will always be due 11:59 pm on the night before class, and comments or questions will always be due by 1 pm on the day of class.

- 2) **Commonplace Book and Commonplace Book Remix:** To encourage intimate and creative engagement with the reading, each of you will keep a Commonplace Book, a collection of quotations from our readings organized into topical headings, in either digital or handwritten form. I will share some background on commonplace book formats and templates, but you will create your own headings and will likely want to change them throughout the semester. I will check on the books periodically.

At the end of the semester, you will use passages that you've collected as the basis of a critical or creative project, a **Commonplace Book Remix** that reflects on a theme from your commonplace book in one of three forms: (a) a short 800 to 1,000-word personal essay; (b) an erasure or blackout poem; or (c) a mixed media Adobe Spark page. (The assignment will include details on each option.)

- 3) **Essay Exams:** We will have two essay exams. The midterm exam will focus on Greek literature. The final exam will ask you to draw comparisons between Greek, Roman, and Judeo-Christian texts.
- 4) **Group performances:** Each of you will participate in two live group performance activities throughout the semester. These involve advance prep outside of class time, coordination, and role-playing during class time by group members. For the first performance, groups will either be participating as part of the *Antigone* trial team or staging a scene from *Lysistrata*; for the second performance, groups will either be participating in a literary trial of the Biblical Book of Job or of the *Song of Roland*. Students not performing on a given day will still serve a vital role as members of the jury.
- 5) **Participation and classwork:** Active participation in class discussion and in short additional activities posted on Canvas or completed using other tools. Discussion groups will be used for brainstorming and to organize participation—as long as your group is participating, you'll all receive a passing participation grade, but in groups where different members speak each class, everyone will do better.

University Credit Hour Requirements and Four-Unit Course Weight

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course-related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. In other words, **since this is a 4-unit course, you should expect to spend at least 12 hours per week attending class,**

reading, studying, writing, or otherwise preparing. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Specified work for the one-unit enhancement includes a high reading load, two **Group Performance Activities** (totaling 150 points or 15% of the grade) and the **Commonplace Book Remix** (125 points, 12.5% of grade). The two performance activities require significant group coordination and preparation outside of class in addition to regular reading. The Commonplace Book Remix supplements critical preparation for the synthetic final exam with a creative, portfolio-based assignment, preparation for which is spread throughout the semester.

GRADING INFORMATION

Grades will be numerical. The table below shows point to letter-grade correspondences and includes my general standards for assessing written work. “Plus” or “minus” grades meet the standards for a mark to a greater or lesser degree. Assignments will be posted with rubrics that include additional, assignment-specific criteria.

Grade	Points	Percentage	Criteria
A plus	970 to 1000	97 to 100%	
A	930 to 969	93 to 96.9%	Written work marked “A” poses an original, provocative argument that is credibly supported by close reading of texts, makes a compelling case for its significance, has a clear logical organization, and uses language and style in a way that communicates not just the bare meaning but creates a sense of authorial voice.
A minus	900 to 929	90 to 92.9%	
B plus	870 to 899	86 to 89.9%	
B	830 to 869	83 to 86.9%	Work marked “B” poses a valid argument that is credibly supported, makes a plausible case for its significance, has a clear logical organization, and uses language and style to communicate the student’s ideas effectively and without ambiguity.
B minus	800 to 829	80 to 82.9%	
C plus	760 to 799	76 to 79.9%	
C	730 to 759	73 to 75.9%	Work marked “C” meets the requirements of the assignment but shows significant weakness in one fundamental area—the argument may be unclear or insufficiently supported, its significance may not be clearly or persuasively stated, the structure may be illogical, or the language and style may occasionally obstruct meaning.
C minus	700 to 729	70 to 72.9%	
D plus	660 to 699	66 to 69.9%	
D	630 to 659	63 to 65.9%	Work marked “D” was clearly written by the student to address the assignment but shows significant weakness in more than one of the fundamental areas listed above, or uses language and style in a way that frequently obstructs meaning.
D minus	600 to 629	60 to 62.9%	

Grade	Points	Percentage	Criteria
F	599 or below	59.9% or below	

Grading Breakdown**

Assignment	Point Weight (/1000)	CLOs
Weekly discussion posts and responses *	200	1, 2, 3
Commonplace Book	75	2, 4, 5
Commonplace Book Remix *	125	3, 5, 6
Presentation 1 (group prep and role play) *	75	3, 5, 6
Presentation 2 (group prep and role play) *	75	3, 5, 6
Midterm Exam *	150	2, 3, 4
Final Exam *	200	2, 3, 4
Live participation & classwork (including group activities)	125	1, 2, 3

* Major assignment. Regardless of overall numerical average, these assignments must be submitted in order to receive credit for the course.

** Although the course is graded on a 1,000-point scale, the assignments add up to 1,025 points. This is a buffer for students who miss a small number of discussion posts, classwork, or other day-to-day assignments because of illness or other life events. At the end of the semester once all the grades have been entered, students who have completed all the work will see a slight boost in their Canvas averages.

Late and Missed Work

The weekly discussion responses must be posted on time since we will refer back to them in class. If you cannot meet a deadline for any other assignment, email me requesting an extension as early as possible, but no later than two days before the assignment is due, so that I have time to review and respond to the request. Other out-of-class assignments turned in one day or more after a listed deadline without an extension agreed to in writing will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each calendar day (not business day) late. For example, a mark of 85% (B) for a paper turned in one day late would drop to 82% (B-), two days late to 79% (C+), and so on.

Discussion posts and responses, participation, and in-class assignments cannot be made up except in extraordinary circumstances. However, extra points are built into the grading for the course so that missing a small amount of work in these categories will not affect your average.

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

Regular and active participation in class is expected. In a Zoom classroom, this means:

- You don't need to have your video on all the time, but, unless you are having connection issues, you should turn it on when you are speaking for your group, and everyone should be ready to turn it on if asked.
- When your video is not on, your Zoom account should display your name (not a screenname) and a profile picture that represents you in some way (that can be a photo of yourself or any image that communicates something about you). For information on customizing your profile see the Zoom support page at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201363203-Customizing-your-Profile>
- We will use breakout rooms for brainstorming and other activities during discussion. You can leave these breakout rooms to return to the main session and ask questions. I will not drop into breakout rooms unless asked, and I will give at least a 2-minute warning before ending breakout sessions.
- When peers are speaking in whole-group discussion, let them finish before starting to speak. If you have questions or comments directly related to what they are saying, you can enter comments in the text chat, or you

can click the blue “raise hand” icon in the Participants window if you want to respond orally. Do also feel free to use reaction signals to second colleague’s points (thumbs up, clapping hands, etc.) while they speak!

- Put away your cell phone or other mobile devices before class, and please close any applications that are not being used for class activities.

In the first weeks, we’ll organize discussion groups that will work closely together throughout the semester, reading and commenting on members’ responses and collaborating in breakout rooms and on the performances.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity: All work delivered in this course must be your own, produced specifically for this course, and produced specifically for the assignment in question. If you draw on the ideas or language of others in written work or presentations, you must, by University policy, specifically acknowledge your indebtedness. If you have questions about the appropriate acknowledgment of sources, please review the library tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism at <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/plagiarism> or contact me. Recycling material from papers written for other courses, or even from earlier papers written for this course in later ones, is also not acceptable. If you wish to write a paper on a similar topic to a paper you have written before, you are welcome to consult with me about ways of adjusting or expanding the topic or argument sufficiently to build on your prior work and still meet the course requirements.

Other Policy Information: Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review for official descriptions of these university policies and resources.

SUPPORT SERVICES

In addition to my office hours, students in English 125 may find these support services especially useful:

SJSU Writing Center: The San José State University Writing Center offers a variety of resources to help students become better writers, and all of its services are free for SJSU students. While we are online, the Writing Center offers drop-in tutoring by text chat for quick questions, scheduled 45-minute appointments via Zoom, and virtual workshops on topics like improving your sentence and paragraph style, managing time effectively during essay exams, and making PowerPoint slides. For more information and to make an appointment or sign up for a workshop, see the website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>

SJSU Communication Center: The San José State University Communication Center is available to help students practice public speaking and general communication skills, through workshops and individual tutoring, including practicing and recording speeches. This is a great resource in preparing for the performance activities, because you can make Zoom appointments for groups as well as individuals and can book up to 60 minutes of communications tutoring per day! To make a Zoom appointment for communications tutoring, visit <https://commcenter.sjsu.edu/students/tutoring/index.html>

English 125-02 (Johnson), Fall 2020 Course Schedule

*This schedule is subject to change with notice. Any changes will be announced in class and via Canvas.
(Optional pages from Hamilton offer context for those who want more grounding in classical mythology.)*

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Readings or Assignments Due (response paper rotation will be on Canvas)	Some Key Topics
1	Wednesday August 19	Introduction to the Course, to Canonicity, and to Each Other (short in-class readings)	canonicity; annotation and note-taking; close reading
2	Monday August 24	<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i> , Norton volume A, pages 89–145 [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 76–94]	“civilization”; model discussion posts; reading approaches for long texts
2	Wednesday August 26	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> , Books 1, 6, 8, 9 (Norton volume A, pages 216–71) Form discussion groups in class based on schedule survey	epic; epic conventions: simile, epithet, catalogue, invocation (to the Muse); oral tradition; oral-formulaic composition (Parry-Lord hypothesis)
3	Monday August 31	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> , Books 16, 18, 22, 24 (Norton, volume A, pages 272–34) [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 253–90] First weekly response posts due (shift 1)	epic heroes: divine and human agency; <i>kleos</i> (glory), <i>arete</i> (excellence), and other conceptions of virtue
3	Wednesday September 2	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 1–4 (Norton, volume A, pages 325–75) First weekly response posts due (shift 2) In-class: Online Writing Center services tour!	written and oral literacies; the “Homer question”
4	Monday September 7	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY	
4	Wednesday September 9	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 5–13 (Norton, volume A, pages 375–475) [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 291–319] Intro to Commonplace Book assignment	monomyth / hero’s journey; flashbacks and narrative levels; hospitality and “civilization”
5	Monday September 14	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> , Books 14–24 (Norton, volume A, pages 475–602)	masculinity, femininity, gender roles; homecoming
5	Wednesday September 16	Introduction to Greek tragedy: Watch “Antigone in Ferguson” mini-documentary (10 minutes) at https://youtu.be/oahSo9P5rgw ; read	tragedy: catharsis, hamartia, unity; rhetoric: ethos, pathos, logos; performance culture

Week	Date	Readings or Assignments Due (response paper rotation will be on Canvas)	Some Key Topics
		in Norton volume A, overview, pages 624–29, and Aristotle’s <i>Poetics</i> , pages 1102–1106	
	Friday September 18	Commonplace Book check #1: Submit on Canvas by 11:59 pm	
6	Monday September 21	Aeschylus, <i>Agamemnon</i> (Norton, volume A, pages 630–80) [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 350–72]	tragic hero: <i>hamartia</i> , hubris; peripeteia (reversal); “theatricality”
6	Wednesday September 23	Aeschylus, <i>The Eumenides</i> (Penguin paperback, Fagles translation, pages 227–77)	patriarchy and misogyny; stasis theory; sex and gender
7	Monday September 28	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> (Norton volume A, pages 681–724) [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 376–93]	anagnorisis (“recognition”); catharsis; Oedipus complex; tragedy and religion
7	Wednesday September 30	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (Norton volume A, pages 725–55) FIRST GROUP PRESENTATIONS (cohort 1): <i>Antigone</i> trial	stasis theory; polis; literature and “citizenship”; tragedy and democracy; rhetorical appeals
8	Monday October 5	Euripides, <i>Medea</i> (Norton volume A, pages 756–90) [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 160–80]	tragic hero, antihero, stichomythia, chorus and audience response; gender; rhetorical appeals
8	Wednesday October 7 **	Aristophanes, <i>Lysistrata</i> (Signet paperback, Parker translation) **<i>(Presentation dates and readings likely to change pending Lysistrata event scheduling)</i> FIRST GROUP PRESENTATIONS (cohort 2): <i>Lysistrata</i> performance	comedy; Old Comedy versus New Comedy; parody and satire; forms of mediation: translation, performance; gender and sexuality
	Friday October 9	Commonplace Book check #2: Submit on Canvas by 11:59 pm	
9	Monday October 12	Midterm Exam Review: come prepared with sample questions	
9	Wednesday October 14	MIDTERM EXAM Online via Canvas, 3:00–4:15 pm	

Week	Date	Readings or Assignments Due (response paper rotation will be on Canvas)	Some Key Topics
10	Monday October 19	Introduction to Roman Literature Watch Caroline Winterer, “Ancient Rome and America,” at https://youtu.be/fov-7k_SFkE Read Norton, vol. A, pages 15–19; Horace, Ode 1.37 (pages 896–97), Ode 30, and <i>Ars Poetica</i> (pages 1108–11); Seneca, Epistle 47 (pages 898–901)	imperialism and cosmopolitanism; triumphalism and monumentalism; civic religion; appropriation
10	Wednesday October 21	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , Books 1, 2, 4 Midterm Exam Wrapper (in-class activity)	primary and secondary epic; originality and influence; conventions and written culture; masculinity; “piety”
	Friday October 23	Midterm Extra Credit Revision (Optional assignment) due on Canvas at 11:59 pm	
11	Monday October 26	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , Books 6, 8, 12 (Norton volume A, pages 922–87) [OPTIONAL: Hamilton, pages 320–44]	ambivalence versus ambiguity; historical consciousness; state literature as/ versus propaganda
11	Wednesday October 28	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> , selections (Norton volume A, pages 1026–68)	subversion; etiology; mythology versus epic; historicity, fictionality
12	Monday November 2	Hebrew Bible: selections from Genesis and Exodus (Norton volume A, pages 145–87) Skim Oxford Biblical Studies, “Thematic Guide: The Bible in Sci-Fi and Fantasy” at http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/resource/scifi_fantasy.xhtml	documentary hypothesis; covenant; non-missionary religions; “Bible as literature” and construct of “the author”
12	Wednesday November 4	Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible: in Norton, volume A: Job (pages 187–214), Psalms (pages 212–15) on Canvas: Ecclesiastes (King James Version) SECOND GROUP PRESENTATIONS (cohort 1): the justice of Job	wisdom literature in written cultures; aphorism; Biblical poetry; parallelism; theodicy; theophany
13	Monday November 9	The Christian Gospels, selections: on Canvas: Mark (entire), Matthew 25 (parable of the talents), Revised Standard Version; in Norton volume B: Luke 2, 15, Matthew 13 (pages 18–29), John 1 (pages 32–34)	parables; typology; universalism; missionary religion; synoptic Gospels; Johannine literature; canonicity,

Week	Date	Readings or Assignments Due (response paper rotation will be on Canvas)	Some Key Topics
			concept of “the author” and textual authority
13	Wednesday November 11	NO CLASS: VETERANS’ DAY	
	Friday November 13	Commonplace Book check #3: Submit on Canvas by 11:59 pm	
14	Monday November 16	<i>The Song of Roland</i> (Norton volume B, pages 220–55)	<i>chanson de geste</i> ; feudalism, fealty; Christianity and epic; vernacular literature
14	Wednesday November 18	<i>The Song of Roland</i> (Norton, volume B, pages 256–86) SECOND GROUP PRESENTATIONS (cohort 2): putting the text on trial	the Other and othering; nationalism and national literatures; Crusades and European identity
15	Monday November 23	Dante Alighieri, <i>Inferno</i> , Norton volume B, pages 387–416 (cantos 1–5), 425–28 (canto 8), 433–37 (canto 10)	Christianity and the epic; humanism (medieval and Renaissance); allegory and symbolism
15	Wednesday November 25	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING RECESS	
16	Monday November 30	Dante, <i>Inferno</i> , Norton volume B, pages 441–60 (cantos 12–15), 505–509 (canto 26), 533–48 (cantos 32–34)	influence and originality; historical consciousness and the idea of “the author”; biographical criticism
16	Wednesday December 2	Dante, selections from <i>Purgatorio</i> and <i>Paradiso</i> , Norton volume B, pages 548–77	Christianity and the classical tradition; vernacular literatures as/ versus national literatures
	Friday December 4	Commonplace Book Remix due on Canvas by 11:59 pm	
17	Monday December 7	Closing Reflections and Final Exam Review	
Final Exam	Thursday December 10	Final Exam online via Canvas site, 12:15 pm–2:30 pm	