San José State University Department of English and Comparative Literature English 125, Homer to Dante, Fall 2025

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Linda C. Mitchell

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 PM & by appointment

Class Days/Time: Mondays/Wednesdays, 9:00-10:15 AM

Classroom: Sweeney Hall 240

Prerequisites: Upper-division standing

Required Texts:

- *The Norton Anthology of World* Literature, Vols. A, B, & C, <u>4th edition is required because of the translations.</u> 9780393265903 <u>Paperbook, not e-copy</u>.
- Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, trans. Fagles required. Penguin Publishers.
- Course Reader from Maple Press. \$15. Drop by the shop, or have the press mail it to you. 330 S 10th St #200, San Jose, CA 95112. Phone: (408) 297-1000. Available after January 19.
- Paper notebook for taking notes in class.
- Suggested: Edith Hamilton's *Greek Mythology*. An e-copy of Hamilton is fine.

Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to some of the major literary works of the first 2,000 years of Western Culture—works of great genius and superb craft. They are as much a part of our heritage as that which we receive from our parents. Our goal this semester is to take possession of that heritage—like heirs who have come of age—by understanding how these works are connected to each other and to us via a series of parallel and contrasting patterns of ideas and experiences that form a path of human continuity across time and place. Students will engage and explore the texts from a variety of contexts and viewpoints: textual, literary, political, social, and cultural; become familiar with a range of critical approaches to the texts; and demonstrate a working knowledge of the texts' influences within the Western literary tradition.

Required Work Hours for the Course

English 125 is a 4-unit course, so students can expect to spend a minimum of twelve hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments. Integrated into the syllabus are 1) increased course content and/or collateral readings and 2) higher-level critical thinking exercises.

University's Credit Hour Requirement:

"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 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus."

Department of English and Comparative Literature: Program Learning Objectives

SLOs. Students will demonstrate the ability to

- 1. read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric;
- 2. show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature;
- 3. write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;
- 4. develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;
- 5. articulate the relations among cultures, history, and texts.

Course Learning Objectives for English 125

Successful students in this course will be able to demonstrate an ability to

- 1. recognize a range of critical approaches to the texts.
- 2. recognize the elements of major literary works of the first 2,000 years of Western Culture and demonstrate a working knowledge of the texts' influences within the Western literary tradition.
- 3. identify universal themes, e.g., hospitality, fate vs. free will, honor, in the Greek, Roman, and Christian periods.
- 4. list the the ways these works are connected to each other and to us via a series of parallel and contrasting patterns of ideas and experiences that form a path of human continuity across time and place.
- 5. engage and explore the texts from a variety of contexts and viewpoints: textual, literary, political, social, and cultural, e.g., *Antigone* as a court trial.
- 6. trace changes in the literature through the following means: language, history, and culture of the periods.
- 7. write a cogent one- page response paper for each day, incorporating good writing, analytical, and critical skills.

Requirements:

Daily reading assignments, engaged-class participation, graffiti post, a midterm exam, and a final exam.

Class Etiquette

- We begin class exactly on time, and I take roll right away.
- If you are going to be a minute or two late, please text me. (After a couple of times, you lose the privilege of texting me that you'll be late.)
- Cell phones go in your backpack. No checking phones or texting during class. (See me in advance if you are expecting an urgent call.)
- Laptops and tablets are not used during class unless you have a documented need.
- Have your textbook and course reader open and ready to begin class.
- It is a professional courtesy that you email or text me if you are going to miss class.

Grading overview for 1,000 points

Activities	Percentage	Points
Reader's Responses, 21, daily	25%	250
Take a bye on one of them		
Exam 1 (PLO 1-3, 5)	25%	250
Exam 2 (PLO 1-3, 5)	25%	250
Class participation (PLO 1-2-3, 5)	20%	200
One-unit enhancement (PLO 1-2-3,5)	5%	50

I. Thursday Emails: Required Reading

Every Thursday, I send out an email that reviews the week and details the work for the coming week. The email will clarify or note any change in assignments. You are responsible for the information in the Thursday emails. If you do not receive a Thursday email by 10:00 PM, please let me know. I recommend that you make an email folder for English 125 emails so that you can reference them easily. It is too easy for English 125 emails to get swallowed up in all your other emails.

II. Reading Assignments:

Assigned works include introductions. Do a close reading before the class session for which the work is assigned. Be prepared to discuss the reading in class.

III. Reader Responses: Guidelines and Policies. 250 points for 25%

- You have 21 response papers, but I count only 20. You can take one bye on a day you are absent. For extenuating circumstances, talk to me in advance.
- I set aside the first fifteen minutes of class to do a one-page response paper.
- You will get feedback and a grade usually by the next class.
- You must attend class in order to do the response paper. See me for an extenuating circumstance.
- Reader responses must demonstrate a critical engagement with the language and content of the assigned text. Summaries receive only partial credit.
- To answer the prompt, you need to have done a close reading.
- Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and syntax count.
- The following are not excused absences: having to work, going on vacation, studying for another exam, babysitting siblings, or writing a paper for another class.
- Please see the course reader for details instructions on how to write a response paper and how I evaluate it.

Grading Rubric for Response Papers

(A+=100%) 12.5 Points: Few to no errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student provides a well-written in-depth paper that includes a clear thesis, *so what*, and relevant evidence. Strong analysis.

(A = 96%) 12.0 Points: Minor errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student provides a well written in-depth paper that includes a clear thesis, appropriate evidence, and a so-what. Strong analysis.

(A- = 92%) 11.5 Points: Minor errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student may have a thesis, but it is not as in-depth as it could be. The *so what* is present. Strong analysis.

- (B+=88%) 11.0 Points: Minor errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student's thesis and ideas are present, but the so-what is not well-developed. Add more analysis.
- (B = 84%) 10.5 Points: Minor errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student's thesis needs work, but the ideas are present. The so-what is not well- developed. Needs more analysis.
- (B-=80%) 10.0 Points: Errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student presents ideas but lacks conciseness and a *so-what* is not well-developed. Add analysis.
- (C+ = 76%) 9.5 Points: Errors in grammar, mechanics, structure, format, and citations. The student's thesis is not clear, is missing a *so what*, and lacks relevant/supporting evidence
- (C = 72%) 9.0 Points: Errors throughout the paper. Student provides a summary of the literature. Weak argument. Weak support.
- (C- = 70%) 8.5 Points: Errors throughout the paper. Student provides a summary of the literature. Brief, general statements. Weak argument. Weak support. Fails to answer to prompt.
- (D+=68%) 8.0 Points: Errors throughout the paper. Brief, general statements. No argument or *so what*. All summary with no analysis. Does not address the prompt. Lacks demonstration that student read the work. No support.
- (D = 66%) 7.5 Points: Excessive errors throughout the paper. Incoherent statements. No argument or *so what*. Summary with no analysis. Does not address the prompt. Lacks demonstration that student read the work.

Formula for In-Class Response Paper

- 1. Answer the prompt.
- 2. Begin with statement making an argument.
- 3. Include the *so what* at the end of the argument or put it in the next sentence.
- 4. Support should be specific, concrete, and relevant.
- 5. The argument, *so what*, and support should indicate that you have read and understand the work
- 6. End the response paper with a sentence pulling your argument together and moving it to a universal level.
- 7. Write a paper title. "Response Paper #2" is not a title.
- 8. Response papers must have standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

IV. Midterm Exam (25%, 250 pts). Final Exam (25%, 250 pts) = 50% or 500 points

Each exam has two essay questions. Each essay is worth 125 points. I average the two essay scores for the exam grade.

A+=125-119

A = 118-113

A = 112-109

B+ = 108-106

B = 105-101

B - 100-98

C+ = 97-94

C = 93-89

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C = 88-76
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D+ = 75-69

D = 68-63

I add the two essays for a possible 250 points

A+=250-238

A = 237-226

A = 225 - 218

B+ = 217-211

B = 210-202

B - 201-196

C + = 195-188

C = 187-178

C = 177 - 152

D+ = 151-138

D = 137-126

Guidelines for essay exams:

- 1. Underline works if you are handwriting the exam.
- 2. At least one work per period, although you may mention others.
- 3. For the midterm, at least two different works (one Greek and one Roman) per prompt must be used. For the final exam, three different works (Greek, Roman, and Christian) per question for a total of six works for the exam. Homer, Aeneid, Roland, and Dante are required.
- 4. Write about works in chronological order.
- 5. A story, e.g., Joseph, from the Bible is not a work. (Book, Ch., Verse).
- 6. Use a mixture of quotes, references, and paraphrases. Cite lines.
- 7. Use transitions, especially between paragraphs. (Refer to our transition sheet.)
- 8. The essay is graded on substantial content, not on how long it is. Filling it with meaningless language will bring the grade down.
- 9. Spell characters names correctly, e.g., Medea, not Madea.
- 10. Avoid explanations/summaries of quotes/examples. Instead, critically analyze quotes to show how they support your thesis.
- 11. You must have a thesis and universal "so-what" for the two questions you choose to write on. That means that you will need to form a stance, make an argument and build a case, then explain the universal importance of your thesis and your *so what*.

V. Participation, 20% or 200 points

- 1. Breakdown of the 20%: 15% will be oral comments in class. 5% graffiti board comments on discussion board on Canvas.
- 2. The average for a passing participation grade for example is 1.5 oral responses per class and 1.0 graffiti comment (discussion board on canvas) per class.
- 3. Possible class responses: present a thread of your argument on the response paper, propose a new idea that has occurred to you during class, or elaborate on a classmate's comment.
- 4. Your presence alone does not qualify as participation; you need to talk. Participation is not an attendance taking mechanism; it is a grade for actively engaging in class discussion.

VI. One-Unit Enhancement: Specified Assigned Work, 5% or 50 points

- 1. Performance in the *Antigone* trial. 5 points for enhancement.
- 2. People's Court for Medea. 5 points for active engagement
- 3. TBA 10 points
- 4. Attendance at the three guest lectures in class. (3 x 6) 18 points

5. Midterm and final review days. (2 x 6) 12 points.

VII. Grading overview for 1,000 points

Activities	Percentage	Points
20 Reader's Responses. (Eliminate 1 of 21.)	25%	250
Exam 1 (PLO 1-3, 5)	25%	250
Exam 2 (PLO 1-3, 5)	25%	250
Class participation (PLO 1-2-3, 5)	20%	200
One-unit enhancement (PLO 1-2-3,5)	5%	50

Grading Scale for Final Grade in English 125

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930-1,000 points = A (93%-100%)

900-929 points = A- (90%-92.9%)

870-899 points = B+ (87%-89.9%)

830-869 points = B (83%-86.9%)

800-829 points = B- (80%-82.9%)

770-799 points = C+ (77%-79.9%)

730-769 points = C (73%-76.9%)

700-729 points = C- (70%-72.9%)

670-699 points = D+ (67%-69.9%)

630-669 points = D (63%-66.9%)

600-629 points = D- (60%-62.9%)

0-599 points = F (0%-59.9%)
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Grading: Your written work will be evaluated according to the following department criteria.

Qualities of "A" Writing

Content: complies with all parts of the assignment; displays original, provocative thought in one or more of the following ways:

- 1. finds a general significance in the specific instance,
- 2. identifies and resolves a contradiction,
- 3. disproves or qualifies a common misconception,
- 4. achieves a fresh insight into a frequently discussed topic,
- 5. places the known in a novel context,
- 6. supports an arguable assertion;
- 7. develops its thought by explanation, example, illustration, or analysis, as appropriate;
- 8. displays flawless logic;
- 9. has the voice of a real person speaking to a real audience;
- 10. and is interesting and detailed.

Organization: has a recognizable thesis, stated or implied, that conforms to our definition of a thesis; has an effective and appropriate overall pattern of organization; has unified, coherent paragraphs organized around recognizable topic sentences that are verbally or logically related to the thesis; has effective and appropriate transitions between paragraphs; has an effective introduction and conclusion.

Style: frequently chooses grammatical options that mirror the content portrayed; shows a variety of sentence lengths and openers; frequently and appropriately uses emphatic sentence patterns such as long cumulative and periodic sentences, various strong parallel structures, and compound sentences using semicolons and conjunctive adverbs to control rhythm, pace, and emphasis.

Conventions: has NO diction, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors; demonstrates a sophisticated knowledge of English grammar, syntax, punctuation, and usage.

Qualities of "B" Writing

Content: complies with all parts of the assignment; displays original, provocative thought in one or more of the ways listed above; attempts to develop its thoughts in the ways listed above; contains no overt logical fallacies; has the voice of a real person; is detailed.

Organization: has a recognizable thesis, stated or implied, that conforms to our definition of a thesis; has an overall pattern of organization; has unified, coherent paragraphs organized around recognizable topic sentences related to the thesis; has appropriate transitions between paragraphs; has an introduction and conclusion.

Style: shows a variety of sentence lengths and openers; frequently and appropriately uses emphatic sentence patterns such as long cumulative and periodic sentences, various strong parallel structures, and compound sentences using semicolons and conjunctive adverbs.

Conventions: has no more than ONE diction, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling error; the error does not prevent comprehension; does not repeat an error marked on a previous paper; demonstrates a sound knowledge of English grammar, syntax, punctuation, and usage.

Qualities of "C" Writing

Content: complies with the main parts of the assignment; finds significance beyond the subjective response;

goes beyond mere description of the topic and response (analysis, generalization, etc.); is detailed. **Organization:** has a recognizable thesis, stated or implied, that conforms to our definition of a thesis; has coherent paragraphs organized around topic sentences, most of which relate to the thesis; has a recognizable beginning, middle, and end.

Style: shows a variety of sentence lengths and openers; occasionally uses emphatic sentence patterns such as cumulative and periodic sentences, parallel structures, and compound sentences using semicolons and conjunctive adverbs.

Conventions: has no more than TWO diction, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors; errors do not prevent comprehension; does not repeat an error marked on a previous paper; demonstrates the ability to write correct simple, compound, and complex sentences.

Qualities of "D" Writing

Content: complies with the main parts of the assignment; makes a definite statement about the topic; attempts to support that statement.

Organization: has a recognizable thesis; attempts to support that thesis; has paragraphs organized around topic sentences; has enough coherence to be recognized as a unit.

Style: varies sentence types frequently enough to avoid monotony; attempts the occasional stylistic emphasis of an important point.

Conventions: has no more than THREE diction, syntax, grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors; errors do not prevent comprehension; does not repeat errors marked on a previous paper; demonstrates a basic understanding of the conventions of written English.

Departmental Grading Policy

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog (Grades-Letter Grading). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A+/A/A-= excellent; B+/B/B-= above average; C+/C/C-= average; D+/D/D-= below average; F= failure. Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for No Credit, shall replace D or F. In A, B, C, No Credit courses NC shall also substitute for W (for Withdraw) because neither NC nor W affects students' grade point averages. In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of the ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/

SJSU Writing Center



Library Liaison: PeggyCabrera, peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu. Fourth floor of MLK Library.

English 125, Homer to Dante, Fall2025

Course Schedule

Complete assigned readings before the class period designated. Syllabus is subject to change by instructor with reasonable notice given in class or by class email.

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	
Week 1 W 8/20	 Introduction to English 125. Expectations. Overview: The Hero's Journey, Themes, & Historical Context. Requirements for a good response paper. Analysis of a good reader response paper. Example. (PLO 2 & 5) (CLO 1-7) 	
Week 2	Gilgamesh, 93-145.	
M 8/25	• Reader Response #1	
	 Graffiti on the board. Be prepared with something to add. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7) 	
W 8/27	 Iliad, Books I, VI, VIII, IX, pp. 232-271. Reader Response #2 The introduction in Norton is helpful, pp. 216-220. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7) 	
Week 3 M 9/1	Labor Day. No Instruction	
W 9/3	 Iliad, Books XVI, XVIII, XXII, XXIV, pp. 272-324. Reader Response #3 Compare Achilles' shield to the shield in Auden's poem (CR pp. 37-38). (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7) 	
Week 4 M 9/8	Odyssey, Books 1-6, pp. 325-393. • Reader Response #4 • The introduction to the Odyssey is helpful. pp. 220-223. • Chart of characters, CR, p. 39 • (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)	
W 9/10	Odyssey, Books 7-12, pp. 393-465. • Reader Response #5 • (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)	

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Week 5	Odyssey, Books 13-18, pp. 465-535.
M 915	• Reader Response #6
	• (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 9/17	Odyssey, Books 19-24, pp. 535-602.
	Read "Ulysses" by Tennyson, CR, p. 41.
	TBA. 10 points for the one-unit enhancement today.
Week 6	Introduction to Greek Tragedy.
M 9/22	Take good notes for midterm and final exams. Call 20 in the New York Control of the New York Con
	• Prepare for today by reading pages 624-29 in the Norton text for intro to
	 Greek Drama. (PLO 2 & 5) (CLO 1-7) 6 points in the one-unit enhancement for attending the lecture today.
	 No reader response paper due today
W 9/24	Aeschylus's <i>The Oresteia. Agamemnon</i> . Penguin or Norton. Fagels translation only.
,,	• Reader Response #7
	• For a good introduction to <i>Agamemnon</i> , read pages 630-34 in Norton. The
	Penguin edition also has an excellent introduction. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
Week 7	Aeschylus's <i>The Oresteia. The Eumenides (</i> Penguin). Fagels's translation required.
M 9/29	• Reader Response #8
	Bring your course reader today. Instructions for Antigone's court trial.
	• (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 10/1	Oedipus Rex, pp. 687-724.
10/1	• Reader Response #9
	• See back story, CR, pp. 47-48.
	• Bring your course reader today. Commit to a role in <i>Antigone</i> before class. You get 5 points for the one-unit enhancement, plus a choice of
	extra-credit points.
	• (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
Week 8	Antigone, pp. 725-55. Court trial today. Have fun!
M 10/6	Reader Response #10 Court trial 1. Turn in the working notes you used for the trial as your reader response.
	2. Bring your course reader so that you can follow the stasis theory during the court
	trial.
	3. Extra 5 points for participating in the mock trial. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 10/8	Medea, pp. 745-781.
	Reader Response #11. Chart 1. Fill out the short in the course reader n. 60 and turn it in at the haginning of
	1. Fill out the chart in the course reader, p. 69 and turn it in at the beginning of class.
	2. RR #11: People's Forum: Does Jason's betrayal justify Medea's revenge? Follow
	instructions on the chart. It will be graded on the soundness of the argument and
	supporting quotes. You can type or hand write the chart.
	3. An extra 5 points for participating in the People's Forum today. PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
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Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Week 9 M 10/13	 Aeneid, 1, 2, 4, pp. 926-89. Reader Response #12 Read the back story on Juno and Carthage, CR, pp. 72-73. Short discussion on themes for midterm essay questions. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 10/15	Aeneid, 6, 8, 12, pp. 989-1025. Reader Response #13 (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
Week 10 M 10/20	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses:</i> Book I, all; Book II, all; Book V; Book IX, Book X, pp. 1029-1068. • Reader Response #14. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7) • Ovid's <i>The Heroides</i> : letters from Penelope, Dido, and Medea and Jason. http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Heroideshome.htm
W 10/22	Review for the exam. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 4)
Week 11 M 10/27	Midterm (PLO 4 & 5) (CLO 4)
W 10/29	From Roman Empire to Christian Europe: Polytheism to Monotheism 6 points for attendance. (PLO 2 & 5) (CLO 1-7)
Week 12 M 11/3	 The Bible. Reader Response #15 Volume A. Old Testament: Genesis; Exodus; Job; Psalms 23, 137. Pages 152-215.
W 11/5	 The Bible. Finish Old Testament. Volume B. New Testament: Luke 2, Matthew 5-7, Luke 15, Matthew 13, John 1. Pages 21-34. Extra-credit points today for a reader response Introduction to Song of Roland. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
Week 13 M 11/10	 The Song of Roland, #1-#110, pp. 223-254. Response #16 Read the original account of Roland, a paragraph by Einhard. CR, p. 76. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 11/12	The Song of Roland, #111-#291, pp. 254-291. • Reader Response #17 • (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)

Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Week 14 M 11/17	 Introduction to Dante. 6 points for attendance. Time set aside for organizing a review day for the final exam.
W 11/19	Inferno, Cantos I-XI, XII-XVIII, pp. 394-472. • Reader Response #18 • (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
Week 15 M 11/24	 Inferno, Cantos XIX-XXXIV, pp. 472-548. Reader Response #19 (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 11/26	No Instruction Today
Week 16 M 12/1	Reader Response #20 • Purgatorio, Cantos I-II, IX, XXI-XXII, XXIV, XXVII, XXX, XXXII, XXXIII. pp. 548- 571 • (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
W 12/3	 Reader Response #21 Discuss the prompt: human experience. The contrapasso question. For Fun. What circle of hell would you be in, what sin are you guilty of? What is the punishment? You can make it up if you don't want to share anything personal. (PLO 1, 2, 3, & 5) (CLO 1-7)
M 12/8	Review for final exam
Final Exam	Monday, December 15, 8:30-10:30 AM