John Jay College of Criminal Justice
The City University of New York

New Course Proposal

When completed, this proposal should be submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Studies-Room 634T for consideration by the College Curriculum Committee.

1. Department (s) proposing this course: **English**

2. Title of the course: **Topics in Ancient Literature**

   Abbreviated title (up to 20 characters): **Topics Ancient Lit**

3. Level of this course:

   ___100 Level   ____200 Level   __x__300 Level___400 Level

4. Course description as it is to appear in the College bulletin:

   (Write in complete sentences except for prerequisites, hours and credits.)

   **Topics in Ancient Literature** will examine major and minor literary movements, authors, and ideas at work in ancient literature with an eye to the formal features of texts as well as the social, historical, and political contexts in which they appeared. As a means of understanding the literature of the period, the course may focus on a literary genre or convention (e.g., epics, tragedies, comedies) or an important theme (e.g., fate, heroism, *hamartia*). Each semester, individual instructors will anchor the course in specific subtopics, primary texts, cultures, historical moments, and so on, depending on their own areas of specialization.

5. Has this course been taught on an experimental basis?
   
   _x_ No
   ___Yes: Semester (s) and year (s):
   Teacher (s):
   Enrollment (s):
   Prerequisites (s):

6. Pre-requisite: ENG 102/201
   Co-Requisite: **Literature 260 (Introduction to Literary Study)** or permission of the Instructor

7. Number of: class hours _3_   lab hours _0_   credits _3_

8. Brief rationale for the course:
*Topics in Ancient Literature* is one of six historically specific topics courses. Students who major in English will be required to take four. The topics courses give students an awareness of the ways that literature is situated in history and how literary forms and concerns differ historically. *Topics in Ancient Literature* gives students insight into such literary groupings as epics, comedies, tragedies, myths, sacred texts, and satires as forms and genres unique to their political, cultural, and aesthetic needs while continuing to build critical skills applicable to English majors, such as close reading, analysis, organized thought, and effective writing.

9a. Knowledge and performance objectives of this course:
(What knowledge will the student be expected to acquire and what conceptual and applied skills will be learned in this course?)

Knowledge:
- Students will understand the ideologies, values, and customs of several ancient cultures through studying genres including epic and lyric poetry, comedies, tragedies, myths, sacred texts, and satires.
- Students will understand literature and literary characters as a social construct epitomizing what each culture thought of as appropriate or inappropriate behavior.
- Students will understand how to question genres, their creation, organization, content, and purpose.

Performance:
- Students will write six one-page essays on topics to be announced (30% of final grade).
- Students will write one 8-10-page paper, due on any one of three due dates, depending on topic (25% of final grade). Students will turn the paper in to the instructor and to turnitin.com. (In general, these papers will require students to apply a secondary reading to one of the primary texts. For ex., one might apply Dean Miller’s analysis of the epic hero to Achilles in *The Iliad* or to David in 1-2 Samuel.) No additional research beyond the books already assigned will be required.
- Twice in the term, on two dates chosen together with the professor, each student will choose, make a presentation on, and lead a class discussion of a passage from the assigned reading that he/she thinks is significant for understanding the major theme (10% of the final grade).
- With two other classmates, in the last class meeting of the term, students will present on a modern text or performance which they compare to those encountered in this course (10% of the final grade).
- Students will write a final, open-book exam on the date assigned in the exam schedule (25% of final grade).
9b. Indicate learning objectives of this course related to information literacy.

The information literate student determines the nature and extent of the information needed, accesses information effectively, efficiently, and appropriately, and evaluates information and its sources critically. The student uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, ethically and legally. (e.g., students demonstrate critical interpretation of required readings; and/or effective searching of appropriate discipline specific bibliographic databases; and/or primary data gathering by observation and experimentation; and/or finding and evaluating Internet resources. For many more examples of classroom performance indicators and outcomes see the ACRL standards for higher education at http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm).
For questions on information literacy see the library’s curriculum committee representative.

Students will be required to locate primary and secondary sources germane to the topic of the course through specialized databases such as the MLA Bibliography and Gale’s Literary Index on the Web, as well as perform library catalogue searches for books. Students will also be required to access books from other CUNY libraries as needed, using CLICS.

10. Recommended writing assignments:
(Indicate types of writing assignments and number of pages of each type. Writing assignments should satisfy the College’s requirements for writing across the curriculum.)

- Students will write class six one-page essays in class (low-stakes writing)
- Students will write one 8-10-page paper (high-stakes writing)
- Students will write a final exam (high-stakes writing)
- Students will respond to visual images and objects viewed on line

11. Will this course be part of any major (s) or program (s)?

__No  __X  Yes. Major or program: Proposed English Major
What part of the major? (Prerequisite, core, skills, etc.):
Part Two: Historical Perspectives
Topics in Ancient Literature is one of six historically specific topics courses.

12. Is this course related to other specific courses?

__No  __X  Yes. Indicate which course (s) and what the relationship will be (e.g., prerequisite, sequel, etc.).
Co-requisite: Lit 260 Introduction to Literary Study

13. Please meet with a member of the library faculty before answering question 13. The faculty member consulted should sign below. (Contact the library’s curriculum committee representative to identify which library faculty member to meet with).

Identify and assess the adequacy of the following types of library resources to support this course: databases, books, periodicals. Attach a list of available resources.

Attach a list of recommended resources that would further support this course. Both lists should be in a standard, recognized bibliographic format, preferably APA format.

Signature of library faculty member consulted: [Ellen Sexton] 11/8/07

Ellen Sexton and Patricia Licklider discussed 1) the books that students would need for this course, many of which the library already owns and several others of which are being ordered as a result of
the English Department's library list, submitted to Maria Kiriakova in Spring, 2007; 2) databases that the library owns that give students access to all kinds of articles and books online, such as the Gale and the MLA; and 3) the students' ability to borrow books from other branches of CUNY as needed, using CLICS. For all these reasons, the students' needs for this course are met.

14. Are the current resources (e.g. computer labs, facilities, equipment) adequate to support this course?  __X__ Yes
    ____ No

The Library owns many of the books that students would need for this course and several others are being ordered as a result of our Spring 2007 library acquisitions list. Relevant databases, including GALE and MLA On-Line Bibliography, are already available.

If not, what resources will be necessary? With whom have these resource needs been discussed?

15. Syllabus: Attached

Attach a sample syllabus for this course. It should be based on the College’s model syllabus. The sample syllabus must include a week by week or class by class listing of topics, readings, other assignments, tests, papers due, or other scheduled parts of the course. It must also include proposed texts. It should indicate how much various assignments or tests will count towards final grades. (If this course has been taught on an experimental basis, an actual syllabus may be attached, if suitable.)

16. This section is to be completed by the chair(s) of the department(s) proposing the course.

Name(s) of the Chairperson(s): **Margaret Mikesell Tabb**

Has this proposal been approved at a meeting of the department curriculum committee?

____ No  __X__ Yes: Meeting date: 12/04/07

When will this course be taught?

Every semester, starting _________________

One semester each year, starting Spring 2009  ____x____

Once every two years, starting _________________

How many sections of this course will be offered?  ____one____

Who will be assigned to teach this course?

**Patricia Licklider**
**Toy-Fung Tung**
**Melinda Powers**
**Valerie Allen**
**Ann Huse**
**John Matteson**
**John Staines**
**Margaret Mikesell Tabb**
**Richard Zeikowitz**

Is this proposed course similar to or related to any course or major offered by any other department (s)?

__X__ No

____Yes. What course (s) or major (s) is this course similar or related to?
Did you consult with department(s) offering similar or related courses or majors?

_X_ Not applicable  ___No  ___Yes

If yes, give a short summary of the consultation process and results.

Will any course be withdrawn if this course is approved?

_X_ No

___Yes, namely:

Signature(s) of chair of Department(s) proposing this course:

Date: ___________________

Revised: October 3, 2006
Selected Bibliography: Topics in Ancient Literature
(Asterisked titles are in the Sealy Library or are on order.)

General:

Individual Works: Gilgamesh

Homer/ Iliad

Homer/ Odyssey

Story of David

Ramayana


**The Tain (Cu Chulainn)**


**Popul Vuh**


**Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali**


**Confucius, The Analects and Tao te Ching**


**Virgil: The Aeneid**


Sample Syllabus: Lit 3xx: Topics in Ancient Literature: The Epic Hero

Course Description:
Topics in Ancient Literature will examine major and minor literary movements, authors, and ideas at work in ancient literature with an eye to the formal features of texts as well as the social, historical, and political contexts in which they appeared. This semester we will study the epics of several ancient cultures including *Gilgamesh*, Homer’s *Iliad*, the *Ramayana*, and the Mayan *Popul Vuh*, perhaps also including the biblical story of Moses or David, Homer’s *Odyssey*, the *Sundiata* of Mali, the Celtic *Tain*, and Virgil’s *Aeneid* to gain insight into the social, political, and religious structures and values of these ancient societies. The hero in the oral and written epics of ancient cultures embodies the struggle in each culture to establish a social order with defined social values that may either re-affirm or reject past values. Central to this struggle is the hero. How does a society channel the energies and the drive for self-realization of its best men? What happens when heroes rage out of control, threatening to harm or even to destroy the society of which they are the greatest, both in terms of martial strength and intelligence? What values does the hero in each case epitomize? In what ways do women fit into the heroic paradigm, or are they excluded from it? This course will attempt to answer these questions to show that heroes are a window into their societies.

Readings (in alphabetical order):


Selections from critical studies, available on electronic reserve

Assignments:

In addition to the readings (see syllabus below), students will be asked to

- write six one-page essays in class on topics to be announced (see syllabus for dates) for 30% of final grade (See In-Class Essays for more information.)
- write one 8-10-page paper, due on any one of 3 dates, depending on topic (see syllabus for dates) for 25% of grade. Students will turn this in to the professor and to turnitin.com. (See Papers for topics and more
information. In general, these papers will require students to apply a secondary reading to one of the primary texts. For example, one might apply Dean Miller’s analysis of the epic hero to Achilles in the Iliad or to David in 1-2 Samuel. No additional research for books beyond those already assigned will be required.

- twice in the term, on two dates chosen together with the professor, each student will choose, make a presentation on and lead a class discussion of a passage from the assigned reading that he/she thinks is significant for understanding the epic hero for 10% of the final grade
- with two other classmates, in the last class of the term, students will present a modern hero whom they compare to those encountered in this course for 10% of the final grade (See Group Work for more information.)
- write a final, open-book exam on the date assigned in the exam schedule for 25% of final grade

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the ideologies, values, and customs of several ancient cultures through their epic poetry
- To understand the hero as a social construct epitomizing what each culture thought of as just behavior
- To understand how oral poetry is created and how large poems are organized and made coherent
- To improve the ability to analyze, discuss, and write about literary works

Attendance:

It is important to be present for every class. The in-class essays cannot be made up, nor can the small-group presentations of various texts. In addition, class discussion is so important that the grade will be raised a half grade if a student participates actively throughout the term. Finally, after four absences, explained or not, the student’s grade will be dropped a half grade. Regular attendance will be taken.

College Policy on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one’s own creation. Using the ideas or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source.

Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism. It is the student’s responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is cited.

Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The Library has free guides designed to help students with problems of documentation. (From the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Undergraduate Bulletin, p. 36).
Sample Syllabus for Lit. 3xx: Topics in Ancient Literature: The Epic Hero

Students must purchase the primary texts. All secondary readings (articles and books) will either be on reserve in the Sealy Library or, where noted, available on the Internet.

UNIT 1: DEFINITIONS:
During these first few classes, students will explore these questions: What is an epic? What sorts of cultures produced them? What is epic’s cultural function? Orality vs. literacy: How are epics created and standardized? Why are epics often lengthy? What different models and explanations of the epic hero do contemporary theorists propose?

Week 1:
In D.C. Feeney’s “Epic Hero and Epic Fable” in *Comparative Literature* 38, pp. 137-58 (available on JSTOR through the Sealy Library).
In Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, pp. 31-77.

UNIT 2: THE DANGEROUS HERO:
In this unit, students will explore the contradictory nature of the warrior hero: his culture needs him for protection, yet in his war fury, he is dangerous even to his friends. This type of hero learns, in the course of his epic travails, to restrain his fiery impulses and desire for immortality, whether that be eternal life or his undying fame. These epics are thus also educational tools for listeners. Their stories reveal their culture’s values, which the hero both reflects and challenges.

Week 2.1:
Homer’s *Iliad*, Books 1, 6, and 9.

One-page in-class writing today

Weeks 2.2 and 3.1:
Homer’s *Iliad*, Books 16-20.

Week 3.2:

Week 4.1:
In Maier’s *Gilgamesh: A Reader*, Foster’s “Gilgamesh: Sex, Love and the Ascent of Knowledge,” pp. 63-75.
*Gilgamesh*, translated by Maureen Kovacs, Tablets 1-6, pp. 2-56.

Week 4.2:

One-page in-class writing today

Week 5.1:
In Hodder and Meagher’s *The Epic Voice*, Tomas O Cathasaigh’s “Tain,” pp. 129-147.
In Oinas’ *Heroic Epic and Saga*, Sean O Coileain’s “Irish Saga Literature,” pp. 172-89.

Week 5.2:

First Due Date for 8-page paper (Double Bonus if handed in today)
UNIT 3: RE-DEFINITIONS:
In this unit, students will examine additional theories in the Miller and Toohey readings below about the nature of epic and the epic hero and will apply these theories to the epics and heroes of Unit 2. That is, students will consider how well these theories apply to Achilles, Gilgamesh and Cu Chulainn and their stories. How else might we explain the aspects of these heroes’ nature? How do these theories fail to interpret and address all the complexities of the epics? Thus in the first two units, students will have moved from theory to examples, but in this unit they will use these three specific heroes to evaluate and challenge Miller’s and Toohey’s theories with a view to developing other possibilities of interpretation.

Week 6.1:
In Miller’s *The Epic Hero*, Chapters 1-3, pp. 52-141.

Week 6.2:

One-page in-class writing today

UNIT 4: THE HERO AS HIS GOD’S REPRESENTATIVE/KING:
In this unit, students will explore the relationships between heroes and their gods. If the extraordinary man’s ability is god-given, does he retain any personal freedom to act responsibly for what happens as a result? How free can a hero be of constraint? This unit thus relates to Unit 2 in its discussion of heroic boundaries and constraints, and it will be further informed by the students’ work with the theorists of Unit 3. It might include discussions of Moses or David in the *Bible*, Rama in the *Ramayana*, and Aeneas in Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

Week 7.1:

Week 7.2:

Week 8.1:

Week 8.2:

Week 9.1:

One-page in-class writing today

Week 9.2:
In Hodder and Meagher’s *The Epic Voice*, Doniger’s “Ramayana,” pp. 102-27. 

Second Due Date for 8-page paper (Bonus if handed in today)

UNIT 5: THE UNEXPECTED HERO// THE TRICKSTER:
This unit explores heroes who do not seem heroic. Not every epic hero seems heroic at first or achieves his ends through open combat. These heroes surprise their fellows with unexpected displays of intelligence and courage to achieve ends thought to be impossible. Do these heroes imply that every man can be heroic, or are they too marked out for greatness from the first? Is their cleverness to be admired, or are we to be suspicious of it? What ideas do
these heroic types express about the culture’s values? This unit might include discussions of Odysseus in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Sundiata, king of Mali, in the oral epic *Sundiata*, and the Mayan Twins in the *Popul Vuh*.

**Week 10.1:**
From *The Odyssey*, books 9 (Odysseus and the Cyclops) and 10 (Circe), pp. 211-248.

**Week 10.2:**

**Week 11.1:**

**Week 11.2:**
One-page in-class writing today

**Week 12.1:**
In Schipper’s *Beyond the Boundaries*, chap. 5, “Oral Literature and Written Orality,” pp. 64-78.

**Week 12.2:**
Niane’s version of the *Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali*, pp. 1-84.

**UNIT 6: THE ABSENCE//SUPPRESSION OF HEROES:**
This unit explores the interesting absence of epic in ancient China. Did the hierarchical nature of the teachings of Confucius and the quietist philosophy of the *Tao te Ching* cause this absence, or are these philosophical works rather the results of a lack of epic? What oral literature can we find instead in this ancient culture? This unit provides a counterpoint to the rest of the course and an opportunity to draw some conclusions about the kinds of cultures that produce epic.

**Week 13.1:**
In Lau’s translation of *The Analects*, the Introduction, pp. 9-55.

**Final Due Date for 8-10-page Paper** (Late papers are marked down a full grade every day they are late.)

**Week 13.2:**
In the Introduction of Chen’s translation of the *Tao te Ching*, “Date and Authorship of the Tao te Ching,” pp. 4-21.
Lao-tzu’s *Tao te Ching*, translated by Stephen Mitchell, the whole book.
One-page in-class writing

**Week 14.1:**
Course Review and In-class Preparation for Small-Group Presentations

**Week 14.2:**
Group presentations on modern heroes

**Week 15.1:**
Final Exam during exam schedule