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Monsters and Marvels Through the Ages: University Honors Program 100-level, 3 CR

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LESLIE A. DONOVAN

Monsters and Marvels Through the Ages

University Honors Program 100-level, 3 CR

LESLIE A. DONOVAN

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
HONORS DIRECTOR, ROSALIE OTERO

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Among the most fascinating and compelling stories passed down through the Ages that continue to engage us today are works that involve monstrous creatures or the marvelous realms of the otherworld. Goblins and fairies, Grendel and Circe, dragons and gargoyles evoke visual or verbal creations from earlier periods that have inspired the imaginations of writers, artists, and thinkers since ancient times. This Fall 2005 course of 14 students examined how such monsters and marvels reflect a variety of historical ideas, social constructs, cultural patterns, and spiritual themes in ways that have become integral to contemporary popular culture.

TEXTS

Gilgamesh, trans. Herbert Mason

Beowulf, trans. Seamus Heaney

Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles

The Saga of the Volsungs, trans. Jesse L. Byock

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Anne Thomson, *Critical Reasoning: A Practical Introduction*

Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*

SurLaLune Fairy Tales website at <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/index.html>.

"Culhwych and Olwen"

Handout from *The Romance of Arthur : An Anthology of Medieval Texts in Translation*, edited by James J. Wilhelm (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 25–58.

Marie de France, "Bisclavret."

Handout from *The Lais of Marie De France*, edited by Robert W. Hanning and Joan M. Ferrante (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995), 33–38.

MONSTERS AND MARVELS THROUGH THE AGES

SYLLABUS

Week 1

- Tues. Introduction/Syllabus
Thurs. Backgrounds and Beginnings

Week 2

- Tues. *Gilgamesh*: Explanatory material (pp. 97–129), Part I (pp.11–24)
Thurs. *Gilgamesh*: Parts II–IV (pp. 25–92)

Week 3

- Tues. Homer, *The Odyssey*: Introduction, Books 1–3 (pp. 3–123)
Thurs. Homer, *The Odyssey*: Books 4–10 (pp. 124–248)

Week 4

- Tues. Homer, *The Odyssey*: Books 11–17 (pp. 249–374)
Thurs. Homer, *The Odyssey*: Books 18–24 (pp. 375–489)

Week 5

- Tues. College Research Fundamentals
Library Research Tutorial
Thurs. Group Presentation Workshop

Week 6

- Tues. Group 1 Presentation: Beauty and the Beast, Madame de Villeneuve
Group 2 Presentation: Rumpelstiltskin, Brothers Grimm
Thurs. Group 3 Presentation: The Little Mermaid, Hans Christian Andersen
Group 4 Presentation: Sleeping Beauty, Charles Perrault

Week 7

- Tues. Harvey, *Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*: Chapters 1–8 (pp. ix–85)
Amping Up Your Writing: 7-minute Writing Workshops
Thurs. “Culhwych and Olwen” (handout)

Week 8

- Tues. Marie de France, “Bisclavret” (handout)
Creative Project Due
Thurs. FALL BREAK

Week 9

- Tues. Thomson, *Critical Reasoning*: Intro. and Chapters 1–2 (pp. 1–76)
Thurs. Thomson, *Critical Reasoning*: Chapters 3–5 (pp. 77–140)

Week 10

- Tues. *Saga of the Volsungs*: Intro. and Chapters 1–12 (pp. 1–54)
Thurs. Analytical Paper Workshop

Week 11

- Tues. *Saga of the Volsungs*: Chapters 13–44 (pp. 55–111)
Analytical Paper 1 Due
Thurs. *Beowulf*: Intro. and first part of poem until Beowulf reaches Denmark

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Week 12

- Tues. *Beowulf*: Rest of the poem
Thurs. Sheela-na-gigs and Gargoyles
(Multimedia presentation from various texts and web resources)

Week 13

- Tues. Shelley, *Frankenstein*: Introduction, first half of text
Thurs. Shelley, *Frankenstein*: Last half of text

Week 14

- Tues. Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: All of text (pp. 7–136)
Analytical Paper 2 Due
Thurs. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 15

- Tues. Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: Continued
Thurs. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*:
Intro. (pp. ix–li), Essay (pp. 185–201) Acts I–II (pp.7–88)

Week 16

- Tues. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*: Acts III–V (pp. 89–171)
Thurs. Wrap-up discussion
Final Portfolio Due

GRADES

Course requirements earned up to 100 points distributed as follows.

Attendance (15% of total grade)

Students earned 1/2 point for every class they attended (30 classes x .5 = 15 points maximum).

Participation (15% of total grade)

Scores for participation were earned for: 1) Participating actively in class most every class session; 2) Being well prepared for class discussion; and 3) Performing in-class exercises and short exercises conscientiously and thoroughly.

Group Oral Presentation (10% of total grade)

Group Oral Presentations provided information on a classic fairy tale from the SurlaLune Fairy Tales website. Each presentation incorporated the following: 1) Plot Summary; 2) Historical Background; 3) Significant Themes/Ideas; 4) Similarities/Differences to at least one other work of contemporary popular culture; 5) Related Fairy Tales; 6) Visual Image related to the fairy tale. Points for the oral presentation were based on scores recorded on a form filled out anonymously by classmates.

Creative Project (10% of total grade)

Each student completed a creative project composed of two parts: 1) An original creative work (5% of grade); and 2) A descriptive paper (5% of grade). For Part 1 of this project, students were asked to create their own contribution to the cultural tradition of Monsters and/or Marvels by writing a short story (6 pages minimum), painting or drawing a series of artworks or sculptures (1 large piece or 2 small pieces minimum), drawing a comic book (4 pages minimum), writing a long poem (8 pages minimum), composing and performing original music (minimum 5 minutes long), or completing a lengthy project in another medium after consultation with the instructor. For Part 2, students were required to write a 3–5 page paper describing the background of the creative work and explaining the reasons behind the choices made to construct it.

Electronic Discussion (10% of total grade)

Using a basic e-mail discussion list, students were required to dialogue with each other throughout the semester about course readings and related subjects. During the semester, they were expected to make an average of 2 postings a week on topics pertinent to the course for a total of 30 or more postings by the end of the semester. Individual postings did not receive points, but students earned scores based on the quality and quantity of their total entries combined.

Analytical Papers (each 10% of total grade)

Students were required to write two fully developed, analytical papers of 5–7 pages, using standard essay structure. Scores were earned for the overall success of the finished products (i.e., how well they met the assignment, displayed serious and significant thought, presented thorough and convincing evidence, established and supported an appropriate logical structure, met acceptable standards of written English, etc.). Students were allowed to develop their own topics in consultation with the instructor or choose from the list below:

1. Episodes: Write a paper that compares and contrasts the significance of narrative episodes from two of the syllabus texts.
2. Theme: Examine the development in one or more of the course texts of one of these themes: the role of women; the significance of animal imagery; the use of formal vs. informal dialogue; social commentary; the use of earlier cultural allusions and references; human attitudes toward the divine; the tension between sacred and secular concepts; or the use of comedy or humor.
3. Fate/Free Will: Compare and contrast the theme of fate and/or free will in two or more of our texts.
4. The Hero: Examine the role of the hero in one or more of our texts.
5. Legacy: Explore the “legacy” of one work read for class by considering how an idea or theme presented in the reading is still important today.

6. Monstrous/Marvelous: Select one monstrous or marvelous element from any of the texts on our syllabus and write a paper in which you analyze the author's choice in presenting that element as marvelous or monstrous.

Final Portfolio (20% of total grade)

At the end of the semester, students compiled a Final Portfolio of all their major assignments, selected short assignments, revised versions of some assignments, and assessments of their work on each of the items included in the portfolio. An additional analytical paper of 5–7 pages that required them to synthesize their thoughts on the topic of Monsters and Marvels was also included in this portfolio.

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