

## GREAT BOOKS UNBOUND: SELF & OTHER

*Office Hours:* Prof. Ponce-Hegenauer: on Zoom (Tu/Th 4:00-5:30pm)  
Prof. Torgerson: on Zoom or in Boger Hall 322 (M/W 2:30p-4p)  
Prof. Horst: on Zoom or in Russell 207a (Tu 10a-12p / W 11a-1p)



Johnson Tsang, "Amor enmascarado", 2020

Where, how, and why do we draw the boundaries of self and other? In this course, we will discover, analyze, and debate how texts from antiquity to the present have generated and questioned ideas of me and you, us and them: from Shakespeare's tale of love's language (*Romeo and Juliet*), to Plato's exploration of love's meaning (*Symposium*), to the Egyptian retelling of the legend of Alexander the Great (*The Alexander Romance*), and to Camus' portrait of community in crisis (*The Plague*).

This course equips students to unbind influential texts from their traditional readings through the College of Letters's collaborative and interdisciplinary approach.

This course combines small FYS discussion sections with weekly mini-lectures by three professors from different disciplines (philosophy, literature, history), and occasional writing workshops.

Designed as a gateway course to any of the core humanities disciplines, Great Books Unbound is not a prerequisite for a College of Letters major, but students considering the major are strongly encouraged to enroll.

## General course policies

### **Disability Resources**

Wesleyan is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and are typically not provided retroactively, please contact Dean Patey at your earliest convenience in Disability Resources (located in North College, Room 218) or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Further information on registering with Disabilities Services can be found online at:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/index.html>

For assistance with disabilities in a remote format, see:

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/distance-learning.html>

### **Religious Observances**

Faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required assignments and attendance. If this applies to you, please speak with /email one of us directly as soon as possible.

### **Covid-19 Code of Conduct**

To protect your health and safety, that of instructors and staff, and the health and safety of your peers, all students must understand and adhere to the University's Covid-19 Code of Conduct:

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/academics/reactivating/campus-life/code-of-conduct.html>

Students are encouraged to review the code of conduct regularly to stay up to date on the current code. For the safety of other students, the course instructor will have to remove any student from the classroom who does not adhere this code of conduct.

**You must alert your section professor to any accommodations knowable in advance (disabilities, athletics, religious observance, etc.) prior to the end of the Drop/Add period: Friday, Sept. 11, 2020.**

## Grading, attendance, participation

As with all courses in the College of Letters, this FYS is assessed in the Credit/Unsatisfactory (Cr/U) mode. This means that evaluation (for individual assignments and for the course as a whole) is qualitative and narrative (e.g. comments) rather than quantitative (e.g. percentages and letter grades). Thus, along with their final “Cr” or “U” grade for the course, students will receive a written evaluation which becomes part of their transcript and is available to their advisor.

In order to receive a grade of “Cr”, students must meet **minimum expectations**.

### 1) Attendance:

Students must be on-time with assigned readings prepared. Each student is allotted two (2) unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Further absences are excused only if explained formally in writing with documentation. Unexcused absences beyond the first two will be reflected in the student’s final evaluation; unexcused absences deemed excessive by the instructors will be grounds for the student receiving a grade of “U” for the course.

### 2) Participation:

Students must contribute to class discussions through active contributions and attentive listening.

### 3) Assignments:

Essays will not be given letter grades, but assessed on a “—”, “√”, or “+” system:

- *unsatisfactory writing or engagement with the text*
- √ *persuasive, clear writing that provides a well-structured argument drawn from textual evidence*
- + *excellent written work which engages persuasively and insightfully with the text*

Students must complete all essay assignments to the level of at least a “√” to achieve a “Cr” for the course. Essays that receive a “—” must be re-written and re-submitted within one week of receipt.

Essays are central to successful engagement with the text and lectures. To facilitate students’ success all professors are available to help any GBU student with drafting, writing, and revision. The College of Letters has also provided Sara McCrea to be a course assistant dedicated to assisting Great Books Unbound students with their writing and revisions. Please schedule appointments by writing Sara at [smccrea@wesleyan.edu](mailto:smccrea@wesleyan.edu). We *strongly* encourage you to make use of this resource throughout the semester and may require you to do so as the semester progresses.

## Required Books

You **must** do this semester's readings from the **specific editions** we have chosen.

That said, we are fully open to remote learning this semester.

This means you may choose for yourself whether you want to obtain paper copies of our texts, or work only from digital copies.

Our texts are as follows (in order of appearance):

\*Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. G. B. Evans. New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, 2003)  
ISBN-13: 978-0521532532

\*Plato, *Symposium*, trans. P. Woodruff & A. Nehamas. Hackett Classics (Indianapolis, 1989)  
ISBN-13: 978-0872200760

+ *The Life of Alexander of Macedon by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, trans. E. H. Haight. Longmans (New York, 1955). [Open-access copy available online.](#)

+ *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, trans. A. M. Wolohojian. Columbia University Press (New York, 1969). [Open-access copy available online.](#)

+ Albert Camus, *The Plague*. trans. R. Buss. Penguin Modern Classics. (London, 2013)  
ISBN-13: 978-0141185132

\* = Available from Wesleyan's R.J. Julia Bookstore on Main Street & as PDFs on Moodle.

+ = Available only via Moodle as PDFs or in a Course Reader/ Course Packet (though you are welcome to find and purchase/rent/borrow physical copies for yourself!).

### Financial Assistance:

The College of Letters provides non-competitive micro-grant scholarships for textbooks. If you do not have the budget for these texts, but you would really and truly benefit from paper copies, please email a statement of need to your Professor.

## Schedule: Class Sessions, Major Assignments, Readings

### Section 1: Literature (Ponce-Hegenauer): Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*, and Others

#### What is a Literary Reading?

#### September 1 & 3

- (Tu) *Lecture* What is Literature?: The Figures of Fiction  
*Reading* Masuccio Salernitano, "The Thirty-Third Novel"; Luigi Da Porto, "Romeo and Juliet"; Matteo Bandello, "Romeo and Juliet"
- (Th) *Discussion* Figures of the story in the Italian source texts.

#### September 8 & 10

- (Tu) *Lecture* What's In a Verse?/ What Is a Verse?: Love as Faith in Renaissance Petrarchism  
*Reading* Petrarch & Petrarchists, handout; Metaphor and Sonnet handout; Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet*, Act I & II
- (Th) *Discussion* What's In a Verse?/What Is a Verse?: Love as Faith in Renaissance Petrarchism

#### September 15 & 17

- (Tu) *Lecture* What is Literary Language?: The Trick of the Trope as Literary Art  
*Reading* Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet*, Acts III-V; Kermode excerpt; tropes handout
- (Th) *Discussion* What is Literary Language?: The Trick of the Trope as Literary Art

#### September 22 & 24

- (Tu) *Lecture* What Makes a Tragedy?: Hamartia & Self-(mis)Recognition  
*Reading* Handout on close-reading paper; *Romeo & Juliet*, reread Acts I-V  
*Submit* 3-4 page paper (12pt, 1" margins, TNR, 2x spaced)
- (Th) *Discussion* What Makes Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*?

### Section 2: Philosophy (Horst): Plato's *Symposium*

#### What is Philosophy?

#### September 29 & October 1

- (Tu) *Lecture* Philosophy: Theory and Dialectic in Socrates, Plato, and the *Symposium*  
*Reading* Plato, *Symposium*
- (Th) *Discussion* What's Love Got To Do With It? *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Symposium*

#### October 6 & 8

- (Tu) *Lecture* Philosophy as a Way of Life: Dialectic and Ascent
- (Th) *Discussion* Theory & Practice: Diotima's description of love; Socrates' relationship with Alcibiades

October 13 & 15

- (Tu) *Lecture* Philosophy as Social Critique: Philosophy, Literature, and Athenian Culture  
(Th) *Discussion* Is love transformative? Is philosophical pedagogy erotic?

October 20 & 22

- (Tu) *Lecture* Argument and Analysis: Writing a Philosophical Essay  
(Th) *Discussion* Discussion of paper drafts.  
(Sa) *Submit* 3-5 page (12pt, 1" margins, TNR, 2x spaced) essay

**Section 3: History (Torgerson): (Three Versions of the) Alexander Romance**  
**What is a Source?**

October 27 & 29

- (Tu) *Listen/Read* Podcast "Intro to Thinking Historically" & Morley, *Writing History* Ch. 1, 4  
*Full Class* Discussion: What is a Historical Question?  
(Th) *Listen/Read* Podcast "Comparing Alexanders"; Selections: Arrian, Rufus, Plutarch, etc.  
*Sections* Discussion: What characterizes the early historical images of Alexander?

November 3 & 5

- (Tu) ELECTION DAY: NO CLASS MEETING  
*Listen* Podcast: "Writing a Paper in History"; Sample papers, handouts  
(Th) *Listen/Read* Podcast "Plutarch and the Romance"; Selections: *Romance* Bk. 1 (3 versions)  
*Full Class* Discussion: What characterizes the image of Alexander in the *Romance*?

November 10 & 12

- (Tu) *Listen/Read* Podcast: "The Power of Alexander"; *Romance* Bk. 2 (3 versions)  
*Sections* Discussion: What are Alexander's Powers? (*Alexander Romance*, Book 2)  
(Th) *Listen/Read* Podcast: "The Limits of Alexander"; *Romance* Bk. 3 (3 versions)  
*Full Class* Discussion: What are Alexander's Limits? (*Alexander Romance*, Book 3)

November 17 & 19

- (Tu) *Read* Peer Essays  
*Sections* Peer Review Workshop  
(Th) *Full Class* What do the varieties of the Alexander Romance tell us about the past?  
*Submit* 5-6 page (12pt, 1" margins, TNR, 2x spaced) essay:  
A Historical Argument from the *Alexander Romance*

November 24 and 26 *Thanksgiving Break* NO CLASS MEETINGS

**Section 4: Reading Between the Disciplines: Camus, *The Plague***  
**How do the Humanities Read?**

December 1 & 3

- (Tu) & (Th) *Full Class* Discussion: The Plague and the Humanities

**Submit by Friday, December 11:** Final Essay (5-6pp): *An Interdisciplinary Reading of the Plague*