I. COURSE INFORMATION

Department: English
Course Title: Genres, Themes, Approaches
Course Number: LIT 240
Type of Request: X New
☐ One-time Only
☐ Renew
☐ Change
☐ Remove
Rationale:

II. ENDORSEMENT / APPROVALS

* Instructor: Rob Browning
  Phone / Email: 406-210-1358, rob.browning@msu.montana.edu
  Signature: ______________________ Date 9-12-16

Program Chair:
Dean: ____________________________ Date 9-12-16

*Form must be completed by the instructor who will be teaching the course. If the instructor of the course changes before the next review, the new instructor must be provided with a copy of the form prior to teaching the course.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE PURPOSE / DESCRIPTION

Provide an introduction to the subject matter and course content:
LIT 240 is one of two new 200-level courses that shall, along with a slightly revised version of LIT 201 (The Study of Literature), comprise the new lower-division curriculum for English literature. For the department’s justification of these curricular changes, please see the relevant forms submitted to the ASCRC in September 2016. As its title, “Genres, Themes, and Approaches,” indicates, LIT 240 is a course designed to allow for a wide range of possible topics. For the purposes of the present form, I shall describe a section of LIT 240 that focuses on the genre of “epic”; other sections, however, may focus on topics such as tragedy, quest literature, literary perspectives on evil, pictures of the self in the modern novel—so long as the topic enables the section to meet the requirements of a general education course (as articulated in the General Education preamble).

The LIT 240 section focusing on epic will introduce students to several representative examples of epic poetry from a range of historical periods: Homer’s Iliad and/or the Odyssey, Virgil’s Aeneid, John Milton’s Paradise Lost, Derek Walcott’s Omeros, and Sharon Dowling’s Hard Country. Also included will be one example of a novel (Arthur C. Clarke’s 2001: A Space Odyssey) that adheres in various ways to the epic tradition. Other versions of the course may include a different set of texts. In all cases, however, students will learn the structural and aesthetic conventions of the epic in the classical Greek and Roman traditions, after which they shall study how subsequent practitioners of the genre variously adopt, adapt, and challenge these ancient conventions.

IV. LEARNING OUTCOMES (SEE FAQS)

Provide examples of how the course will support students in achieving each learning outcome
Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts.

X ☐ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?

Because epic poetry is conspicuously hybrid in nature, embedding many different genres, communicative modes, and cultural forms within a single poem, this course will present students with many opportunities for synthesizing new concepts. First of all, students will learn how epic poets themselves synthesize concepts in their efforts to forge connections between ancient cultural traditions and their own present-day concerns. Through a combination of modeling during lectures, guided class discussions, focused homework assignments, and small group activities, students will learn how to recognize the structural and aesthetic conventions of epic poetry and how to interpret the ways poets variously adapt these to new contexts in order to create new meanings. In studying epic poems by Homer and Virgil, for instance, students will learn about the convention of the invocation of the muse—its characteristic components and its function. In studying Milton’s early-modern epic Paradise Lost, subsequently, students will be asked to write an informal essay analyzing the poem’s opening invocation as homework. They will be asked to identify the characteristic features of this invocation and to compare and contrast these to those of the invocations by Homer and Virgil. In the following class we will discuss their findings, paying special consideration to how Milton is positioning himself competitively as a Christian poet adapting the literary materials of pagan cultures. When students write extended formal essays on such topics they shall be supported with guidance through the essay-writing process in classes devoted to modeling thesis writing, developing coherent arguments, and working with textual evidence. They will also have opportunities for receiving individual support during office hours.

☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

- Formulate and express written opinions and ideas that are developed, logical, and organized.

X ☐ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?

As in the homework example described above, students will be expected to respond to particular interpretive questions in short, informal essays. Often, the prompts for such writing tasks will ask students to articulate their initial response to or opinion regarding a problem in our reading. Students’ initial responses to the literature will be taken seriously in this class since these can reveal how a text elicits emotional reactions and otherwise can be designed to manipulate us one way or another. Subsequent class lectures and discussions will then challenge students to analyze their initial responses and to examine more closely how the text is working. Through this process of interpretation, students will revise or build upon their initial ideas with the goal of formulating well-developed, interesting interpretive claims that can serve as the basis for their formal essays and essays for bluebook exams. The instructor will support students with guidance through the essay-writing process in classes devoted to modeling thesis writing, developing coherent arguments, and working with textual evidence.

☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience, purpose and context

X ☐ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?

Students will receive instruction in how to write for an academic audience. They will learn what academic readers conventionally expect in regards to register, diction, argument structure, paragraph development, use of evidence in support of claims, and the documentation of primary and secondary sources. The instructor will provide models of these conventions in lectures and by directing students to specific examples in secondary readings. Students will also learn the value of writing in a more informal mode for
classmates and for themselves as a means of recording and thinking through initial ideas and responses.
☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

- **Revise written work based on constructive comments from the instructor**
  ☒ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?
  Students will be required to revise the first of their formal analytical essays in light of the detailed feedback provided by the instructor. Students will also practice revision in the process of developing their initial responses to reading assignments (in the form of informal homework papers) into well-developed, formal analytical essays.
  ☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

- **Find, evaluate, and use information effectively and ethically**
  (description of information literacy outcomes appropriate for each class level)
  Subject librarians are available to assist you embed information literacy into your course.
  ☒ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?
  Students will receive in-class instruction in how to search relevant library databases for peer-reviewed secondary sources and how to use and document these sources appropriately (according to M.L.A or Chicago conventions). This instruction may also be supported by a database session taught by our humanities librarian, Sue Samson.
  ☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

- **Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions**
  ☒ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?
  Students will learn the basics of how to construct formal analytical essays about literary texts according to conventions within the discipline of literary studies. Most importantly, they will receive instruction and guidance in the process of formulating and developing meaningful thesis statements. They will learn how to support a thesis claim with a logical argument comprised of coherent paragraphs, based on close-reading of textual evidence.
  ☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

- **Demonstrate appropriate English language usage**
  ☒ Yes  If yes, how will student learning be supported?
  Students will receive extensive and detailed written feedback on their usage of the English language.
  ☐ No  If no, course may not be eligible

V. WRITING COURSE REQUIREMENTS (SEE FAQS)

- Enrollment is capped at 25 students. ☒ Yes  ☐ No
  If no, list maximum course enrollment.
  Explain how outcomes will be adequately met for this number of students.

  Justify the request for variance.
• Which written assignments will include revision in response to instructor’s feedback?  
To allow sufficient time for the revision process, students will be required to revise the first of their formal essays.

VI. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Please describe course assignments. Students should be required to individually compose at least 16 total pages of writing for assessment. At least ten (10) of these 16 pages should be new, previously unsubmitted content rather than revised work. Clear expression, quality, and accuracy of content are an integral part of the grade on any writing assignment. At least 50% of the course grade should be based on students’ performance on writing assignments.

Formal Graded Assignments:

Essay one (first draft and revised draft) ------------------------------------------ 30%
Essay two ------------------------------------------------------------------ 30%
Midterm exam (bluebook) ------------------------------------------- 15%
Final exam (bluebook)-------------------------------------------- 25%

The formal essay assignments will provide students with a number of different topics from which to choose. The first will have a minimum page number of five pages; the second will be six pages or more. Both exams will be comprised of essay responses.

• Informal Ungraded Assignments: Informal homework papers (of one page, single-spaced) will be assigned throughout the semester.

• Attach a sample writing assignment. Include instructions / handouts provided to students.

VII. ASSESSMENT

X[ ] I will participate in the University-wide Program-level Writing Assessment by requiring students in this course to upload a sample paper to the designated Moodle location. Please clearly communicate the requirement to your students and include language on your syllabus (sample below).

• This course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of student papers will be assessed by a group of faculty using a rubric developed from the following writing learning outcomes:

• Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
• Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
• Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
• Revise written work based on constructive feedback
• Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
• Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
• Demonstrate appropriate English language usage
The rubric score points are: (4) advanced, (3) proficient, (2) nearing proficiency, and (1) novices. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

VIII. SYLLABUS

Attach syllabus and send digital copy with form to faculty senate@mso.umt.edu.
The syllabus must include the list of Writing Course learning outcomes above.
Submission
LIT 240 (Epic)—Essay Two
Due date: February 26 (Friday)

R. Browning
Typed and signed at the end

The assignment: Write an analytical essay of no fewer than six double-spaced pages (size 12 Times New Roman font, margins of one inch) in which you respond to one of the prompts below. Successful essays will include a strong thesis and textual evidence from the literature that supports the thesis and main supporting claims.

About thesis statements: Your thesis will be your concise answer to the main question(s) you are attempting to answer. A "strong" thesis is a claim that needs the work of your essay to be demonstrated. If your thesis is obviously true from the start then there is no reason to write an essay in support of it. Likewise, a vague or overly broad thesis is a "weak" one. You should make it very easy for your reader to know precisely which statement is your thesis statement. For this first essay, please locate your thesis in your introductory paragraph and underline it or write it in bold type.

In text citations: For each quotation and reference to specific parts of a text, use an in-text citation. In quoting from Paradise Lost, cite the book and line numbers — for example: (3.224-229). If you are quoting from a work of prose, such as Timothy Ferris's chapter "The Sun-Worshippers," cite the page number(s). In a given in-text citation you need to include the author's last name only if the author's identity is not otherwise apparent from the context of your sentence, in which case the citation would look like this: (Ferris 68). If your readers will certainly realize you're quoting from Ferris, just give the page number, for example: (68).

Any quotation marks should precede the citation and the period for your sentence should follow the citation — for example:
The narrator writes that Trefry "saw an honesty in his eyes" (2204).

In this next case, notice that the question mark appears within the quotes and a period still follows the citation:
Oroonoko asks, "should we be slaves to an unknown people?" (2217).

Works cited list: At the end of your essay (you do not need to start a new page if there's room), provide a list of the primary texts (the literature) and any secondary sources (such as historical studies or works of literary criticism) you have cited according to MLA (Modern Language Association) conventions. Here are some examples:

Works Cited


Notice that this list is in alphabetical order (according to the first letter of each entry), it is double-spaced, and the lines after the first for each entry are indented. For further guidance in MLA
citation, visit the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). There’s a link to this site on our Moodle page in the “Writing Resources” section.

**Your word:** Please sign your name at the end of your essay. Your signature is your word that the essay’s work is your own, except where you have indicated.

Your essay is much more likely to be coherent and interesting if you make the questions you’re responding to your own. Add, omit, focus, and change the questions of the prompt as you see fit.

**Autonomy.** In the first book of Paradise Lost, Satan (in)famously proclaims, “The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n” (254-55). In light of this bold idea, analyze the condition of Satan’s own mind as it is revealed to us in the soliloquy of book four (lines 32-113). Does evidence from our reading support Satan’s optimism about the willpower of the mind? What evidence challenges Satan’s sense of autonomy? What, ultimately, is at stake in how one interprets these matters? To help develop your thinking, read one of the essays on Satan at the back of the Norton Critical Edition of Paradise Lost (choose between Lewis’s, Rajan’s, and Empson’s). Bring relevant ideas from the essay into your own discussion.

**Knowledge and temperance.** Raphael advises Adam not to busy his thoughts with “matters hid”: “Heav’n is for thee too high / To know what passes there; be lowly wise: / Think onely what concerns thee and thy being” (8.167-174). Explain Raphael’s thinking (see the full speech that starts at line 66) as it applies to Adam and Eve in their unfallen condition in paradise. In light of our readings from Paradise Lost, discuss whether or not (or the extent to which) this thinking also applies to Milton’s readers, including we readers from the 21st century. Alternatively, conduct an analysis of what Eve learns in the course of her short lifetime up to her fall. What general tendencies do you see in how Eve learns and in the direction her education is heading? What are we to understand about the relationship between Eve’s natural, untutored tendencies and the lessons she is being taught (is temperance one of them)? Use Luxon and Zukerman’s essay “Contemplation of Created Things” and/or Anthony Pagden’s “What is Enlightenment” (on Moodle) as a secondary source for your discussion.

**Architecture of the universe.** With reference to Timothy Ferris’s chapter “The Sun-Worshippers” (on Moodle), describe the architecture of the cosmos Milton reveals to readers in Satan’s journey from Hell to Earth (read book 2, lines 872-1055 and book three 418-742). In what ways has Milton created a cosmos that incorporates both ancient and modern models and perspectives? What particular astronomical matters does the text leave ambiguous or otherwise unsettled – and why? What does Satan’s cosmic journey communicate to readers about the nature of outer space? How are we to understand it? How are we to respond to Satan’s journey and the view of the universe it reveals?

**Representations of nature.** What are the characteristic ways that Milton represents the natural world? What sensory impressions, what ideas, and what values is the narrator trying to impress upon his readers about the natural landscape, including its flora and fauna and the relationships that exists between natural world and human beings? How do these ideas or impressions bear upon the larger themes of the work? I suggest that you focus on book 4 (lines 203-87 and anywhere else in the book you care to look).

**Marriage.** Use Mary Astell’s “A Preface, in Answer to Some Objections to Reflections upon Marriage” (Norton, vol. C, 8th edition pp. 283-37, 9th edition pp. 2420-24 plus see Moodle slides for the play) to illuminate the politics of marriage in Paradise Lost. Observe instances of thinking in the poem that supports the husband-sovereign, wife-subject analogy Astell addresses, and consider how the poem variously responds to this ideology (which was in force long before Astell wrote her reflections). Although it is not as overtly progressive as Astell’s statement, how does Paradise Lost express criticism of the conventional marriage politics of the time?
**A topic of your own devising.** Subject to approval (in advance of the due date), you may devise a topic of your own so long as it focuses on one or more of the literary texts we have read and considers that text in light of a well-defined contextual frame (historical, political, scientific, philosophical, social, psychological, or aesthetic). You must also select a scholarly secondary source that will help you to explain the context in which you’re studying the literature.
Genres, Themes, Approaches: EPIC (LIT 240)  
Spring 20XX

Rob Browning  
e-mail: rob.browning@mso.umt.edu  
Office Hours: (LA 217) MWF 12:05-2:00 and before class time (11:00) by appointment

This course introduces students to the rich tradition of the literary epic, as represented by several prominent epic poems (and one novel) spanning three millennia. Students will gain familiarity with the ancient Western conventions of the genre through careful reading of works by Homer and Virgil, and will study how modern authors have adopted, adapted, and challenged these in accordance with the aesthetic, philosophical, and political concerns of their time. Completion of this course satisfies the General Education requirements for both the Intermediate Writing competency and the Literary and Artistic Studies Perspective.

Required Texts:


An important requirement of this class is that you have with you in class a hard copy of the literature we’re reading for each day. Our culture is on the cusp of print and electronic technologies, but until electronic texts can allow us to mark them up with the same facility that we can annotate a paper text with a pencil they’re not sufficient for our purposes. A physical text is a basic tool that allows you to read literature more engagingly.

Graded Work:

- Essay one (first draft and revised draft) ---------------------------------- 30%
- Essay two ------------------------------------------------------------- 30%
- Midterm exam ----------------------------------------------------------- 15%
- Final exam ------------------------------------------------------------- 25%
- Participation, quizzes, and attendance --------------------------------- can raise or lower final grade (see below)

Essays: These are formal papers devoted to answering one of the questions I have provided you. Essays earning a grade of “C” or higher will have a strong, clearly stated thesis (a focused claim that requires the work of your body paragraphs to demonstrate) and supports your main claims with specific evidence from the literary texts that are your focus. I will post essay questions on Moodle two weeks before each due date.

Exams: The exams are designed to test: 1) your familiarity with our readings, 2) your knowledge of the cultural contexts in which we have been studying the literature (historical, political, philosophical, social, biographical, and inter-textual) 3) your ability to make sense of particular passages of literature in relevant contexts. I will explain the specific format of each exam in advance and we’ll devote time in class for reviewing the relevant material.

Participation: Exploring literature in the company of other readers is an opportunity to learn about the texts in ways that we never could as solitary individuals. Consistent preparation and thoughtful participation is valuable to the class as a whole, and so such effort will raise a final grade by one-third of
a letter grade. Our sense of your level of "participation" is based on your attendance, how well you appear to be keeping up with reading assignments (based on your involvement in discussions and performance on pop quizzes), and any discussions I have with you during office hours.

**Attendance** is an indication of your commitment to your studies. I become concerned after a student has missed more than four classes and expect anyone in this position to see me so we may discuss your status in the class. Ordinarily (and certainly if I hear nothing from you), each absence beyond four will reduce the final grade by one third of a letter grade. I will take attendance promptly at the start of each class, so if you arrive late for any reason, be sure to check in with me at the end of class.

**Please arrive to class on time.** While I understand that the most conscientious of us sometimes are delayed by circumstances beyond our control (and in those instances, please do come to class rather than not at all), persistent late arrivals will be a distraction for the rest of us. You may dismiss yourself during class time, but please do so only if you have an urgent reason.

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism is a violation of scholarly trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://www.umt.edu/SA/YPSA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/YPSA/index.cfm/page/1321).” If after studying the university’s Conduct Code you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism you should let me know. Violators of the Student Conduct Code will probably fail the course.

**Accessibility and Accommodation:** Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting the instructor. UM assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. “Reasonable” means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications.

**Specific objectives for students of this course:**

1. To learn the conventions and distinguishing characteristics of epic poetry and the ways in which these have changed over time.
2. To gain appreciation of how authors variously utilize and deviate from the conventions of epic to make meaning and distinguish their artistic accomplishment.
3. To gain familiarity with the major cultural forces and happenings relevant to the epic poems we study, and to understand how these cultural contexts can contribute to meaningful interpretations of the texts.
4. To learn how to perform a meaningful, interesting close reading of a literary text.
5. To gain practice in revising and developing informal homework essays (in response to our daily homework reading questions) into formal analytical essays.
6. To become proficient in writing rhetorically effective essays (well-reasoned and grammatically sound), driven by a thesis and sustained by an ordered, coherent argument.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

This schedule is subject to change, so it's important that you exchange contact information with one of your classmates early in the semester. If you miss a class, you should get in touch with that person to learn if there have been any changes to the schedule.

**Moodle:** Certain readings are accessible at the course’s Moodle page. In most instances, I have provided you with a link to text that’s in cyberspace.

1/25 Mon. Introductions
1/27 Weds. The *Iliad*
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/29 Fri</td>
<td>The Iliad</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/1 Mon.</td>
<td>The Iliad</td>
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<td>2/3 Weds.</td>
<td>The Iliad</td>
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<td>2/5 Fri.</td>
<td>The Iliad</td>
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<td>2/8 Mon.</td>
<td>The Iliad</td>
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<td>2/10 Weds.</td>
<td>The Iliad</td>
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<td>2/12 Fri.</td>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
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<td>2/15 Mon.</td>
<td>Presidents day - no class</td>
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<td>2/17 Weds.</td>
<td>Essay one due. The Aeneid</td>
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<td>2/19 Fri.</td>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
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<td>2/22 Mon.</td>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
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<td>2/24 Weds.</td>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/26 Fri.</td>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/29 Mon.</td>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
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<td>3/2 Weds.</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>3/4 Fri.</td>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
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<td>3/7 Mon.</td>
<td>Paradise Lost</td>
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<td>3/9 Weds.</td>
<td>Paradise Lost</td>
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<td>3/11 Fri.</td>
<td>Paradise Lost</td>
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<td>3/14 Mon.</td>
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<td>3/16 Weds.</td>
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<td>3/23 Weds.</td>
<td>Paradise Lost</td>
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<td>3/25 Fri.</td>
<td>2001: A Space Odyssey</td>
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<td>3/28 Mon.</td>
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<td>3/30 Weds.</td>
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<td>4/1 Fri.</td>
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<td>4/4 - 4/8</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>4/11 Mon.</td>
<td>Hard Country</td>
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<td>4/13 Weds.</td>
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<td>4/18 Mon.</td>
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<td>Hard Country</td>
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<td>4/22 Fri.</td>
<td>Omeros</td>
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4/25 Mon.  Omeros
4/27 Weds. Omeros
4/29 Fri.  Omeros

5/2 Mon.  Omeros
5/4 Weds. Omeros
5/6 Fri.  Essay revisions due, Review

Final Exam: May 13 (Friday) 10:10-12:10 in our usual classroom.