

ENGE1900
Heroes and Monsters:
From *Gilgamesh* to *Game of Thrones*

What is a hero? The stories we read, as well as the movies and television programmes we watch are full of heroism, but do we really know what a hero is? Does a hero have to be good? Do they have to be strong? Do they have to win in the end? Do we have to like them? This course will address many of these questions in relation to many different texts from a wide variety of media: from one of the earliest surviving texts of the ancient world, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to the recent global phenomenon, *Game of Thrones*. We will look especially at the way heroes are shaped by the monsters that they do battle against. Some monsters are fought with fists and swords, but others must be defeated through other means for they lie within the hero himself.

Course Timeline

WEEK	LECTURE	REQUIRED READING
1	Introductory Lecture: The Hero and his Shadows	
2	“He who saw the deep”: Gilgamesh’s Monsters	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> (“A Forest Journey”; “Ishtar, and Gilgamesh, and the Death of Enkidu”)
3	Blood on the Hero’s Hands: Odysseus and the Suitors	Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> (Book 21, “An Archery Contest”; Book 22, “Bloodshed”)
4	The Shadows of <i>Pietas</i> : Aeneas’s <i>Furor</i>	Virgil, <i>The Aeneid</i> (Book 12)
5	Mocking the Hero: Ovid’s Rewriting of the Hero	Selections from Ovid, <i>The Metamorphoses</i> (“Perseus (I)”; “Meleäger and the Calydonian Boar”)
6	Versions of Odysseus: The Hero as Monster	Dante, <i>Inferno</i> (Canto 26) Tennyson, “Ulysses”
7	Christ the Hero: Pagan Heroes, Christian Monsters	Luke 4: 1-13 (King James Version) Milton’s <i>Paradise Regained</i> (Book 1, ll.1-17; Book IV, ll.365-639)
8	Lament for the Hero: <i>Beowulf</i>	<i>Beowulf</i> (ll.1-851)

9	Chivalry and the Hero: The Shame of Sir Gawain	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> (ll.1690-1997; ll.2169-2530)
10	“Add faith unto your force”: Redcrosse Knight and the Dragon	Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> (Book I, Canto 11)
11	Monsters in the Thought: <i>Othello’s</i> Tragic Heroism	Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> (III.3)
12	Death of Heroes, Birth of Monsters: <i>Game of Thrones</i> (S1)	<i>Game of Thrones</i> (Season 1)
13	Concluding Lecture: What next for the Hero?	No reading

Learning Resources

As well as extensive lecture notes, I will give you a reading guide for each text. The guide for each text will be distributed the week before the lecture on that particular text. Additionally, I will post helpful articles, book chapters, lists of key characters onto CU Blackboard. I would also recommend the use of the BBC podcast, “In Our Time,” in which experts speak about many of the texts we are considering including: *Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and others. These programmes are an excellent introduction to these texts.

Assessment Scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Essay 1	1000-1500 words	40%
Essay 2	1000-1500 words	40%
Presentation	15 mins (approx.)	15%
Participation		5%

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