Syllabus (revised) for 090:292:03 “Homer’s Odyssey: Mythology, Psychology and Politics”

Steven F. Walker, Professor of Comparative Literature (sfw@rci.rutgers.edu)

Week 1 (9/6): Introduction. Initiation and Transformation (see sheet)

Week 2 (9/13): Odyssey I-IV. Short preparation (SP): “Initiation /Transformation of Telemakhos”

SP: “The Two Faces of Helen”

Week 3 (9/20): Odyssey V-VII + Midlife Chapter 1. SP: “Nausikaa’s Initiation/Transformation”

SP: “The Two Faces of Kalypso”


Project papers chosen and assigned (see sheet).

Week 5 (10/4): Odyssey XII-XIV + Midlife Chapters 3 + 4 SP: “Two Faces of Kirke”

Week 6 (10/11): Odyssey XV-XVI + Midlife Chapter 5 SP: “Why Odysseus needs transformation”


(*all three preparations: compare Sophocles’ vs. Homer’s representations of the three characters)

Week 8 (10/25): Odyssey XXII-XIV SP: “The Initiation and Transformation of Penelope”

Atwood’s The Penelopeiad + SP Penelope in The Penelopeiad; SP The Maids in The Penelopeiad


Week 10 (11/8): In-class examination

Weeks 11 (11/15), 12 (11/29) 13 (12/6): project presentations (30 minutes, including 10 minutes for discussion). The 10+ page project paper is due a week after presentation; see the project sheet for topics and schedules.

Week 14 (12/13): project presentations + 5-10 page personal response paper “My Odyssey” (due in class today for discussion)

Please note: this course fulfills the Core curriculum Requirement of for Writing and Communication in a Discipline for goals t, u and v.
**Required Books:** PLEASE NOTE: In order to facilitate class discussion, it is imperative that everyone have **the same book (hard copy only)** in hand (that is, same publisher, same translator) and **bring it to class** when it is being discussed.

Books are available at the Rutgers Bookstore (Barnes&Noble) Please let me know immediately if any book is missing or unavailable. ([sfw@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:sfw@rci.rutgers.edu)) Buy all books as soon as possible, since the bookstore will be sending unbought copies back to the publisher by mid-semester.


**Grading:** attendance and participation: 20%; project presentation and paper: 40% response paper s: 10% examination: 30%

**NB:** attendance is presumed to be perfect, except in cases of excused absences. Please do your best to arrive on time (= 9:50AM). Feel free to bring in coffee etc. You may leave the room for a few minutes at any time without asking for permission.