

English 108 World Literature:  
A Portrait of You as a Reader



Vincenzo Foppa, untitled [Boy Reading Cicero], c. 1464

St. Augustine writes, “I have become a question to myself.” What does it mean to turn your self into a question? Students in this course will look at three Renaissance authors—Shakespeare, Montaigne, and Petrarch—who take up this question of the self and explore it through new genres of writing. The course will also examine how later authors, musicians, and filmmakers from a variety of places and times have responded to these authors.

*Contact Information*

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*Required Materials*

*Hamlet*. Oxford World’s Classics. ISBN: 978-0199535811. [Link to Duck Store Page](#)

There is only one text you need for this class. You must purchase the specific edition listed above. Versions of the play that are online or published by a different company are not acceptable. Used or rented is fine. If you buy the book from Amazon or other online stores, make sure to search using the ISBN number listed. All other readings will be made available through Canvas.

## *Calendar*

See the Weekly Modules on Canvas for details about what to read and do for each class session.

Week 1: Augustine, selections from *Confessions*

Week 2: Petrarch, poems from *Scattered Verses*

Week 3: Self Poetry after Petrarch

Week 4: Montaigne, selections from *Essays*

Week 5: Montaigne, further selections from *Essays*

Week 6: Montaigne's Readers

Week 7: Shakespeare, *Hamlet* acts 1-2

Week 8: Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3-5

Week 9: Kurosawa, *The Bad Sleep Well*

Week 10: TBD

## *Assignment Overview*

**Reading:** Completing the week's assigned reading is essential to all the other work in the class. Read slowly! The language will often be both archaic and dense. I recommend reading twice, once to get a basic sense of what's happening and once to think about the language and meaning. Reading aloud is not only helpful but entertains yourself and the people you live with. When we get to Shakespeare, watching film versions or looking at modernized editions is completely fine \*if and only if\* you also read the original.

**Attending Class and Discussion Section:** Each week, the main class will hold two sessions on zoom. They will typically consist of a lecture, question and answer, and some small-group or whole-class activity. You will also be assigned to attend one discussion section each week. Discussion sections will usually build from the weekly discussion posts. Attending all three weekly sessions, prepared and having done the reading, is important and counts toward your grade. Attendance is worth **20%** of your grade. Showing up to class late will count as one third an absence. If you're unable to attend the live sessions for technical or other reasons, you can watch the recording and submit a 300-word summary to make up your absence.

**Weekly Discussion Posts:** Each week, you'll write a discussion post of at least 250 words. Your posts must: 1) include at least one quotation from the week's reading, 2) spend some time discussing the quotation, and 3) ask a meaningful question about the text for discussion with classmates. Posts are due by Sunday before midnight. You are allowed to miss two weeks of discussion posts. Discussion posts are worth **20%** of your grade for the term.

**Portrait of a Reader:** Your main task for this term is to create your Portrait of a Reader. The Portrait will be a document of you growing as a reader and working toward answers to some of our course questions.

**Weekly Entries:** Each week, you will write a new entry in your Portrait. The entries will ask you to reflect on and respond to some portion of the week's reading that. The entries are not traditional papers. They are more like exercises in "reading in slow motion" where you write about the process of reading and thinking about the text. You may be asked to write in a variety of genres like letters, journal entries, poems, quotation collages, and dialogues. These are mostly graded on completion, meeting all the requirements of the prompt, and demonstrating that you've read and reflected on the text. However, the best entries will show signs of having challenged yourself or done something unique. You're allowed to miss three with no penalty, and there's no weekly entry for week 10, so you'll write a total of six. Weekly entries will be due on Thursday each week. Weekly entries are worth 30% of your grade for the term.

**End of Term Revision:** see assignment description on Assignments page

**Note:** there is no final exam for this course.

## Policies

**Accessibility:** Please let me know if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation, especially in this online form. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

**Formatting Papers:** For turning in assignments electronically, you can either submit them as text on Canvas or as an attached document. If you submit them as attachments, you need to use .doc(x) or .pdf format (not .pages or .odt). If you need to include citations, you should use MLA-style parenthetical citations and include a Works Cited page. A great guide to MLA format can be found at [Purdue's OWL website](#). You are expected to proofread your work; too many errors will result in a penalty to your grade.

**Late Assignments:** I give out extensions readily, but you need to ask in advance. Late assignments are generally graded down one third a letter grade per day late. Exceptions may be given for emergencies and other drastic situations.

**Plagiarism:** All work must be your own and written solely for this class. Plagiarism can be unintentional, so be careful and make sure you understand the rules. If you're not certain, ask the instructor or TA. If you quote, paraphrase, or borrow ideas from an article, website, editor's note, friend, or any other outside source, you need to provide documentation. I encourage you to look at the library's guides for citing sources and avoiding plagiarism (<https://library.uoregon.edu/citing>). The same link will also allow you to access the university's official policy toward academic misconduct; you should read over the policy if you're unclear on what counts as cheating or plagiarism. If you're struggling with a paper, I encourage you to contact me. It's better to submit a paper late, unfinished, or in poor quality than risk the penalties for plagiarizing.

**English Language Learners:** Anyone can succeed in this class whether or not English is their primary language. You will likely have some additional challenges: readings and papers will take longer to complete, participating in class discussion may be more intimidating. If you're having trouble with participation, you're welcome to share your ideas in email or office hours. If you're struggling with assignments, come to office hours and we can discuss. You should know that grammar, syntax, and spelling are a relatively minor part of any paper grades. As with all students, I expect you to show care with your language, but your ideas are what is most important.

**Advisory:** Be aware that the material we read for this course can be disturbing in its treatment of sexuality and violence, and our discussions will cover these topics. If you feel you can't participate in discussion around a particular issue or text, let me know and I will try to design alternative work.

## Grades and How to Improve

If you are concerned about your grade, the best thing you can do is seek help early. Some other things you can do:

- 1) Give yourself more time to complete the reading and assignments. Each class's reading should take you about 60-90 minutes, if you read it carefully, go back and read it again, and take notes. If you read slowly, you will understand more and perform better on the assignments. Similarly, be sure to take time to plan your writing before beginning, and then read it over once you're through.
- 2) Sign up for office hours at [this link](#). Many students find it awkward or intimidating to meet with a professor, but it's one of the best ways to learn. I'm happy to talk with you about the plays, assignments, or any areas you feel you'd like feedback.
- 3) Make an appointment with the Writing Associates Program, which offers free, one-on-one, online(!) peer tutoring for students in lower-division English and Composition classes and Honors College classes. Writing Associate tutors are advanced English majors who have been trained to tutor writing. They are available to help students with any aspect of their writing for this course, from learning how to write about literature and media to crafting clearer and more effective arguments. More information and sign ups are available at [this link](#).

