

Love and War: Epic Romance in the Renaissance

EL 482.01

Professor Ethan Guagliardo



Course Description

Epic, at least since Virgil's *Aeneid*, has always been the literary form of empire. Epics offer an expansive vision of the cosmos in which everything has its place—especially the barbarian, degenerate, and passionate “others” tamed by the epic poet's authoritative voice, the voice of civilization, divinity, and reason. Yet on a second look, even Virgil seems to have had his doubts. In this class, we will examine the legacy of Virgilian doubt and counter-epic in the development of the early modern hybrid genre called “epic romance,” paying particular attention to the philosophical, religious, and social developments that helped shape the peculiar hybridity of Renaissance heirs to Virgil. We will also look at other genres—particularly tragedy—that responded to epic's monological form, and concentrate on those supposed epic others—including femininity, affect, polytheism, pessimism, and anti-political sentiment—that both resist and seep into Renaissance epic. Primary readings include Virgil's *Aeneid*, Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Texts

Virgil, *Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin). ISBN: 0143105132.

Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. P. Hamilton (preferred; the cheaper Penguin ed. by Roche also acceptable).

Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. David Bevington (preferred).

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. William Kerrigan et al. (Modern Library preferred).

Assignments

Weekly Assignments: In order to facilitate more fruitful class discussions, I will ask that you submit a one-page response paper every week, by Wednesday 10:00 AM, online. These response papers should

concentrate on close-reading the language of a single passage. In Shakespeare, for instance, no more than three lines; in Spenser, no more than a single stanza. Nonetheless, you are invited and encouraged to connect your readings to the broader concerns and themes of the works. You may not miss any weeks.

Exams: Short answer and essay questions.

Final Paper: 10-page research paper due on the scheduled date of the final exam. This paper's topic will be crafted in consultation with me.

Grade Distribution

Participation	10%
Weekly Assignments	20%
Midterm	30%
Final Paper	40%

Other Course Policies

Attendance: *Attendance is mandatory.* Participation is crucial to your success in this course. Students will be allowed **three** unexcused absences. Any absences beyond three will lower your final grade for the course. **Five or more unexcused absences will result in an F.** Students who have not read assigned materials or have not come to class with their homework will be marked as absent and asked to leave class. I reserve the right to excuse absences in particular cases.

Academic Honesty: *All student work, whether graded or ungraded, must be his or her own. All sources consulted, whether in print or online, must be appropriately cited.* If you are uncertain what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please talk to me.

Weekly Schedule

Please note: All readings should be done by the day they are assigned.

Week 1

T Introduction; Homer, "The Shield of Achilles," from *The Iliad* [CP]

Th Virgil, *Aeneid*, Books 1-2.

Week 2

T Virgil, *Aeneid*, Books 3-4.

Th Virgil, *Aeneid*, Books 6-7.

Week 3

T Virgil, *Aeneid*, Books 8 and 12.

Th Ariosto, "Astolfo's Voyage to the Moon," from *Orlando Furioso*, trans. James Harrington [Pdf].

Week 4

T Torquato Tasso, "Chorus 1" from *Aminta* [Pdf]; Michel de Montaigne, "Of Glory," from *Essays* [Pdf].

Th Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Acts 1-3.

Week 5

T Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, Acts 4-5.

Th Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 1, Cantos 1-2.

Week 6

T Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 1, Cantos 4-6.

Th Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 1, Cantos 9-10.

Week 7

T Midterm Exam

Th Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 3, Cantos 3-4; 6.

Week 8

T Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 5, Proem and Cantos 1-3.

Th Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 5, Cantos 4-6.

Week 9

T Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Book 5, Cantos 7-9.

Th Spenser, *Two Cantos of Mutability*.

Week 10

T Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Acts 1-3.

Th Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Acts 4-5. **Final Paper Proposal Due.**

Week 11

T Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, continued.

Th Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 1-2.

Week 12

T Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 3-4. **First Draft of Final Paper Due.**

Th Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 5-6.

Week 13

T Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Books 8-9.

Th Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 10.

Final Paper Due