

Course Description:

This course will explore *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* films and compare them to George R. R. Martin's series of books collectively titled *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Students will read three to five of Martin's texts over the course of the term. Students will be introduced to elements of the epic from its ancient beginnings in Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, and will analyze the changes in the epic form in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including, but not limited to, the evolution of the epic hero and his or her world, the role of religions, the greying of the distinction between good and evil, the ideas of Joseph Campbell and the quest of the hero, and Jungian archetypal psychology. Students will study excerpts from Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and Thomas Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

Attention will also be given to the techniques of film and adaption, specifically with a study of Peter Jackson's representation of Middle-earth. An exploration of how cultures produce, consume, and pass on the epic through time and tradition will also be analyzed, from the oral bards of Ancient Greece to the modern American culture of film. While some familiarization with Tolkien might be helpful, it is in no way required to participate in the course.

One of the overarching areas for analysis will be various perspectives on what is meant by the ideas of **hero** and **heroism** as they are displayed in myriad cultures and texts.

This course is designed for serious readers. In order to complete Martin's novels within the time-frame of the course, students will need to read 35-40 pages per night. Furthermore, as Martin's world is quite dark, **students should be mature enough to handle some scenes of explicit language, violence, and sexuality.**

Assignments:

Students can expect to be evaluated through quizzes, essays, and projects, such as film analysis, artistic interpretations, group projects, and a quarter and final exam.

In addition to reading and writing about the literature, students may have opportunities to create visual and musical explorations of course content. In some instances, students should be prepared to work collaboratively, however, most major projects and exams will be graded on an individual basis. Emphasis will also be placed upon the formation of habits of self-discipline in order to ensure success in high school, college, and beyond.

Students should be prepared to read and annotate 35-40 pages of literature in preparation for each class period. Class time will be dedicated to discussion of readings as well as guidance and preparation of individual and group projects. A premium is placed upon students' burgeoning ability to discuss literature intelligently, and all students are expected to contribute meaningfully to class discussions of the literary and philosophical material. Quizzes, declamations, timed writings, and major essays may also be expected. Students will be coached to develop goal-setting, time management, and interdisciplinary skills.

All written assignments are due at the beginning of the period and **no late work is accepted!** If a student is absent, it is his or her responsibility to get the work assigned and information covered during his or her absence. Students have the total number of days absent plus one to complete and turn in make-up work. After that, make-up work will no longer be accepted. **Students are NOT required to purchase any books for this course, although many students prefer to have their own private copies in which to annotate.** Laptop computers and tablets are not required for the course, although many students find these forms of technology useful to access reading assignments that are online and for researching specific topics during class discussions and lectures.

Classroom Behavior: Students are expected to behave respectfully towards everyone in the class. Any disrespect towards other students or staff will be dealt with according to policy set forth by San Dieguito Union High School District.

Grading: Grades are determined traditionally by the percentage of points acquired out of the total points possible for the course:

100%-90% = A 89-80% = B 79-70% = C 69-60% = D 59-0% = F

Plagiarism/Cheating: Plagiarism is the use of any idea or phrasing of an idea traceable to a single source without proper acknowledgment. Plagiarism is also turning in someone else's work as one's own or supplying one's work to another student for him or her to use. Cheating is copying another student's homework or classwork, quiz, and test answers from other students with or without their permission, and copying information from websites without proper citation. At no point during the course will students be asked to refer to "other" materials than those specifically listed for this course. **Referencing Spark Notes, Cliffs Notes, Monarch Notes, or any written or online source other than those listed on the reading schedule or specifically suggested from class lecture or discussion for this course is considered cheating and will be punished with a zero for the particular assignment and referral to school administration.** Please refer to the Academic Honesty Contract on my website.

Materials required for every class period:

1. Red, blue, and black pens; 1 or more colored hi-liters
2. Text(s) being studied
3. All handouts
4. English binder with dividers
5. Hole-punch

I look forward to a fast-paced and stimulating term in which we will grow as students and people. And while we should always keep before us the words of Heraclitus—"Much learning does not teach understanding"—we should also remember Aristotle's words—"The activity of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of all virtuous activities." I am excited to get started; I hope you are too!

Please sign and return this sheet.

Print name

Student signature

Date

Parent signature

Date