IDS 2935: Immortality
Quest 1: Nature and Culture

I. General Information

Class Meetings
- Spring 2025
- 100% In-Person, No GTAs, 35 Residential
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 1:55 pm – 2:45 pm
- AND 0019
- 3 Credits

Instructor

- Mattias Gassman
- Office hours: Monday, Wednesday, 12:00 – 1:00 pm
- CSE E444
- mattias.gassman@ufl.edu

Course Description
What is immortality? Can we live forever? What would it mean to live forever, and should we want to? What part of us would live on—and who, after all, are we? For millennia, humans have debated, hoped for, questioned, and flatly rejected the possibility of everlasting life in the body or after death. In this multidisciplinary course, we will explore the long history of Western thinking about immortality in its many senses: figurative survival through memory of great deeds, personal salvation after death, elevation to status as a literal god, restoration to bodily life, and collective survival as a species.

We will see how hope, skepticism, and changing expectations of immortality shaped the epic poetry, philosophy, religious literature, novels, and art of the Greeks and Romans. We will watch the spread of the Jewish expectation for bodily resurrection and a literal end of the world transform Greco-Roman conceptions of immortality. In both literary traditions, intellectual and personal encounters with immortal beings—gods, angels, and immortalized humans—are a constant theme, one reworked decisively by Christian philosophy and poetry. We now experience the world through modern science and the technologies it has made possible. Does that transformation require yet a new way of thinking about immortality—or complete rejection of the possibility? In the final weeks of the course, we will turn to modern archeology, philosophy, and speculative literature, to ponder the enduring significance of immortality and the questions it raises.

Quest and General Education Credit
- Quest 1
- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 2000 words

This course accomplishes the Quest and General Education objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C *or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.*

Required Readings and Works

- Leonard, John, ed. *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, Penguin Classics (Penguin, 2003)
- Melville, Ronald, trans. *Lucretius: On the Nature of the Universe*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press, 1993, reprinted 2009)
- Rowe, Christopher, trans. *The Last Days of Socrates*, Penguin Classics (Penguin, 2010).
- Additional *required* readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas or as library e-books
- Materials and Supplies Fees: N/A

Course materials provided or linked online may be protected by copyright. Do not distribute or use them for purposes outside of this class.

Course Objectives

1. Identify, describe, and explain the history of the philosophical, religious, and political pursuit of immortality in Western civilization from Homer to the 20th century.
2. Identify, describe, and explain theories for conceptualizing human immortality, immortal beings, and life after death as developed across the long arc of Greco-Roman culture and further elaborated in the modern world.
3. Identify, describe, and explain modern scholarly and scientific engagement with themes of immortality, and the scholarly methodologies involved.
4. Analyze how works across disciplines and genres from the ancient, early modern, and modern worlds represent immortal beings and the possibility of immortality.
5. Analyze and assess the intellectual viability of competing philosophical and religious accounts of immortality.
6. Identify and analyze philosophical, scientific, and religious concepts of immortality as developed in fictional works of various genres.
7. Develop and articulate in writing clear and effective responses to central questions about the theme of immortality and its development over time.
8. Communicate clear, effective, and well-supported ideas and arguments, orally and in writing, about the philosophical and cultural significance of immortality.
9. Connect literary and intellectual themes of immortality with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond.
10. Reflect on the relevance and viability of concepts of immortality in modern life.

Assignments

- 9 reading quizzes
- 1 midterm
- 1 experiential learning component
- 1 analytical paper (2000 words, due in week 13)

Advice on computer use

As a rule, you will learn better if you read printed texts and take notes by hand, rather than working on an electronic device. If you are able, I strongly encourage you to print out the online readings and to take notes on paper (while reading, but especially in class). If you choose to use a computer in the classroom, please keep it on airplane mode to prevent distraction. If you appear to be using electronic devices for non-class-related purposes, this will negatively affect your participation grade.

AI policy

Use of AI technologies to produce content for your assignments is forbidden.

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

1. **Active Participation and Attendance: 20%**
    a. 10% of your grade is based on discussion participation: an exemplary participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below.
    b. 10% of your grade is based on attendance. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 1: an A becomes a B, and so on.
    c. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per UF attendance policy. **Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course**. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.
2. **Reading quizzes (nine, drop the lowest two, 5% each): 35%**
    a. Nine times during the semester, we will have an in-class quiz. You will be asked to answer questions, identify terms or passages, and/or comment on passages from the readings.
    b. All quizzes are closed-book and answered on paper. Further information will be given in class.
3. **Midterm exam, held Week 7: 25%**
    a. A fifty-minute test will require you to answer questions, identify terms or passages, and/or comment on passages from the readings.
    b. Held on Wednesday, February 26 (week 7) during the regular class hour. Exam will be closed-book and answered on paper.
4. **Experiential learning component (500 words), due Week 11: 5%**
    a. You will visit a local museum, identify an object/display, and write up a report. See description below. Professor will provide written feedback. The length of your report will be a minimum of 500 words.
    b. Due Wednesday, March 26 (week 10) at **9:00 pm** EDT.
5. **Final essay (2,000 words), due Week 13: 15%**
    a. You will submit a minimum 2,000-word essay on a thesis that responds to a prompt concerning the pursuit of immortality in Western culture.
    b. Your argument must engage closely with at least four course readings and should show an accurate and nuanced knowledge of the overarching history of ideas on immortality. Professor will provide written feedback. See Canvas for details.
    c. Due Friday, April 18 (week 13) at **9:00 pm** EDT.

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

The following schedule is arranged by topic, not week of the semester, and is divided into three broad cultural epochs.

Phase 1: Greco-Roman afterlives

Topic 1. Immortal glory: before the afterlife
What is worth living for, in a world of gods who cannot die and mortals who know they will soon die? We begin our study with the *Iliad* of Homer, the first and central book in the Greek cultural tradition.

Monday, January 13 (week 1) – Introduction to the class and to Homer's Iliad

Wednesday, January 15 (week 1) – Homer, Iliad 1.1-246, 345-427, 488-611, 9.379-429, 12.307–28, 16.431–61 (19 pp.)

Friday, January 17 (week 1) – Homer, Iliad 18.65-147, 462-616; 19.238-337; 23.1-107; 24.697-804 (16 pp.)

Topic 2. The afterlife in early Greece
The Greeks of Homer's day could imagine humans lingering on, not alive and yet not entirely gone, after death. Some also hoped to attain spiritual goods—perhaps even a life after death—through the favor of particular gods. We continue with the underworld scene in the *Odyssey* of Homer and the most famous myth of immortality from early Greece, Demeter's quest for her kidnapped daughter Persephone.

Wednesday, January 22 (week 2) – Homer, *Odyssey* 11 (17 pp.)

Friday, January 24 (week 3) – *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (11 pp.)

Topic 3. The philosopher's hope
European philosophy, it has been said, is "a series of footnotes to Plato." No philosopher has captured the Western imagination more decisively than the Socrates Plato depicted in his dialogues. What does Socrates have to teach about death and immortality, as he awaits his execution for corrupting the youth of Athens with his questions? Are his words convincing? Is life, after all, a continuous practice for death?

Monday, January 27 (week 3) – Plato, *Phaedo*, 57a-77e (Rowe, *Last Days*, 87-118) (32 pp.)

Wednesday, January 29 (week 3) – Plato, *Phaedo*, 78a-95e (Rowe, *Last Days*, 118-40) (23 pp.)
Reading quiz 1

Friday, January 31 (week 3) – Plato, *Phaedo*, 96a-107b, 114d-118a (Rowe, *Last Days*, 140-56, 165-9) (22 pp.) AND SKIM 107c-114c (Rowe, 157-69)

Topic 4. Philosophical myth? The underworld and the afterlife in Plato's thought
Does philosophical hope for immortality require a new way of thinking about the soul's *location* and *experiences* after death? We conclude our examination of Plato with two passages that rethink the structure of the universe in order to explain the fate of human souls: the concluding portion of Socrates' discourse in the *Phaedo* and the Myth of Er, Plato's philosophical reimagining of judgment and reincarnation after death.

Monday, February 3 (week 4) – Plato, *Republic* 10, excerpt (Myth of Er, 7 pp.), *Phaedo*, 107c-114c (Rowe, *Last Days*, 157-65) (16 pp. total)

Recommended: reading on the "spindle of necessity" (4 pp.)

Topic 5. Immortal atoms, mortal souls
Can the right understanding of the universe liberate humanity from the fear of death? The greatest statement of Epicurean philosophy, Lucretius's epic *On the Nature of the Universe* poses a cosmic and ethical vision sharply at odds with Plato's. Speculative physics about atoms, prescient theories of a "soul" that resembles a nervous system, and a new conception of distant, blissful gods combine to challenge Greco-Roman religion and immortality itself.

Wednesday, February 5 (week 4) – Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* 1.1-634 (18 pp.)
Reading quiz 2

Friday, February 7 (week 4) – Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* 1.951-1118, 2.1-333 (17 pp.)

Monday, February 10 (week 5) – Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, 3.1-712, 912-1094 (26 pp.)

Topic 6. Ruling your way to glory
Traditional Roman belief had little or no place for individual existence beyond death. As for Homer's Achilles, glory was all the hope there was. We now explore a peculiarly Roman path to everlasting blessedness: statesmanship. Our guide is the dream-vision, set by the orator Cicero in the mouth of the military hero Scipio Aemilianus, of a heavenly afterlife for the faithful statesman. What was Cicero proposing? Did he mean for his readers to believe the dream? How did it shape the hopes of Roman statesmen, present and future—and what did it have to do with the deification of emperors or the hope of a Golden Age? Besides literature and archeology, we will discuss artistic depictions of deification, under the early Empire, by later Romans, and in American Neoclassical art.

Wednesday, February 12 (week 5) – Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 1.1-13, 2.4-21 (excerpts) (12 pp.)
Reading quiz 3

Friday, February 14 (week 5) – Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 6.9-29 ("Dream of Scipio") (8 pp.)

Monday, February 17 (week 6) – texts about ruler-deification (Hymn to Demetrius Poliorcetes; Cassius Dio 51.20, excerpt; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15, excerpt); images of apotheosis (5 pp.)

Topic 7. Poetical philosophy, imperial poetry: Roman underworld, Roman glory
We round out our visits to the Greco-Roman afterlife with one of the most influential reinterpretations of Greek mythology—and philosophy—for a Roman audience: the sixth book of the great epic of imperial Rome, Vergil's *Aeneid*. We then consider a Roman vision for renewed Golden Age in the most famous of all brief Greco-Roman poems, Vergil's *Eclogue* 4.

Wednesday, February 19 (week 6) – Vergil, *Aeneid* 6 (trans. Humphries) (30 pp.)

Friday, February 21 (week 6) – Discuss and debate: whom should we immortalize? (No new reading, so come ready with initial questions for review!)
Reading quiz 4

MIDTERM

Monday, February 24 (week 7) – review for midterm
Wednesday, February 26 (week 7) – midterm examination

Phase 2: Scripture and its legacy

Topic 8. The dawn of a bodily afterlife and the end of history
Greco-Roman conceptions of the afterlife generally centered on the immortality of the soul. In a corner of the Near East, a very different hope was taking shape. Through selections drawn from across the long arc of the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, we will trace out Israelite ideas about gods, developing conceptions of a literal life after death. How did scriptural beliefs in a resurrection intersect with monotheistic tradition and Jewish experience of defeat, exile, and restoration to the Promised Land? We conclude with the formation of a distinctive Jewish expectation for a coming end to human history, in the central work of biblical apocalyptic literature, the book of the prophet Daniel.

Friday, February 28 (week 7) – What are the scriptures? God and covenant in the Hebrew Bible. Readings: selections from the Hebrew scriptures. (15 pp.)

Monday, March 3 (week 8) – Idolatry and (after)life in the Bible. Readings: further selections from the Hebrew scriptures (10 pp.)

Wednesday, March 5 (week 8) – Daniel 1–6 (13 pp.)

Friday, March 7 (week 8) – Daniel and destiny: 1 Maccabees (excerpt), Daniel 7–12 (12 pp.) Reread *Hymn to Demetrius Poliorcetes*.
Reading quiz 5

Topic 9. "I am the resurrection and the life": Christian afterlives.
We continue our study of the biblical tradition by exploring the beginnings of a distinctive Christian view of immortality. How did experience of Jesus and his teaching lead some Jews to a new understanding of the hoped-for resurrection of all humanity?

Monday, March 10 (week 9) – the Gospels (excerpts) (10 pp.)

Wednesday, March 12 (week 9) – Acts of the Apostles, letters of Paul (excerpts) (9 pp.)

Topic 10. The end and immortality
What happens to expectations for an afterlife, when the world itself is no longer immortal? Resurrection was not the only transformative teaching brought, by Christians, from the Jewish scriptural tradition into Greco-Roman culture. Turning to the other great work of apocalyptic literature, the Revelation of John of Patmos, we explore visions of the end and the remaking of the physical world and human society.

Friday, March 14 (week 9) – selections from the Revelation of John (15 pp.)
Reading quiz 6

Topic 11. Saints and saviors
Do people have to be great—powerful, educated, influential—to gain immortality? Christianity posed a fundamental challenge to Greco-Roman values. Nowhere was that challenge more clearly expressed than in the glorification of a new kind of immortal being: the martyred saint. We begin with a pagan (and grotesquely farcical) story of the personal transformation and salvation of an ordinary person: the final metamorphosis of Lucius, titular donkey of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, back into a human—and a devout worshipper of Isis and Osiris. We then turn to the harrowing account of the imprisonment and execution of two young Roman women and their male companions—based, seemingly, on Perpetua's own prison diary—in 203.

Monday, March 24 (week 10) – selections from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (*Golden Ass*) and *On the God of Socrates* (18 pp.)

Wednesday, March 26 (week 10) – *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* (trans. Jacobs; 10 pp.)
Experiential learning component due

Topic 12. The new immortals
Jumping forward to the confident Christianity of the post-Constantinian Empire, we first explore the triumphant vision of the conversion of Rome and of the heavenly afterlife placed by the poet Prudentius (ca. 390) in the mouth of the martyr Lawrence (d. 258). We set this stirring and patriotic poem alongside a more practical, down-to-earth account of the power of the new kind of immortal, the Christian saint, in Augustine's *City of God*.

Friday, March 28 (week 10) – Prudentius, *The Martyrs' Crowns* 2 (Hymn to Lawrence); Augustine, *City of God* 22.8 (13 pp.)

Topic 13. Building the medieval afterlife
Ancient Christian reimagination of immortality did not stop with the invention of a new kind of immortal being, the saint. It also issued, over the centuries, in elaborate reconsideration of what had happened to the righteous dead of Old Testament Israel and what happens to the not-quite-righteous dead of the new, Christian era. Through targeted readings in scriptural foundations, the sophisticated theology of Augustine's *City of God*, and imaginative accounts of dead men who came back to life, we explore two central themes in the Medieval Latin vision of immortality: purgatory and Christ's descent into Hell.

Monday, March 31 (week 11) – Purgatory: biblical selections, Augustine, *City of God* 21.26, 22.30 (trans. R.W. Dyson, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Cambridge, 1998), Bede the Venerable, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.12 (about 16 pp.)
Reading quiz 7

Wednesday, April 2 (week 11) – harrowing of Hell: biblical selections; Julius Firmicus Maternus, *On the Error of Profane Religions* 24–25; *Gospel of Nicodemus*, second part (about 15 pp.)

Phase 3: immortality in the modern imagination

Topic 14. Twilight of the gods
Christian scripture has supplied one great element in the Western apocalyptic imagination. Another comes out of Norse mythology. How did the people of Iceland tell the stories of their gods and of *Ragnarök*, the impending doom and remaking of the world? We continue with excerpts from the *Poetic Edda*.

Friday, April 4 (week 11) – *Voluspa* (trans. Pettit) (5 pp., plus 4 pp. recommended introduction)
Also available: sections on Baldr and *Ragnarök* from Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda* (trans. Faulkes).

Topic 15. Paradise and the loss of immortality
Christian scripture does not simply promise a future resurrection, judgment, and remaking of the world. It also posits an original loss of immortality given to humans by God. We have seen the myths made by the Greeks and Romans, both before and after Plato's case for the immortality of the soul. How is the epic tradition transformed by Christian belief in the loss of immortality by both humans and angelic powers? We turn now to the Garden of Eden of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and to his imagination, very different from Augustine's, of the fallen angelic powers mentioned, but almost never described, in Greek and Hebrew scripture.

Monday, April 7 (week 12) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.1-669 (17 pp.)

Wednesday, April 9 (week 12) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 4.172-775 (16 pp.)

Reading quiz 8

Friday, April 11 (week 12) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9.643-1189 AND SKIM: 10.845-1104, 12.469-649 (29 pp.)

Topic 16. Beyond immortality? Technology and eschatology in the 20th-century imagination
Can we still conceive of an individual immortality in an industrial world? Do we need to, or is the chance to master evolution and environment enough? We compare the speculative literary depictions of immortality and the world's end set out by two British public intellectuals of the early twentieth century: J.B.S. Haldane, biologist, Communist, and early transhumanist, and the Medievalist and Christian writer C.S. Lewis.

Monday, April 14 (week 13) – Haldane, J.B.S. "The Last Judgment," in *Possible Worlds and Other Essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927; Phoenix Library 1930), 287-312 (26 pp.)

Wednesday, April 16 (week 13) – Lewis, C.S. *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups* (copyright 1945; repr. New York, Scribner: 1974, 2003), pp. 169-79, 186-90, 284-91, 365-69 (36 pp.)

Friday, April 18 (week 13) – in-class discussion: science, government, and modern quests for immortality. Continue with Haldane and Lewis.
Analytical papers due.

Topic 17. Undying lands: humans, immortals, and the hope for deathlessness
The first utopia of Western literature is Plato's Atlantis, the great island beyond the Pillars of Hercules that was sunk by earthquake and floods. His tale of the cyclic destruction and renewal of human civilization by catastrophe has repeatedly gripped the modern imagination. How is the utopian imagination transformed by reflection on human longing for immortality—and the recollection, inherited from the biblical (and Miltonian) tradition, of its loss? For our second week on the 20th- century literary reimagining of immortality, we turn to J.R.R. Tolkien's reworking of the Atlantis myth. In Tolkien's "secondary world," immortality is an observable day-to-day reality, simply beyond human grasping—by the gift, the immortals say, of the supreme deity. Past peoples theorized about the cosmic ordering of gods, angels, and unchanging stars. What role do the elves play, after all? In the modern age, can we think of actual immortality only in fiction?

Monday, April 21 (week 14) – Plato, *Timaeus* (selection); Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion*, edited by Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen & Unwin, 1977), "Akallabêth" (34 pp.)

Wednesday, April 23 (week 14) – Continue with Tolkien. In-class discussion: are myths of immortality still possible?
Reading quiz 9

IV. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see here.

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A–	90 – 93%		C–	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B–	80 – 83%		D–	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubric(s)

Participation Rubric

Excellent (90%-100%)	Typically comes to class with questions about the readings in mind. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion
Good (80%-89%)	Does not always come to class with questions about the reading in mind. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.
Average (70%-79%)	Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion.
Insufficient (60%-69%) or **Unsatisfactory (below 60%)**	Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion.

Experiential learning rubric

Full credit **(95%-100%)**	Report meets length requirement; identifies an object/display as assigned; includes two photos, one of the object/display itself and the other showing the student with the object/display; and includes both a description and a reflection that cites at least three specific, relevant passages from our readings or images from the class presentations. Grade may be reduced by up to 5% for significant stylistic flaws, repeated typos, etc.
Partial credit **(65-70%)**	A report may fall into this category for two reasons: 1. Report contains all necessary elements, but is a) too short or b) includes only one or two relevant citations; or 2. It includes reflection and the required selfie but omits a photo and/or description of the object/display itself. Grade may be reduced by up to 5% for significant stylistic flaws, repeated typos, etc.
Minimal credit **(0-30%)**	A report may fall into this category for two reasons: 1. It does not include a photograph of the student with the object/display. 2. While generally well-written on the level of style, typography, and punctuation, it is vague, superficial, or illogical, as evidenced by features such as the following: a. It derives multiple citations, without explanation, from passages or texts we have not read. b. Key citations are nonsensical (the passage cited has nothing to do with the idea being discussed). c. It does not include citations at all. Reports displaying the above features may receive up to 30% credit. Failure to submit a report, or submission of a report that omits the reflective section, will result in 0% credit.

Analytical Paper Rubric

	Excellent (90%-100%)	**Good** (80%-89%)	**Average** (70%-79%)	**Insufficient** (60%-69%) **or Unsatisfactory** (below 60%)
Thesis and Argumentation	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation of the text(s). Argument logically and thoroughly supports the thesis.	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text(s) under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement with the text(s). Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with insufficient support.	Thesis is vague and/or confused, demonstrates a failure to understand the text(s). Argument lacks logical flow and makes little or no use of source material.
Use of Sources	At least four relevant texts are well incorporated, deployed, and contextualized throughout.	At least four relevant texts are incorporated, but with less context and/or less effective incorporation into the argument.	Relevant texts are present but are not properly contextualized, are present in insufficient number, and/or are insufficiently incorporated into the argument.	Two or fewer relevant texts appear.
Organization	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and incorporates a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order, resulting in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Poor organization. Hard to follow. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.
Grammar, mechanics, and MLA Style	No errors.	A few errors.	Some errors.	Many errors.

V. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the Quest the General Education student learning outcomes for Humanities (H).

Humanities (H) Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain the history of the philosophical, religious, and political pursuit of immortality in Western civilization from Homer to the 20th century. (Quest 1, H) Assessments: Active class participation, in-class examination, reading quizzes, analytical paper.
- Identify, describe, and explain theories for conceptualizing human immortality, immortal beings, and life after death as developed across the long arc of Greco-Roman culture and further elaborated in the modern world (Quest 1, H). Assessments: Active class participation, in-class examination, reading quizzes, analytical paper, experiential learning component
- Identify, describe, and explain modern scholarly and scientific engagement with themes of immortality, and the scholarly methodologies involved (Quest 1, H). Assessments: Active class participation, reading quizzes, analytical paper

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyse information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Analyze how works across disciplines and genres from the ancient, early modern, and modern worlds represent immortal beings and the possibility of immortality. (Quest 1, H). **Assessments:** Analytical paper, active class participation.
- Analyze and assess the intellectual viability of competing philosophical and religious accounts of immortality. (Quest 1, H) **Assessment:** Active class participation, analytical paper
- Identify and analyze philosophical, scientific, and religious concepts of immortality as developed in fictional works of various genres. (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** Active class participation, reading quizzes

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and articulate in writing clear and effective responses to central questions about the theme of immortality and its development over time. (Quest 1, H). **Assessments:** Analytical paper, experiential learning component
- Communicate clear, effective, and well-supported ideas and arguments, orally and in writing, about the philosophical and cultural significance of immortality (Quest 1, H). **Assessments:** Active class participation, analytical paper

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Connect literary and intellectual themes of immortality with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). **Assessments:** Active class discussion, experiential learning component
- Reflect on the relevance and viability of concepts of immortality in modern life. (Quest 1). **Assessments:** Active class discussion, experiential learning component

VI. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

The flipside of immortality is mortality. People, times, places, even biological species all pass away. In this class, we have thought about life, death, and afterlife primarily in company with philosophers and writers of the past. In virtue of the fact that we still read them, every one of these people has gained a certain kind of immortality. What about the people—or animals—that have not attained general fame?

This experiential learning assignment invites you to think about the physical side of life, death, and remembrance. You may go either to the Matheson History Museum (free, open Tuesday –Thursday, 513 East University Avenue) or the Florida Museum of Natural History, located at the University of Florida Cultural Plaza (free to students and open all week, 3215 Hull Road). **You may attend individually or with classmates as you wish, but please be aware that the Florida Museum is temporarily closed to large tour groups.** If you wish to substitute a display or object found elsewhere, you may do so, as well, subject to my approval and to all the other requirements of this assignment.

While you are at the museum, identify a display or object that you find particularly interesting for questions of mortality and immortality. Think broadly and creatively: this could be a cultural display about a now-vanished people of pre-modern Florida, images from the history of Alachua County (subject of a Matheson exhibit in February), a fossil, or something else entirely.

You will then do **four** things:

1. Take **two pictures**. One will show the object/display directly. The other will show you, individually or with your classmates, with the object/display. (Most of you will have a digital camera on your smartphone or laptop. If you do not have access to a camera, let me know **at least three weeks in advance of the due-date** and we will work out alternatives.)
2. Name the object/display.
3. Describe the setting in which the object/display appears, and say something about *what* it is. Where does the object/display come from, who made it, what does it represent, how old is it, etc.? This section should be at least **100 words** long, and may be longer if you need more space. **Treat museum display information like any other source. You may quote or paraphrase it, but should say that you are citing it, and add some commentary in your own words.**
4. Reflect on how this object/display relates to the themes we have discussed in class and to questions of immortality and mortality as they arise in the modern world. This section should be at least **400 words long** and must include **at least three citations from our course readings** (or, if appropriate, references to images discussed in class, for which you can refer to the PowerPoints uploaded on Canvas).

Submit these materials in one Word document via Canvas. Total length is to be at least **500 words**, plus the photos of the object/display. You may submit your report at any point in the semester, but are **required** to do so by 9:00 pm on **Wednesday, March 26.**

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Self-reflection is built into key assignments, including the experiential learning component. In these opportunities for self-reflection offered by specific activities throughout the course, students will reflect on the broader implications of the themes of the course, considering the impact to themselves and/or to a wider community.

VII. Required Policies and Helpful Guidelines

Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found here.

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available here. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via this link. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at GatorEvals Public Data.