IDS 2935: Wisdom and Heroism: Great Books in the Medieval World Quest 1: The Examined Life

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Fall 2023
- 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- MWF Period 5 (11:45am-12:35pm)
- Leigh Hall, Room 0104

Instructor

- Dr. Karl Gunther
- CSE E322
- Office hours MWF 10-11 and by appointment
- <u>k.gunther@ufl.edu</u>
- 352-294-6829

Course Description

What does it mean to be heroic and to be wise? How did these ideas develop in combination with one another in the medieval period? Many aspects of what we might now consider elements of the "examined life" originated with medieval thinkers, who were motivated by essential questions about the meaning of human existence and its persistence in an afterlife, offering us insights for how we should live now. The twin ideals of heroism and wisdom – whether through knighthood, crusades, courtship, monastic celibacy and poverty, religious martyrdom, or in the intellectual life itself – pervaded epic poetry, music, and philosophy during a time of unprecedented population growth and social development. This multidisciplinary course traverses both the glories and the foibles involved in the medieval ideals of heroism and wisdom, through a study spanning history, philosophy, literature, art, and architecture. Do we see elements from the age of heroic chivalry in our concept of heroism today? Is wisdom necessarily connected to intellectualism and the educated life? We will pursue these questions, measuring contemporary expressions of wisdom and heroism against those developed in Medieval Europe.

Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities

This course accomplishes the <u>Quest</u> and <u>General Education</u> 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.

Required Readings and Works

- 1. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Penguin, 1999) available on reserve
- 2. Cicero, On Obligations (Oxford, 2000) available on reserve
- 3. *Beowulf,* trans. Seamus Heaney (Norton, 2000) available on reserve
- 4. All other readings and works are available in Canvas or will be provided in class.
- 5. Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

- 1. Active Participation and Class Attendance: 20%
 - a. Participation: 10%
 - i. 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. Class Attendance: 10%
 - i. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty, but starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A- becomes a B, and so on.
 - ii. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per university 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 Questions (5 all term): 20%
 - a. Approximately every other week you will turn in to Canvas two questions regarding that week's readings, quoting the text briefly to identify any confusions, factual questions, or conceptual problems you encountered as you read the text. In your question you will also reflect on how an issue in the reading is connected to issues you encounter in your own life. Postings must be at least 200 words. See Canvas for details and grading rubric.
 - b. Due weeks 2, 4, 6, 9, 11
- 3. Your own original epic poem or tale (1000 words) (creative writing "Experiential Learning Component"): 20%
 - a. See description below. Professor will provide written feedback. See Canvas for more details.
 - b. Due week 8
- 4. Argument Analysis Paper (min. 1000 words): 20%
 - a. In week 15, you will submit a 1,000-wd essay on "Cultural expressions of heroism." Incorporating course readings and following up on our discussion of cathedrals, you will

develop an analytic argument based on your own thesis regarding ways in which the character trait of heroism is expressed in a building or structure in Medieval Europe. How is it different from contemporary expressions of heroism in structures or statues, such as military statues or sports stadiums? Your essay should be driven by a central question related to our course, such as: "If a shrine, statue, or memorial can celebrate a heroic act or person, can a structure reflect a sense of general cultural heroism?" If you choose a structure not included in our course readings or lecture, you must have your choice approved by the professor. In week 13, you will bring the first two pages of your paper to class for a workshop with your peers, which will count as 5% of your essay grade. Professor will provide written feedback at the draft stage and on the final copy.

- b. Due dates: Week 13 (Draft) and 15 (Final). See Canvas for details and grading rubric.
- 5. Final Exam: 20%
 - a. December 12, 2023 from 3:00-5:00pm

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <u>https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/</u>

А	4.0	С	2.0
A-	3.67	C-	1.67
B+	3.33	D+	1.33
В	3.0	D	1.0
В-	2.67	D-	.67
C+	2.33	E	0

Grading Rubric (See other rubrics in Canvas)

Participation Rubric

	Excellent (A)	Good (B)	Average (C)	Insufficient (D)	Unsatisfactory (E)
Knowledgeable: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work. Thoughtful: Evaluates carefully issues raised in assigned work.					
Considerate: Takes the perspective of others into account and listens attentively.					

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1 Aug. 23-25	 Topic: Introduction to Quest, and the Examined Life in the Medieval World Summary: What is the "examined life" and how did medieval figures examine the values of their own culture through the concepts of "heroism" and "wisdom"? We begin study of Cicero's On Obligations, one of the most influential books about the examined life in medieval Europe. Required Readings/Works: Cicero, On Obligations (Book I, selections)
Week 2 Aug. 28- Sept1	 Topic: Out of the Ancients Summary: Cicero wrote to impart wisdom about three subjects: doing what is right, doing what is useful in daily life, and what should happen when doing what is useful conflicts with doing what is right. Cicero's discussion of these subjects had a major influence on medieval thinkers and we will begin the course by looking at this legacy of the ancient world. Does Cicero offer insights that remain useful today for thinking about heroism and wisdom? Required Readings/Works: Cicero, On Obligations (Books II-III, selections) Assignment: 200-wd reading questions due
Week 3 Sept. 6-8 (No class Sept. 4)	 Topic: Wisdom in the Face of Injustice and Death Summary: We begin our study of Boethius's <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> this week, one of the earliest and most significant literary works to inform the themes and methods of the entire medieval intellectual period. What is heroic about searching for happiness in the face of injustice and death? How and why was examining his life transformative for Boethius? Required Readings/Works: Boethius, <i>Consolation</i> (Books I-II)
Week 4 Sept. 11-15	 Topic: Wisdom in the Face of Injustice and Death (continued) Summary: We continue our study of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy. How does Boethius define true happiness? Is his definition convincing? How do Boethius' ideas about injustice compare with Cicero's and with modern ideas about justice and injustice? Required Readings/Works: Boethius, Consolation (Books III-IV) Assignment: 200-wd reading questions due
Week 5 Sept. 18-22	 Topic: Heroism in Beowulf Summary: <i>Beowulf</i> is one of the most famous epic poems of the middle ages. What ideas about heroism and wisdom are embedded in this early medieval narrative about a warrior doing battle against monsters and a dragon? How does this vision of heroism and wisdom compare with those we have already studied? Does it still shape modern attitudes?

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	Required Readings: Beowulf, trans. Seamus Heaney (selections)
Week 6	 Topic: Unification of Europe and Rise of Islam Summary: Do we hold our leaders to a standard of heroism that we believe is a shared cultural value? How was Charlemagne seen as a standard of heroism in his era? How does Einhard's vision of a heroic leader compare to that in <i>Beowulf</i>? How did the rise of Islam in the 7th century shape the medieval portrayal of heroism?
Sept. 25-29	 Required Readings/Works:
	 a. Einhard, <u>The Life of Charlemagne</u> b. Ibn Ishaq, <i>The Life of Muhammad</i> (selections)
	 Assignment: 200-wd reading questions due Topic: Chivalry and Crusades
Week 7 Oct. 2-4 (no class Oct. 6)	• Summary: Can we ever consider violence to be heroic? The earliest surviving songs of heroism from medieval France, the Song of Roland (11 th c.), enjoyed popular reception by audiences enamored with ideals of chivalry, honor, and heroic sacrifice. How should we assess this song of heroism as essentially glorifying destruction and death? How might we understand the crusades in relation to our modern sense of justifications for war?
	 Required Readings/Works: a. Urban II, Sermon at Clermont (1095)
	b. The Song of Roland
Week 8 Oct. 9-13	 Topic: Twelfth-Century Renaissance Summary: How can the idea of heroism be applied to the intellectual life? We will analyze 12th-Century approaches to wisdom and heroic sacrifice in the monastic life and forms of spiritual austerity. How did these novel forms advance the ideals of religious heroism? Discussion will focus on the poetic works of Anselm, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Hildegard of Bingen, whose music will also be featured. Required Readings/Works Anselm of Canterbury, Prayers and Meditations (selections) Bernard of Clairvaux, selected letters Hildegard of Bingen, Ordo Virtutum, 1150 (18 min. listen) Assignment: Original epic poem or tale (1000 wds): See "Experiential Learning Component" below and see Canvas for details.
Week 9 Oct. 16-20	 Topic: Natural and Divine Laws Summary: Is it important to think of laws as repositories of cultural wisdom? We will examine how concepts of the common good led to philosophical distinctions between human, natural, and divine law as sources of wisdom in the medieval period. Legal reforms changed the nature of the examined life in this period. How did these legal reforms alter the medieval understanding of the relationship between the individual and community? Required Readings/Works: a. John of Salisbury, <i>Policraticus</i> (selections) b. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Treatise on Law</i> (Questions 90-94)

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 10 Oct. 23-27	 Topic: Vows and Saints Summary: How did the rise of religious orders—the Dominicans and the Franciscans—shape the culture's sense of the examined life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? Were their public vows of poverty seen as heroic in the period? Would we consider their actions as heroic today? Required Readings/Works: a. Jordan of Saxony, On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers b. Francis of Assisi, Rule (selections)
	c. Thomas of Celano, <i>Life of Saint Francis</i> (selections)
Week 11 Oct. 30- Nov. 3	 Topic: Universities Summary: Do we assume that the role of the university is to confer wisdom? What is a university, and how does our understanding of it bear continuity from medieval times? What were the early methods, regulations, and debates over the content and character of the medieval <i>universitas</i> as intentional communities dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom? Discussion will be accompanied by in-class viewing of the architecture of medieval universities. Required Readings/Works: <u>Gregory IX, Statutes for the University of Paris</u> Thomas Aquinas, On Christian Theology (selections) Orthodoxy Enforced at Paris, 1272 and Teaching Obligations in the Faculty of Arts, Paris, ca. 1280
Week 12 Nov. 6-8 (no class Nov. 10)	 Topic: Cathedrals Summary: Can we consider structures as portraying aspects of heroism and wisdom? Built as sacred spaces and the crowning glories of medieval cities, cathedrals aspired to the sublime heights in expressing the purpose and possibility of human existence. How was their magnificence criticized by some as decadent and even as contradictory to the spirit of Christianity? Discussion will be accompanied by in-class viewing of the architecture of Chartres Cathedral and other medieval structures. Required Readings/Works: <i>Arculf's Narrative about the Holy Places</i> (selections) Abbot Suger, <i>On What Was Done In His Administration</i>, 12th c. Bernard of Clairvaux, <i>Apology</i>, 1125
	Topic: The Hero's Journey
Week 13 Nov. 13-17	• Summary: How would we envision a "hero's journey" today? Does our culture offer a quest or test we might deem heroic? Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i> (14 th c.) offers an approach to the examined life and recovery of wisdom in the hero's journey. By studying Dante's version, which highlights the perils of the soul in the afterlife, a vision of hell, and the pursuit of wisdom within this present life, we can reflect on our own pursuits and paths of heroism. This week will also feature an argument analysis writing workshop.

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	 Required Readings/Works: Dante Alighieri, Divine Comedy, selections (provided on Canvas) Assignment: Argument Analysis draft workshopped in class on Friday (see Canvas)
Week 14 Nov. 20 (no class Nov. 22, 24)	 Topic: Wisdom in the face of the Black Death Summary: Is it possible to react heroically and with wisdom to a pandemic? How does art and literature, as reflecting "the examined life," express the stresses on a society in the face of mass death? The great pandemic in the Middle Ages, the Black Plague killed almost half of the European population in the 14th century. What were medieval reactions to the plague and how did it inspire the composition of literary works? We will read selections from Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> and Langland's <i>Piers Plowman</i>: these are both firsthand testimonies about the plague, and also cultural introspection about the need for social reform in the aftermath of devastating catastrophe. Required Readings/Works:
	 a. Boccaccio, <u>Decameron</u>, selections b. William Langland, <u>Piers Plowman</u>, selections
Week 15 Nov. 27- Dec. 1	 Topic: Heroism, chivalry, and courtly love Summary: Is the pursuit of love a heroic act? We conclude the course with Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i> (14th c.) and its complex depictions of heroism through chivalric romance and courtly love ("The Knight's Tale"). How does Chaucer's work refer to Boccaccio, Boethius, and other thinkers studied in this course? How might Chaucer's social critique be construed as an intellectual forerunner of future developments in European history? Required Readings/Works: Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale", selections, from <i>Canterbury Tales</i> (Provided on Canvas) Assignment: Argument Analysis paper due (1000 wds).
Week 16	Topic: The Examined Life
Dec. 4-6	 Summary: In this final week, we will reflect in class discussions on the various medieval visions of heroism and wisdom that we have studied in this course. How has studying these ideas shaped your own understanding of heroism and wisdom?

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the <u>Quest</u> and <u>General Education</u> learning outcomes as follows:

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

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across humanities disciplines to examine essential questions about the wisdom and heroism as ideal aspects of character in the medieval world. (Quest 1, H) **Assessments:** Active class discussion, in-class examination, reading questions, argument analysis paper.
- Identify, describe, and explain the historical, philosophical, and literary evidence for the twin ideals of wisdom and heroism as constitutive elements of the examined life in the medieval world, and the interpretive and normative questions that arise in seeking to understand the medieval approach to a life well lived. (Quest 1, H). **Assessments:** Active class discussion, in-class examination, reading questions, argument analysis paper.

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

- Analyze how works across disciplines and genres from the medieval period represent the quest for defining heroism and wisdom amidst great social change. (Quest 1, H). Assessments: In-class examination; argument analysis paper, active class discussion.
- Analyze and evaluate specific accounts of the pursuit of the ideals of wisdom and heroism, across diverse texts and works from a specific historical period, using close reading, critical analysis and group discussion, and personal reflection. (Quest 1, H). **Assessments**: In-class examination, argument analysis paper, reading questions, active class discussion, *Song of Roland* experiential learning component.

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

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts, visual and auditory media, and experiential learning activities. (Quest 1, H). **Assessments:** Argument analysis paper, *Song of Roland* experiential learning component, active class discussion.
- Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on ideals of heroism and wisdom in the quest for the examined life. (Quest 1, H). **Assessments:** In-class examination, active class discussion, argument analysis paper draft workshop, argument analysis paper, *Song of Roland* experiential learning component.

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

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). **Assessments:** *Song of Roland* experiential learning component, active class discussion, argument analysis paper.
- Reflect on students' own and others' experience with the pursuit of the examined life in active class discussion and argument analysis papers. (Quest 1). **Assessments:** Song of Roland experiential learning component, argument analysis paper, paper draft workshop, active class discussion.

V. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

After reading the epic poem "The Song of Roland," you will write your own original epic tale. (Although the original is a poem, our translation is a prose translation so your work may also be in prose. You may submit a poem if you prefer.) You must write it in the voice of a character or person from the present day, whether it is a sports star, a political leader, a celebrity, a family member, or even a character from a recent film. Your epic tale must be at least 800 words, and in your tale you must include aspects of heroism as defined or described in our course readings up to this point (week 6). Your character may be a hero for their achievements (say, Serena Williams as a tennis champion), or may even be a movie villain (e.g., Darth Vader or Lord Voldemort) against which a hero or group of heroes battles, but your tale must be set in the present day, and must employ some of the heroic tropes we have studied. See more details on required elements in Canvas. In addition to your tale, you will write a brief analysis of what medieval "heroic" elements you included. Finally, you will comment on how your modern sense of what counts as "heroic" affected the tale. How did you have to shift certain descriptions or factual details in order to incorporate our modern sense of what might count as heroic? Are these traits that you value in your own life, and that serve you well in today's society? Are these traits evident among the student body at the University of Florida? Why or why not? These last two sections will be at least 200-300 wds. (1000 words total).

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Self-reflection is built into many of the assignments, primarily through the reading questions, the analytic essay assignment, and the *Song of Roland* creative writing assignment. 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.

VI. Required Policies

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 at: <u>https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx</u>

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <u>https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/</u>. 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 at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. 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 <u>https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/</u>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <u>https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/</u>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code

(<u>https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/</u>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <u>http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/</u>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/ or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation,

assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.