Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*
Museo Del Prado, Madrid (1500-1505)

In another moment down went Alice after it, 
ever once considering how in the world she was to get out again. 
-Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Since antiquity—in classical epic and myth, in the Bible and apocryphal lore—mortals have wandered the beyond and the deceased have roamed the earth. Often these journeys are of critical importance to those left alive, instrumental steps to founding empire or earning salvation. This course explores literary, artistic, theatrical, and cinematic representations of otherworlds infernal and paradisal. We visit the realms of the afterlife, as well as edenic or dystopic spaces in the land of the living. Our focus is how these imagined lands reflect, critique, and animate the real world. Because the desire to know the beyond cuts across geography and time, the topic also affords us the opportunity to conduct comparative explorations of various national traditions and periods, from the ancient world to the Middle Ages and Renaissance to modernity.
Course objectives:

- To develop your writing, especially of persuasive, evidence-based argumentative essays, by learning and refining the skills that make up the labor of composition (i.e., free writing, drafting, revising)
- To enhance discussion skills (active listening and persuasive oral communication)
- To gain a historicized understanding of some influential representations of otherworldly journeys, and to hone methods of thinking critically about such spaces in future encounters

Required texts

Most readings will be posted on our class website. The following books, in the editions indicated, must be purchased or borrowed for this course. If you wish to use an alternate edition, please clear it with me in advance.


N.B., using free texts from the internet is a bad idea. Downloadable versions are usually outdated (to avoid copyright law) and suffer from arcane translations. They also lack the notes that facilitate comprehension when we’re approaching a strange-seeming text from another time period and/or culture. Failure to bring an appropriate edition to class will lower your final grade.

Assignments

Your writing assignments will consist of the following:

- Reading responses. These compositions allow me to provide feedback on your writing throughout the course of the semester.
- Informal in-class writing. The point of these assignments is to explore your interests through writing and to generate discussion. I will collect and read them, but you should focus on ideas rather than style and grammar.
- Three essays of varying length, as indicated on the schedule. All will be evidence- and argument-based essays, with different emphases. The first is a close reading of one primary text; the second compares two primary texts intertextually; the third is an argumentative essay based on a text of your choosing.

Additionally, each student will sign up to give a short presentation on one of the readings.
Other course requirements
Complete and digest all readings prior to class. Participation in classroom discussion—both speaking with and listening to classmates—will be evaluated. Along with weekly assignments and the final essay, participation comprises the largest portion of the final grade.
Complete all assignments on time. Assignments must be printed out and handed in at the beginning of each class. Electronic copies sent by e-mail will not be accepted. You must contact me in advance if you are unable to hand in a paper on time. No late work will be accepted without prior clearance.
Refrain from eating in the classroom. Water and coffee are fine.
Check your NYU e-mail daily. You can easily set up forwarding if this is not your preferred account. On the note of e-mail, please give me 24 hours to respond, excluding weekends.
Ask questions when you do not understand. These texts are hard. There will be things we each find confusing or perplexing every week. It’s important that you take the initiative to work through that puzzlement.
Keep open communication. If some problem is affecting your performance in the course, please get in touch with me. I am keen to help everyone do as well as possible in, and get the most out of, the course.

Attendance policy
Three unexcused absences will lower the final grade and may result in a failing grade. A late arrival or early departure is equal to one-half of an absence. Illness constitutes an excused absence in the case that the student can provide a doctor's note.

Technology policy
Laptops and smartphones are not permitted. It is recommended you print readings, though Kindles and Nooks are acceptable. Failure to bring readings in an acceptable format will result in a lowered participation grade.

Grading
Presentation: 10%
Essay 1: 15%
Essay 2: 15%
Essay 3: 20%
Reading responses and in-class writing: 20%
Participation and attendance: 20%

Academic integrity
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University.
Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html).
Course Schedule

Readings are subject to change.

First descent

Week 1
R 9/8   Read: Virgil, Orpheus myth (Georgics selection pp. 251-57)

Dante’s cosmos and its intertexts

Week 2
T 9/8   Read: Berger, “The Renaissance Imagination,” pp. 3-17 and 36-40
          Virgil, Aeneid, books 1, 2
          Write: Reading response to Berger, including your infernal “second world” of choice (1-2 pages)
R 9/10  Read: Virgil, Aeneid, books 3, 4, 6
          Write: Reading response to Virgil (2 pages)

Week 3
T 9/15  Read: Dante, Inferno, cantos 1-5
          Lino Pertile, “Introduction to Inferno”
R 9/17  Read: Dante, Inferno, cantos 8, 13, 15, 26, 33
          John M. Najemy, “Dante and Florence”
          Primo Levy, selection from If This Is a Man (in class)
          Write: Second draft, response to Virgil (2-3 pages)

Week 4
T 9/22  Read: Book of Genesis, 1.1-3.24
          Book of Revelation, 1, 12-22
          Dante, Purgatorio, cantos 28-32
          Peter Stallybrass, “Visible and Invisible Letters,” p. 77 (in class)
          Write: Your own apocalypse (150-200 words): 1) post to website by Wednesday at noon; 2) read your classmates’ revelations and come prepared to discuss your why your favorites were successful
          Peter Stallybrass, “Against Thinking”
          Poliziano, dedicatory letter to Orpheus (in class)
          Machiavelli, letter on speaking to ghosts of the ancients (in class)
          Write: Workshop—First draft due of essay #1 (4-5 pages)
“Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me?”
Infernal anti-heroes and the quest for good

Week 5
T 9/29 Read: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, books 1, 3, 4
Petarch, letter to Virgil (in class)
**Write:** Final draft of essay #1 due
R 10/1 Read: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, books 9, 10, 12
Michelle Kuo and Albert Wu, “In Hell 'We Shall Be Free’"
Write: Reading response to Milton

Week 6
R 10/6 Read: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vols. 1-2 (N.B., we are reading the 1818 edition)
Write: Reading response to Shelley
T 10/8 Read: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 3
Chris Baldick, "Assembling *Frankenstein*"
Shelley notebooks/editions assignment (in class)

Week 7
T 10/13 No class. Courses meet on Monday schedule.
R 10/15 Attend: Library training trip (details TBA)
Write: Response to monstrous figures in Bosch's triptych

Week 8
T 10/20 Write: Following up on our Bobst training on databases, select a book, film, or other primary
text that is interesting and also new to you. Locate it in the library, read or watch, and prepare a
short presentation (5-10 minutes) for your classmates. Keep the summary short (just a minute
or two) and focus instead on how the text fits with 1) other texts on the syllabus, and 2) course
themes. Select one excerpt (approximately a paragraph, or a clip of no longer than a minute.

R 10/22 Watch: Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*
Read: David Dresser, “*Blade Runner: Science Fiction and Transcendence*”

Week 9
T 10/27 Attend: Field trip to Green-Wood Cemetery (details TBA)
R 10/29 Read: Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”
Gardens reading (TBD)
Listen: Bowery Boys Podcast, “Green-Wood Cemetery”
Write: Response to Green-Wood handout
Week 10
T 11/3 Read: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 8
Virginia Cox, “Rhetoric and Ethics in Machiavelli”
David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”

**Write:** Workshop—First draft due of essay #2 due (6-7 pages)

R 11/5 Individual conferences
Write: In addition to essay draft, bring completed form regarding level of video game expertise

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**Hells of human making**

Week 11
T 11/10 Read: *Macbeth*

**Write:** Final draft of essay #2 due

R 11/12 Watch: *Macbeth* film (at home; version TBD)
Read: Jonathan Gil Harris, “The Smell of Macbeth”
Write: 1) “Macbeth’s infernal trial” assignment
2) Proposal of max. 250 words for final assignment (genre or popular fiction of any medium): post your persuasive argument for why our last reading should be the one you nominate to website by Wednesday at noon; 2) e-mail your vote to me by class start; from the top three contenders, I will select the winner based on applicability and feasibility

Week 12
T 11/17 Read: Katherine Rowe, “Crowd-Sourcing Shakespeare”
Play: Video game as assigned
Write: Response to video game handout
Listen: Instructional session on Scalar by Deanna Sessions, NYU Educational Technologist (in class)
Attend: *Sleep No More*, tonight at the McKittrick Hotel (530 W 27th St); meet at 6:30 p.m.
W.B. Worthen, “The Written Troubles of the Brain’: SNM and the Space of Character”
Write: Response to SNM handout

Week 13
T 11/24 Write: Scalar narrative of SNM experience: 1) submit by noon on Monday (note that Deanna will be having special tech office hours for our class, but you’ll have to get moving, as they will be prior to the weekend); 2) complete response handout about your classmates’ narrative trajectories

R 11/26 No class. Final essay abstract due by 8:00 a.m. today. Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 14
T 12/1  Read:  Winning submission (see 11/12 above)
R 12/3  Read:  TBD

Write:  Workshop—First draft due of essay #3 (8-10 pages)

End times

Week 15
T 12/8  Individual conferences
R 12/10 Workshop (revised papers)

Week 16
T 12/15 Last day of class

Write:  Final draft of essay #3 due