

ENGL 297-B Winter 2021: MYTHS, MONSTERS, AND GODS



Instructor: Arna Elezovic

Office Hours: Mondays 1130 – 1230 and by appointment

Email: elezovic@uw.edu

Class Meeting Time: M, W, F from 1230 – 120 p.m. Pacific Standard Time

Classroom Zoom Meeting ID: 989 3000 3026 or <https://washington.zoom.us/j/98930003026>

Basic Information about the Course

Description: ENGL 297-B is a small writing seminar that is linked to a large lecture class, CLAS 430, Greek and Roman Mythology. What this means is our ENGL 297-B class will take content from the lecture course. Our themes are "myths, monsters, and gods." But our class will be a workshop where you learn to write or learn to improve your own writing by writing. Our focus will be on the *practice and mechanics* of writing. How do you get an idea down and express it well? What words do you use and why? How do you organize an essay, and then edit it? We will have a variety of writing assignments and exercises to answer those questions, including learning the different ways to draft essays, read, to take notes, and how to edit your own work and edit the work of your peers. I aim to make this as fun and supportive as possible via remote learning.

Assignments: Weekly short online submissions, discussion boards, conferences (virtually), peer reviews of each other's work, and 2 major writing assignments (essays) during the quarter. You will have opportunity to write either research or a historical fiction essay based, a screenplay, or other creative project based on your own inclination for the second major writing assignment. The topics will be connected to our themes of Greek and Roman mythology, monsters, and gods.

Learning Goals

1. Demystify the writing process, by getting past writing resistance and turning your rough draft ideas into polished written work.
2. Learn how to craft an argument and support that argument with evidence and analysis, using critical and analytical thinking skills that you can then express in a coherent and logical way. This process usually results in the "academic college essay."
3. Explore other genres of writing: historical fiction, research, graphic novels, or screenplays.
4. Participate in being a thoughtful member of a writing group or community.

Required Texts: ENGL 297-B "Myths, Monsters, and Gods" does NOT require any books. Instead, we will use selections of texts and images from the books required for CLAS 430 Greek and Roman Mythology. The books from CLAS 430 are both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are texts or images or things created in the time that they describe; secondary sources are works about a specific time or place or topic, like a text book. Generally, I will include primary source selections from that textbook on our website. I will also upload additional materials - about writing and about the Greco-Roman world. I am a historian who has studied a fair amount of ancient Mediterranean history, so I can help you with the historical context of what you are learning in CLAS 430. Please contact Professor Waldo if you have problems obtaining the books for his class.

Grading Contracts: In this course, we are using a grade contract system because grading is often seen as subjective. In a nutshell, a grading contract means I specify what you have to do to earn a particular course grade, and you decide what you're willing and able to do. Then you sign up for the contract that works best for you. You can change your mind as the quarter progresses, but you have to talk to me first. I use this system so that grading is transparent, which enables you to be in control of the grade you receive. It also liberates you to learn *how you think* and *how you write* because I will not evaluate your work on a percentage scale. I will give you feedback on your written work but no grades. There are no surprises: if you fulfill the obligations of your contract, you get the grade you signed up for.

Peer Reviews: Another key aspect of this course are peer reviews and conferences. What this means is that you will review each other's drafts during a conference of 4 -5 of your peers + me. You will provide written feedback on draft essays before conference and then verbal feedback during conference on their drafts. I can tell you from past experience that, even if you are not sure about this idea, students come to *love* this process. Getting feedback from 4-5 people helps any writer look at their work in an analytical way. Seeing your own writing and ideas through the eyes of other people helps writers clarify their ideas, improve their writing, and the create an overall structure of the essay or project. I will also provide examples of essays and example peer reviews, and we will practice doing a peer review together as a class, so you know what to do. We will spend a week on peer reviews before you have to turn in your revised major writing assignments; conferences will take place instead of class.

Learning Remotely: Learning remotely means no classroom face to face interactions. I wish I could meet you all in person, but...also, I want to keep the people I love who are medically vulnerable safe. I have put a lot of thought into the design of this course and adjusted a lot of what I would normally do to the new global pandemic world. If you have any concerns or issues as the quarter progresses about learning remotely, please let me know. If you feel overwhelmed, let me know. My goal is to make our class as fun and supportive as possible.

Modules: How the Course is Organized

Organizing Principle: I want you to think of this class as exposure to the practice of writing in different "genres." The course is organized around major writing assignments. The first major genre of writing is the "analytical" essay, a creature that is commonly found in all kinds of humanities classes at the University of Washington, in history, classics, psychology, sociology, political science, and so on. The second genre will be your choice. The readings, assignments, and materials you need for each major writing assignment will appear in modules.

Getting Started Module: This module is the information that you will need to get a sense of me and of each other and really will be the focus of our first week or so.

Major Assignment 1 - The Analytical College Essay Module: The first major assignment is a standard analytical essay with a historical focus, likely where you evaluate a myth or story and use evidence from primary sources. Analytical writing is a skill, the more you practice the better you get, so even if you know how to do this, it is good to start with an assignment that makes you exercise fundamental skills for college. It is also a great skill to have generally: the ability to analyze a text, an image, an article, and then formulate ideas based on that evidence can take you far in life.

Major Assignment 2 - Research, Historical fiction, and Dialogue Module: The second major assignment is open ended, meaning you get to choose the genre that you like, want to try, or feel safe writing. Topics will be individual, but I can always provide questions for you to answer if you are stumped. I have published just the sketch of this module because it will change with your input around the middle of the quarter, after you have turned in the first essay.

Greco-Roman History and Mythology Resources Module: This module is a selection of videos, podcasts, a few PowerPoints that I have compiled to help you contextualize the world of Greeks and Romans, who lived thousands of years ago. Mythology or mythological stories can be confusing mess of names and relationships, so my theory is that short quick videos will give you the overviews. Many of the videos are lighthearted and meant to entertain as they teach. For example, check out the videos by "Overly Sarcastic Productions"! I am a firm believer that when humor is involved, we learn better and remember more. I also think some of these materials will demonstrate to you just much we still draw from the Greeks and the Romans to advance our often-erroneous ideas about "Western Civilization."

Navigating the UW Module: This module is a selection of what I consider essential services to a student in the behemoth of the UW. If you think something is missing, let me know and I will add it. There is also a general UW Resources Page that is automatically added to every course website, found under Navigation on the left-hand side of our course website, so you can explore that as well. I created my module before they added their UW resources navigation page!

Flexibility in the Design of the Course

I have provided a general schedule in the following pages for our two major assignments with pedagogical goals driving the order and sequence of assignments. Certain things have to happen, but one of the key aspects of this kind of small writing seminar is flexibility, so when we come of the second major assignment, we will spend a class session on course design. This is your course.

Schedule

Major Writing Assignment 1 – The Analytical Essay Module

Week 1 - Introduction, myths, stereotypes

Mon. Jan. 4	Introductions, defining a “myth,” and stereotypes about Greco-Roman myths
Wed. Jan. 6	Analysis of images and texts
Fri. Jan. 8	Types of evidence discussion
Homework	Discussion Board – Getting to know each other Discussion Board – Stereotypes Student Survey Writing Exercise – Analytical Paragraph due Sunday night by midnight

Week 2 – Fast versus slow reading, Evidence and Analysis

Mon. Jan. 11	Evidence hunting and gathering, Strategic reading
Wed. Jan. 13	The terrible thesis & then better one
Fri. Jan. 15	The “Bad Thesis” Competition, Evidence + analysis
Homework	Read Handout “Strategic Reading” (2+ pages) Read handout “Style, Genre & Writing” (1 page) Read handout “Thesis Guidelines” (1 page) Read selections from <i>CLAS 430 texts</i> to analyze as a class, To Be Decided Writing Exercise – The Thesis or Argument Writing Exercise – “Proto draft” essay

Week 3 - Evidence + analysis in a paragraph, proto drafts

Mon. Jan. 18	Martin Luther King Day – NO CLASSES
Wed. Jan. 20	Analytical paragraphs using the MEAL Plan, topic sentences
Fri. Jan 22	Peer reviews and sample essays
Homework	Read Anne Lamont’s <i>Bird by Bird first few chapters</i> (very short, fun read) Read Paul Silva’s <i>How to Write a Lot</i> (incredibly useful for all students, short) Read handout “MEAL Plan” (1 page) Meet with Arna during office hours or by appoint by end of week 3 Draft Analytical Essay due Sunday Jan. 24 by midnight

Week 4 - Conference week, revising

Mon. Jan. 25 – Fri. Jan. 29	<i>(Note: your CLAS 430 first exam will be Friday Jan 29th)</i> Classes are replaced by conferences this week. We will have meetings of 4-5 students + instructor. I will have a virtual sign-up sheet. Each student will have 15-20 m. of feedback from peers, in the form of one “in-depth review” from one classmate, and 3 general reviews from at least three classmates. Written reviews of all essays are required. Plan for 1.5 hours for each conference. We will meet on Zoom at our usual link.
Homework:	Post at least once to the Community Forum discussion board by end of week 4 Peers reviews due before your conference to be submitted online FINAL Analytical Essay due Sunday Jan. 31 by midnight

Major Writing Assignment 2 – Research, Historical Fiction, and Dialogue Module¹

Week 5 – Pivot week, genres, brainstorming

Mon. Feb. 1	Course design, reflection writing exercise
Wed. Feb. 3	The three genres, refer to “Style Genre and Writing Handout”
Fri. Feb. 5	Brainstorming
Homework	Writing Exercise – Reflection essay on first major writing assignment Read Anne Lamont <i>Bird by Bird</i> “Character, Plot, Dialogue” Writing Exercise – Brainstorming for essay 2 due Sunday night

Week 6 – Research

Mon. Feb. 8	Presentation by librarians on research
Wed. Feb. 10	Citing sources and avoid plagiarism
Fri. Feb. 12	Organizing ideas
Homework	Writing Exercise - Research log (where you collect sources, format them using a citation style, and organize your own thoughts) due Sunday night

Week 7 - Historical Fiction

Mon. Feb. 15	President’s Day – NO CLASSES
Wed. Feb. 17	Context is everything
Fri. Feb. 19	Showing rather than telling the story
Homework	Writing exercise – “Proto or Down Draft” for Essay 2 Writing exercise – Self Assessment using Grading Contracts

Week 8 – Dialogue

Mon. Feb. 22	How to write different forms of dialogue
Wed. Feb. 24	To Be Decided (TBD)
Fri. Feb. 26	TBD, <i>Note: your CLAS 430 second exam will be Feb. 26th</i>
Homework	Draft Essay due Sun. Feb. 28 by midnight

Week 9 – Conferences

Mon. Mar. 1 – Fri. Mar. 5	Classes again are replaced by conferences this week. Plan for 1.5 hours for each conference. We will meet on Zoom.
Homework	Peers reviews due before your conference to be submitted online

Week 10 – Professional writing, publishing your work, and portfolios

Mon. Mar. 7	Presentation by Career Services on resumes?
Wed. Mar. 9	Presenting your own work
Fri. Mar. 11	Discussion board, TBD

¹ This week is a proposed schedule but will change with your input and edits. Homework, readings, exercises in class will be decided later.

Homework

Post at least once to the Community Forum discussion board by end of week 10
Final Essay 2 due Sunday by midnight
Metacognitive and/or reflection essay about your learning during the quarter