

## **Falling from the Bible to Proust: Course Outline**

### 1) Purpose and audience:

The purpose of this course is threefold:

1. To familiarize students with the theory and practice of intertextual criticism. The Fall from Paradise, from Chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Genesis, will be examined as it appears reconfigured in later texts both as scene of conversion or of the transition from ignorance to self-knowledge, and as the prototype for a series of literary Earthly Paradises in which nature and artifice, truth and error are juxtaposed. In lecture students will be introduced to theories of intertextuality from Horace, Cicero and Quintilian, to Renaissance theorists, to Kristeva and Barthes. Students may choose to write their final paper on this aspect of the course.
2. To introduce students to a set of important and related first-person narratives of French literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These texts include Montaigne's Essays, Rousseau's Reveries of a Solitary Walker, Stendhal's Life of Henry Brulard, and Proust's In Search of Lost Time. In each, the "fall" is literalized and occasions the self-knowledge necessary to begin autobiographical reflection: Montaigne falls off of his horse, Rousseau is knocked down by a carriage, Stendhal falls down whenever he has an idea, and Proust's hero is almost run over by a car, and trips on a pair of uneven paving-stones. In other selections from Rousseau's La Nouvelle Heloise and Proust the Earthly Paradise and the opposition between truth and error are thematized. Students may choose to write their final papers on any of these texts, or other works in which similar Falls occur

- (for example, Finnegans Wake or Clarice Lispector's The Hour of the Star, among others).
3. For students to understand that “how” a text says what it says is as important as “what” it says. In the texts we will examine the Fall appears as an allegorical topos that signifies a gain in autonomy, self-knowledge, and self-presence. Yet, paradoxically, the allegorical language at the same time establishes a distance from the self, because the meaning of this allegorical sign is anterior to the self, and it can be endlessly repeated “after” this self. Students may choose to write a paper about this aspect of the course.
  - 2) Objectives: At the end of the course students will be familiar with several theories of intertextuality, and will understand the language and content of key French first-person narratives. Students will also have practiced their writing skills through a series of drafts with the goal of producing a final paper of ten to fifteen.
  - 3) Instructional Method: lecture, class discussion, reader's log, in-class and term writing assignments.
  - 4) Content:

**Week 1:**

Introduction to course:

Sin = pride

Redemption = conversion narrative, exemplarity

Not only course about the theme, but general introductions to the works we read

Keywords: topos, allegory and symbol, intertextuality

Gardens: Eden, Augustine, Renaissance version

Lecture and discussion: introduction to theories of intertextuality; Read Genesis Chapters 2 and 3, Book VII of St. Augustine's Confessions.

Week 2: Lecture and discussion: Renaissance versions of the Earthly Paradise, introduction to Montaigne; Presentations: Read Montaigne's "Of Practice."

Week 3: Lecture and discussion: introduction to Rousseau; Presentations; read "Reveries of a Solitary Walker" and La Nouvelle Heloise, part 4 letters 11 and 17.

Week 4: Lecture and discussion: introduction to Stendhal; Presentations; read The Life of Henri Brulard.

Week 5: Presentations; read The Life of Henri Brulard.

Week 6: Presentations; read The Life of Henri Brulard.

Week 7: Lecture and discussion: introduction to Baudelaire; Presentations; read "On the Essence of Laughter"

Week 8: Lecture and discussion: introduction to Proust; Presentations; read the Bois de Boulogne episode from Swann's Way.

Week 9: Presentations: read Time Regained.

Week 10: Presentations; read Time Regained.

Week 11: Presentations; read Time Regained.

Week 12: Lecture and discussion: review; Presentations; read Time Regained.

5) Reading Requirements:

Proust, Marcel. In Search of Lost Time Volume 6: Time Regained. New York: Modern Library, 1993.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Reveries of a Solitary Walker New York: Penguin, 1980.

Stendhal. The Life of Henri Brulard. Great Britain: Viking Penguin, 1995.

Course Reader:

Genesis, Chapters 2-3

St. Augustine, Confessions, Book VIII Chapters 8-12 (Great Britain: Penguin, 1961)

Montaigne, Essays, "On Practice" (Great Britain: Viking Penguin, 1983)

Rousseau, La Nouvelle Heloise, Part 4 Letters 11 and 17 (Pennsylvania: PSU Pr., 1990)

Baudelaire "On the Essence of Laughter" from The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays (New York: Da Capo, 1988)

Proust, "The Bois, Garden of Woman" episode from Swann's Way (New York: Modern Library, 1998)

6) Credit Requirements:

In-class Presentations: based upon thoroughness and effectiveness of presentation (35%)

Final paper of ten to fifteen pages in length: (65%)