ISS 1691: Immortality

Quest 1: Nature and Culture

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Fall 2025
- 100% In-Person, No GTAs, 35 Residential
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 4:05 – 4:55 pm
- CSE 0453
- 3 Credits

Instructor

- Mattias Gassman
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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

- Melville, Ronald, trans. *Lucretius: On the Nature of the Universe*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press, 1993, reprinted 2009)
- Dobranski, Stephen B., ed. *John Milton, Paradise Lost*, Norton Library (W.W. Norton, 2022) [Other editions/printings of *Paradise Lost* are allowed, but please note that editions can differ and I will base assessments and in-class discussion on this edition. Regardless, you will want to have a print rather than electronic version text, in order to help you navigate Milton's complex and often difficult seventeenth-century English.]
- 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 15)

Instructions on computer use

Most of 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 both to print out the online readings and to take notes on paper, especially during our class meetings. If you use a computer to access course texts, please do **not** use it to take notes in class, unless you have discussed doing so with me. If you appear to be using electronic devices for non-class-related purposes, your participation grade will be reduced.

AI policy

Use of LLMs and other 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 percentage point: an A (10) becomes an A- (9), then a B- (8), 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 Friday, October 3 (week 7) during the regular class hour. Exam will be closed-book and answered on paper.
4. **Experiential learning component (500 words), due Week 10: 5%**
    a. You will visit a museum or site of similar interest, 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 Friday, October 24 (week 10) at **11:59 pm** EST.
5. **Analytical paper (2,000 words), due Week 15: 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 on content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar, and punctuation. See Canvas for details.
    c. Due Monday, December 1 (week 15) at **11:59 pm** EST.

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

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.

Friday, August 22 (week 1) – Introduction to the class and to Homer's *Iliad*

Monday, August 25 (week 2) – Homer, *Iliad* 1.1-246, 345-427, 488-611, 9.379-429, 12.307–28, 16.431–61 (19 pp.)

Wednesday, August 27 (week 2) – Homer, *Iliad* 18.65-147, 462-616; 19.238-337; 23.1-107; 24.697-804 (16 pp.)

Topic 2. Gods and mortals
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, but encounters with the gods could also be perilous for fragile mortals. We continue with the challenge to immortality offered by Homer's *Odyssey*, including its famous underworld scene, the story of the encounter between Aphrodite and the mortal shepherd Anchises of Troy, and the most famous myth of immortality from early Greece, the goddess Demeter's quest for her kidnapped daughter Persephone.

Friday, August 29 (week 2) – Homer, *Odyssey* 5.1-281; 23.1-24, 67-372 (17 pp.); *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (11 pp.)

Wednesday, September 3 (week 3) – Homer, *Odyssey* 11.1-334, 385-650 (16 pp.)
Reading quiz 1

Friday, September 5 (week 3) – *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (13 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, September 8 (week 4) – Plato, *Phaedo*, 57a-77e (Horan, pp. 1-22) (22 pp.)

Wednesday, September 10 (week 4) – Plato, *Phaedo*, 78a-95e (Horan, pp. 23-40) (18 pp.)

Friday, September 12 (week 4) – Plato, *Phaedo*, 96a-107b, 114d-118a (Horan, pp. 40-52, 57-60) (16 pp.) AND SKIM 107c-114c (Horan, pp. 52-57)
Reading quiz 2

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, September 15 (week 5) – Plato, *Republic* 10, "Myth of Er"; Plato, *Phaedo*, 107c-114c (Horan, pp. 52-57) (13 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, September 17 (week 5) – Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* 1.1-634 (18 pp.)

Friday, September 19 (week 5) – Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* 1.951-1118, 2.1-333 (17 pp.)

Monday, September 22 (week 6) – Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, 3.1-712, 978-1094 (24 pp.) **Reading quiz 3**

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?

Wednesday, September 24 (week 6) – Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 1.1-13, 2.4-21 (excerpts) (12 pp.)

Friday, September 26 (week 6) – Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* 6.9-29 ("Dream of Scipio") (8 pp.)

Topic 7. 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*. Following on the *Aeneid*, we consider the literary and political immortalization of two key figures: Julius Caesar and his adoptive son, Augustus, first emperor of Rome.

Monday, September 29 (week 7) – Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.1-11, 253-359, 6.132-1074 (trans. Lombardo) (30 pp.) **Reading quiz 4**

Wednesday, October 1 (week 7) – Cassius Dio, excerpt (1 p.); Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15, excerpt (5 pp.) and review for midterm

Midterm examination – Friday, October 3 (week 7)

Topic 8. The dawn of a bodily afterlife

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. We begin the second part of our course by exploring the beginnings of the distinctive Christian understanding of immortality and the resurrection of the dead. How did the legacy of Jewish thought and the experience of Jesus lead to a new understanding of the afterlife that would dominate Western culture for almost two thousand years?

Monday, October 6 (week 8) – introducing the Judeo-Christian tradition: excerpts from the Hebrew Bible (12 pp.)

Wednesday, October 8 (week 8) – Resurrection and judgment: excerpts from the Hebrew Bible and 2 Maccabees (13 pp.)

Friday, October 10 (week 8) – Resurrection and the new age in earliest Christianity: excerpts from the New Testament (10 pp.) **Reading quiz 5**

Topic 9. 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. We conclude with the triumphant vision of Rome's conversion put in the mouth of a martyr from 257 by the late fourth-century poet Prudentius.

Monday, October 13 (week 9) – selections from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (*Golden Ass*) and *On the God of Socrates* (23 pp.)

Wednesday, October 15 (week 9) – *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity* (trans. Jacobs; 10 pp.)

Monday, October 20 (week 10) – Prudentius, *The Martyrs' Crowns* 2 (Hymn to Lawrence) (18 pp.) **Reading quiz 6**

Topic 10. Gods and demons

Christians were not supposed to worship the Greco-Roman gods, and with the rise of the new religion, the old polytheistic cults really did fade away. Mediterranean "paganism" effectively died over the course of the fourth through sixth centuries. What happened to the gods? In this unit, we watch two processes that would matter enormously for Medieval and Renaissance thinking about the Greco-Roman gods and their worship, down to the time of John Milton and his younger contemporary, Isaac Newton. The first

is *Euhemerism*: the reinterpretation of the gods as mortal rulers deified, like Roman emperors, after their deaths. The second process reinterprets the pagan gods as demons in the Christian sense: rebel angels hostile to God.

Wednesday, October 22 (week 10) – Vergil, *Aeneid* 8 excerpt (1 p.), Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 1.9-11, 13-15, 18, 2.13 (24 pp.)

Friday, October 24 (week 10) – biblical selections (4 pp.), Augustine, *On the Divination of Demons* (excerpt, 10 pp.), Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries of Egypt* (5 pp.) (19 pp. total); review reading from Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates* (3 pp.)
Experiential learning component (museum report) due

Topic 11. 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 of the fallen angelic powers mentioned, but almost never described, in Greek and Hebrew scripture.

Monday, October 27 (week 11) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.1-270 (8 pp.)
Wednesday, October 29 (week 11) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.271-669 (11 pp.)
Reading quiz 7
Friday, October 31 (week 11) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 4.172-775 (16 pp.)

Monday, November 3 (week 12) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 6.56-679 (16 pp.)
Wednesday, November 5 (week 12) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9.643-1189 (15 pp.)
Friday, November 7 (week 12) – John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 10.845-1104, 12.469-649 (12 pp.)
Reading quiz 8

Topic 12. Rediscovering the past: the transition to modernity
We do not view the past the way that people did before us. The difference is in part a matter of *knowledge* and in part a matter of *method*. In this week, we will do our best to bridge the intellectual gap between the still-traditional, Classical and Christian world of John Milton and modernity. We begin with a thought-provoking discussion of the periodization of history and continue by examining two of the most important additions to the modern European and American perception of the human quest for immortality: the Norse myth of *Ragnarök*, the impending "doom of the gods," and Egyptian archeology.

Monday, November 10 (week 13) – C.S. Lewis, "De descriptione temporum" [inaugural lecture at Cambridge, 1954] (12 pp.)

Wednesday, November 12 (week 13) – *Voluspa* (trans. Hollander, modified, plus introduction) (8 pp.). Also available: modern translation by Pettit and sections on Baldr and *Ragnarök* from Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda* (trans. Faulkes).

Friday, November 14 (week 13) – Percy Shelley, "Ozymandias" (1 p.), Diodorus Siculus on Osymandias (1 p.). View excavation photographs and drawings from the tomb of Tutankhamun: http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/carter/gallery/#; http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/4cartmap.html
Reading quiz 9; advanced drafts of analytical papers due

Topic 13. 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, November 17 (week 14) – J.B.S. Haldane, "The Last Judgment," in *Possible Worlds and Other Essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927; Phoenix Library 1930), 287-312 (26 pp.)

Wednesday, November 19 (week 14) – C.S. Lewis, *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, November 21 (week 14) – Haldane, "Auld Hornie, F.R.S.", Lewis, "A Reply to Professor Haldane" (20 pp.)

Topic 14. 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, December 1 (week 15) – Plato, *Timaeus* (selection); Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Silmarillion*, edited by Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen & Unwin, 1977), "Akallabêth" (34 pp.)
Analytical papers due.

Wednesday, December 3 (week 15) – Continue with Tolkien. In-class discussion: are myths of immortality still possible?

IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

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 5% for significant stylistic flaws, repeated typos, etc.
Partial credit **(85%)**	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 5% for significant stylistic flaws, repeated typos, etc.
Minimal credit **(0-60%)**	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 60% credit. Failure to submit a report will result in 0% credit.

Reflection paragraphs rubric

Full credit **(95%-100%)**	Submission answers all questions with coherent reference to the student's own experience and reading. Grade may be reduced by 5% for significant stylistic flaws, repeated typos, etc.
Partial credit **(15-80%)**	Submission fails to answer at least one question; grade will be reduced by 20% for each missing answer, down to 20%. Grade may be reduced a further 5% for significant stylistic flaws, repeated typos, etc.
Minimal credit **(0-10%)**	Submission does not answer the questions or shows signs of being substantially generated by an LLM. Failure to submit any document 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 and mechanics	Minimal 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 consider *any* artefact or building you wish. There are many examples on or near campus, or you could go outside Gainesville. I suggest visiting the Matheson History Museum (free, open Tuesday –Thursday, 513 East University Avenue) or the Harn Museum of Art (free to students and open all week, 3259 Hull Road). (The Florida Museum of Natural History, also free and located near the Harn Museum, is unfortunately closed at present.) Identify a display or object that you find particularly interesting for questions of mortality and immortality. Think broadly and creatively: this could be a work of art, images from local history, or a natural object.

You will then do **four** things:

1. Take **two pictures**. One will show the object/display directly. The other will show you 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 before 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 **Friday, October 24.**

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

Academic Policies

All academic policies in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found at: https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies