

Faust's Bargain with the Devil: Knowing It All, Losing It All

(Byrne 1-credit first-year seminar)

Fall 2015, Rutgers University
01:090:101-34 [index 14978]
Th2 (9:50-11:10am), from Sept. 3 until Nov.
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GH [German House] 102 (172 College Ave.,
CAC)

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DESCRIPTION

Faust, in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's famous play, is every university's worst nightmare. Frustrated that his multiple academic degrees have left him knowing nothing of value, the aging scholar goes rogue: he gives up standard research for magic; he flees his study with the devil to go out and party; he uses his status to help him impress and seduce a much younger woman; he heads off on a world tour without regard to those he encounters or has left behind; and he becomes a capricious and dangerous tyrant. How, then, did the Faust legend become the quintessential myth of modernity? What does Faust experience and learn by selling his soul? How is he changed, and how does he transform his world? Is his story a celebration or a condemnation of the modern age of discovery – research, teaching, learning and self-exploration?

GOALS

This seminar will enable students to do the following:

- Recognize and analyze formal elements of a literary text;
- Relate these formal elements to the text's history – both
 - the contexts in which it was written and has subsequently been interpreted, and
 - the history to which it implicitly and explicitly alludes;
- Acquire a sense of the cultural importance of one of the most famous works of European literature;
- Acquire a basic understanding of the history and relevance of the Faust myth from the Middle Ages to the present.

OPTIONAL

Interested students are welcome to present (5-10 min.) on a Faust-related work (text, cartoon, song, video game – whatever) of their own choosing. I only ask that you: 1) avoid material that may seem offensive (e.g. because of explicit sex or violence); 2) let me know by the end of September if you'd like to do this, so that we can schedule your presentation for a day that will work well.

REQUIRED TEXT (AVAILABLE AT THE RUTGERS UNIVERSITY STORE AND FROM VARIOUS ONLINE SELLERS):

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust*. Trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann. New York: Anchor Books, 1961. [ISBN 978-0385031141]

I strongly recommend you buy this particular edition, because it is one of the more successful modern translations; because it contains both the translation and, for comparison on the facing page, the original German; and because it contains all portions from Part I *and* Part II that we will need, whereas many editions just contain Part I, say. For those who want to bring another

version instead: there are many different print and electronic versions of Goethe's play (and you may even have one or the other at home); but for the sake of class discussion, it will be important that every class member bring to each class meeting an edition that at least: 1) has line numbers throughout, so that you can quickly find or identify for others any passage we may be discussing; and 2) contains all of Part I, and Act V of Part II.

GRADING

This one-credit course is graded pass/fail. In order to receive a passing grade, students are expected to:

- Attend every class and arrive punctually. While I will regularly present on historical background and other issues relevant to the material, the point of the course is also for you to practice engaging in and learning from discussion of a literary text. This will only work if you attend class and come prepared. (In this sense our class sessions are like orchestra or band rehearsals, or team-sport practise: they're only useful if everyone prepares and then meets to work together.)
- Complete and be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each class (indicated in the weekly schedule below next to the words "Read for today").
- Contribute actively and regularly to class discussion. (Bring your questions and observations to class!)
- Post a weekly journal entry of 200-300 words (please adhere to these limits), due every Thursday morning (before 12:00 noon), via the Assignments link at the course Sakai site. Each week's journal entry should respond to that week's reading. Some guidelines:

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR WEEKLY JOURNAL

- Your journal entry for the week is due every Thursday morning (before 12:00 noon), via the Discussion & Private Messages link at the course Sakai site.
- Avoid plot summary. I'm not so interested in being reminded about the basic storyline; rather, I want to read your *ideas* about the text.
- For instance: What makes certain characters interesting (or not)? What motivates them? What inner conflicts do they reveal? Does the text present them positively or negatively, and how so? What are some of the ironies and jokes of the text – can you explain some of them? How do formal aspects of the text (the language that's used – the text's vocabulary, its rhythms and rhymes, the tone adopted by different characters at different times, the division of the text into sections and sub-sections) help tell the story? What world view(s) do individual characters, but also the text as a whole, reflect?
- Include at least two discussion questions at the end of your journal, and be prepared to bring up these questions in class. These questions will likely be most interesting and productive if they relate to one or more of the kinds of questions listed just above.

COURSE SAKAI WEBSITE

A website for this course is available to enrolled students at sakai.rutgers.edu under the title "2015-09 Faust's Bargain with the Devil: Knowing It All, Losing It All - Byrne." The Resources page at this site includes many Faust-related texts that I've used in various courses on this topic but that I do not expect you to read. However, I will sometimes ask you to download, print, and bring to class short selections from this page for us to discuss in class along with the text of Goethe's drama. The site includes other tools and resources that you will be required to use regularly.

ATTENDANCE

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss

more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Failure to bring copies of the assigned readings to three classes likewise counts as one absence. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Violations of academic integrity are an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS

Use of electronic devices in class other than for study of the class topic (e.g. taking notes or consulting an assigned text in electronic form) is strictly forbidden. Those seen using such devices for other purposes will be asked to leave immediately. Their dismissal will count as an absence and may result in a lowering of their overall grade.

Weekly assignments and class discussions

9/3/2015

- Introduction to course and topic
- Class discussion: opening lines from "Prologue" in: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), *Faust* (1832)

9/10/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 1-353
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from the Book of Job (ca. 7th – 4th centuries BCE)

9/17/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 354-1177
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* (1592)

9/24/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 1178-2072
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), *The Tragicall History of Dr. Faustus* (ca. 1604)

10/1/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 2073-2864¹
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), *The Damnation of Faust* (1846); excerpt(s) from Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998), *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1994)

10/8/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 2865-3649
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from Murnau, F.W. (1889-1931), *Faust* (1926)

10/15/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 3650-4612
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from Murnau, F.W. (1889-1931), *Faust* (1926)

10/22/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 4613-4727; 11043-11510
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from Charles Gounod (1818-1893), *Faust* (1859); John Coolidge Adams (1947-), *Doctor Atomic* (2005)

10/29/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 11511-11843; re-read lines 1530-1850
- Class discussion: *Faust*; excerpt(s) from Jan Svankmajer (1934-), *Faust* (1994)

11/5/2015

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 11844-12111
- Concluding discussion

¹ Note that in German "Gretchen" is a diminutive of "Margarete," and that the two names, in this play, refer to the same person.