

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

(Byrne 1-credit first-year seminar)

Fall 2017, Rutgers University  
01:090:101-73 [index 12007]  
Tu 1:10-2:30pm, from Sept. 5 until Nov. 7.  
AB-2250 (15 Seminary Pl., CAC)

Prof. Nicholas Rennie  
O. hrs. Tuesdays 9:00am, & by appointment  
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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 fourth week of the semester 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. *Faust: A Tragedy: Interpretive Notes, Contexts, Modern Criticism*. Vol. 2. Norton Critical Edition. New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2001. [ISBN 978-0393972825]

I strongly recommend you buy this particular edition because it contains all portions from Part I and Part II that we will need, whereas many editions just contain Part I. (It also contains some interesting history of the play, and a number of interpretations that have changed the way people thought about Goethe and this work.) For those who want to use a different edition: there

are many different print and electronic versions of Goethe's play (and you may even already have one); 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 identify any passage we may be discussing; and 2) contains all of Part I, and Act V of Part II.*

If you can read German and want to work through all or parts of the original text in that language, but want translation support as you do so, take a look at the version at <https://annotext.dartmouth.edu>. By clicking on individual words in the text you'll bring up a translation in the window above. These translations will reflect the usage specific to the passage in question, whereas a standard dictionary might give you multiple meanings irrelevant to the context or not typical of the idioms of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 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 a little like orchestra or band rehearsals, or team-sport practice: 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 (see directly below).

## GUIDELINES FOR YOUR WEEKLY JOURNAL ENTRY (SAKAI > FORUMS)

- Your 150 to 250-word journal entry for the week (please adhere to this length requirement) is due every Monday morning (before 12:00 noon), via the *Forums* link at the course Sakai site. Each week's journal entry should respond to that week's reading, *not* to the reading we already discussed the week before.
- 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?
- Always insert line numbers when you refer to a specific passage. For instance: "Realizing that it is Mephisto who has unwittingly gotten himself caught in Faust's study, Faust proposes that Mephisto agree to a pact (1414)."
- Include at least two discussion questions at the end of your journal, and be prepared to bring these questions up 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](http://sakai.rutgers.edu) under the title "2017-09 Faust's Bargain." 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.

## **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**

#### **9/5/2017**

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

#### **9/12/2017**

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

#### **9/19/2017**

- 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)

#### 9/26/2017

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

#### 10/3/2017

- Read for today: Goethe's *Faust*, lines 2073-2864<sup>1</sup>
- 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)

#### 10/10/2017

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

#### 10/17/2017

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

#### 10/24/2017

- 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)

#### 10/31/2017

- 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)

#### 11/7/2017

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

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

## **Student-Wellness Services:**

### **Just In Case Web App**

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

**(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/**

[www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)**

**(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)**

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### **Disability Services**

**(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### **Scarlet Listeners**

**(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>**

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.