

Anna Henke
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Office Hours: 1:30pm-2:30pm Tuesdays and by appointment

Topics in German Literature & Civilization: REVENGE!

01:470:390:01

Cross-listed with Comparative Literature 01:195:397:01

Anna Henke

MW4 1:10pm-2:30pm

Scott Hall 202

Course Description

This course will explore revenge and melancholia in their relation to mourning (both as stages and substitutes for the grieving process). Bacon called revenge “a kind of wild justice,” an idea that gained traction during the Enlightenment as philosophers worked to tame legal systems, basing them on reason rather than the wild logic of vengeance. Already in the Elizabethan era, however, playwrights were exploring on stage the dangers vigilantism posed to the state. It is perhaps no coincidence that at the same time that the community began to grapple critically with the violence of anger, the collective imagination began to reflect on – indeed it became consumed with – a different mood altogether: melancholy. Revenge and melancholy clashed most famously in the figure of Hamlet, whose dual responses to his father’s death interfere with one another: his passive, multifaceted and fascinating melancholy interrupts his active drive for revenge.

The dangers of revenge to the authority of the state are, perhaps, more apparent than the threat posed by melancholy, which has often been dismissed as apolitical. And yet, as an anti-social behaviour, melancholy is associated with a kind of rebellion. Kristeva links melancholy to religious doubt. As the mark of religious skepticism it constitutes a certain kind of social rebellion.

Historically, the cure for both revenge and melancholy lay in drawing blood: revenge demanded the spilling of another’s blood, whereas melancholy one’s own. Unlike revenge, which takes its legitimation from a causal offense, however, melancholy knows no origin. In addition to exploring the relationship between revenge and closure as well as melancholy and therapy, we will also explore the social and political implications of active and passive responses to trauma, the relationship of revenge and melancholy to the body in pain, Aristotle’s suggestion of a link between artistic production and melancholy, and the relationship between melancholy and reading.

Taught in English

FINAL GRADE

Discussion-board posts & responses 20%

In-class presentation: 20%

Mid-term paper: 25%

Final Paper 35%

Grade distribution

A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F=64 and below

Required texts, available at the Rutgers bookshop.

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*
Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus, Othello, Hamlet*
Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*
Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*
Bacon, *The Essays*
Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*
Nietzsche, *Human all too Human*
Goethe, *Iphigenia in Tauris*
Büchner, *Danton's Death*
George RR Martin, *Game of Thrones*
Borges, *Fictions*

Final Exam date, time & location

There will be a final paper in lieu of a final exam.

Departmental policies

- 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. 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.

Class Requirements

Attendance is mandatory. More than one absence will lower your grade. Keep up-to-date with the reading; participate in class discussion.

- In-class Presentation

Students will be expected to give one brief 15-minute introduction in which you will pose questions to the class. You will meet with me before your presentation; together, we will design and frame the questions that will guide us through the class.

You are required to post questions on the online forum 2 days before class. Your classmates will respond to those prompts.

Student presentations should address the following:

Brief biography of the author, close reading of a passage, reflect on the question what does this work tell us about revenge, melancholy, comparison to another work.

- Online Forum

Participation in the online class forum is mandatory. Students are required to post reading responses online in preparation for class. Students should prepare for each class by selecting *a word, sentence, or passage from the reading* that they post about in the class forum. Students' contributions will serve as a basis of class discussion. *In order to receive credit for the assignment, postings must be entered on the online forum by the time class begins.* (Please do not just post page-numbers; posts don't have to be long, but they should be clearly formulated questions or comments including at least one short citation from the reading. Students are welcome to post their observations or questions as comments that follow on from what other students have already posted as long as these comments further the discussion in some way.)

- Midterm essay

The first writing assignment of the course will be a 5-7 page essay, which is to focus on a single text which we have covered in class. The essay should carefully unfold an issue or theme which the student identifies in the text, or investigate a question the student believes to be particularly relevant to the text. All essay topics should be discussed with me during office hours before work is begun on the essay. The mid-term essay will account for 25% of the student's final grade.

- Final Essay

The final assignment for the course will be a long essay, 12-15 pages on a text we DID NOT cover in class.

Course Schedule

Revenge Today:

W 1/18. Hitchcock, "Revenge"
"Criminalizing Revenge Porn," 49 Wake
Forest L. Rev. 345
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2368946
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/05/the-attorney-fighting-revenge-porn>

Ancient Revenge:

M 1/23 Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*
W 1/25 Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*

M 1/30 Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*

Elizabethan Revenge

W 2/1 Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* (1594),
M 2/6 Julie Taymor, "Titus"

Revenge without Motive

W 2/8 Shakespeare, *Othello* – (1604)

Revenge of the Melancholic

M 2/13. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1603),
W 2/15 Montaigne, Essays including
"Cowardice, the mother of cruelty"

Depression without Origin

M 2/20 Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,
selections
W 2/22. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,
selections

W 2/22 FIRST PAPER DUE

Revenge and Justice:

M 2/27 Bacon, Essays including "Of

Revenge" (1625),

W 3/1 Nietzsche, Human, all-too Human
including "Elements of revenge"
M 3/6 Nietzsche *Genealogy of Morals* preface
and part 1

M 3/8 Kleist, *Michael Koblhaas* (1810)

SPRING BREAK

Theater without Revenge

W 3/20. Goethe, *Iphigenia in Tauris*

Melancholy, Violence, Politics:

W 3/22 Büchner, *Danton's Death* (1835)

M 3/27 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia"
(1917)

W 3/29 Kristiva, "On the Melancholic
Imaginary"

M 4/3 Campion, "The Piano"

W 4/5 Bergman, "The Passion of Anna"

M 4/10 Simon, "The Wire"

W 4/12 Simon, "The Wire"

M 4/17 Baldwin, "I am not your Negro"

W 4/19 Martin, *Game of Thrones*

M 4/24 von Trier, "Dogville"

W 4/26 Borges, Emma Zunz
Poe, *The Cask Of Amontillado*

Concluding Reflections

M 5/1 TBA

FINAL PAPER DUE

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/

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/

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.