

Goethe's *Faust* and the Fracturing of Tradition

Spring 2020, Rutgers University
German 16:470:626 [27958] / Comp Lit
16:195:516 [14375] / German 01:470:388
[27358] / Comp Lit 01:195:480 [27275]
Wednesdays 4:30-7:10pm, AB 4050 / 15
Seminary Place West Wing (CAC)

Prof. Nicholas Rennie
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Faust, in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's drama, 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.

In this seminar we will examine both Part I and Part II of Goethe's work, as well as historical sources, to consider first some questions about the Faust legend: how did this legend become the quintessential myth of modernity? What does Faust, in the various iterations of this legend, experience and learn by selling his soul? Is his story a celebration or a condemnation of the modern age of discovery – research, teaching, learning and self-exploration?

Even as we take these and other more general questions about the Faust myth into account, we'll focus more particularly on the dramatic text that came to be widely considered the most important work both of Goethe's life, and of the modern German literary tradition – as well one of the most disruptive and innovative works of modern European literature. Written and revised over six decades and drawing texts from the Bible to Kālidāsa's *Shakuntala*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the works of Shakespeare, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and poetic, scientific and philosophical writing of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the play updates an old German story about experimentation and the limits of human autonomy; it integrates, recasts and anticipates 18th and 19th-century developments in European literary and intellectual history; it adopts or develops virtually every metric and generic form that would be available in German by the time of Goethe's death in 1832; and it has been invoked as a test case by literary, aesthetic, philosophical, political and social theories of the past 200 years. This seminar will combine close readings of the play in relation to these various literary and historical contexts, along with discussion of a selection of the drama's recent interpretations.

Discussion in English. Primary and secondary literature available in English (with additional, optional secondary texts available in German). Graduate students in the German program are expected to read German primary texts (e.g. *Faust*) in the original language, and cite them in German in their papers.

REQUIRED TEXTS (YOU WILL NEED TO ORDER AND BUY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING)

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Faust*. Edited by Albrecht Schöne. 8th ed. 2 vols. Deutscher Klassiker Verlag im Taschenbuch 52. Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2017. [ISBN 9783618680529]
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Faust I & II*. Edited by David E. Wellbery. Translated by Stuart Atkins. Princeton Classics. Princeton; Oxfordshire (UK): Princeton University Press, 2014. [ISBN 9780691162294]

REQUIREMENTS

- Weekly attendance and preparation.
- One 15-minute presentation on a secondary text.
- Two quizzes.
- Paper(s):
 - Graduate students: final paper (3,000 – 3,500 words), in English or German, to be submitted via Canvas / Assignments. Be sure to set up an appointment to discuss your final paper topic with me by Wed. 4/1 at the latest.
 - Undergraduates: two papers of 1,500-1,750 words each, in English (or, with my prior written approval, in another language), to be submitted via Canvas / Assignments. Be sure to set up an appointment to discuss your paper topics by at least two weeks before each paper due-date.

GRADE

- | | |
|----------------|-----|
| • Presentation | 10% |
| • Two quizzes | 25% |
| • Paper(s) | 65% |

Auditors: one 15-minute presentation, and weekly attendance.

To help give you an early sense of the overall structure of Goethe’s play, and to make it easier to understand references to various parts of the play in the secondary readings, be sure to read the whole play through at least once by the end of February.

Quizzes? Yes: *Faust* is a brilliant, complex, long, unwieldy, sometimes quite baffling play. In many regards it is – to cite a description by Goethe himself – *Inkommensurabel*. The point of the quizzes is to help ensure that, beyond focusing on isolated passages or ideas that especially interest you, you also get to know the play as a whole in some detail.

PRESENTATIONS

Each presentation should focus on an aspect of the day’s theory reading, and should focus on the terms and structure of the text itself. It should present a clear thesis and cite specific passages from the assigned reading as evidence. You can best help the rest of the class if you succinctly articulate what you take to be *one particularly important dimension of the reading* (even just its main thesis), and then discuss any potential problems that you see with this thesis and that remain unresolved within the text itself. Presentations that list aspects of a text without organizing these under a main organizing principle tend to be less effective in helping others find their way into discussion of the text. Presenters should integrate some discussion of the week’s “optional” reading (pick one, if more than one is listed) in their comments (see “optional readings” above). Presentations should last 20 minutes, followed by discussion.

Please do *not* read your presentation from a script. Comparative references to other relevant texts are welcome, as long as the assigned text remains the focus of the presentation.

Click [here](#) to sign up for your presentation, or go to the course Canvas page, click on either “syllabus” or “assignments,” select “presentations,” and follow the link at “Sign up [here](#) to schedule your presentation.”

PAPERS

Like your presentation, your paper should introduce a clear thesis, and should normally do so within the opening paragraph (especially in the case of the 5 and 6-pp. papers). The subsequent argument should

demonstrate this thesis with the help of judicious quotations (always include page and/or line numbers) from the text under consideration. Strong papers seek to account for, rather than simply ignore, those features of the text that might seem to contradict the paper's main thesis. Please pay close attention to the form of your paper: incomplete and run-on sentences, typos and misspellings, and sloppy and obscure formulations will lower your grade. You are encouraged to contact me in advance to discuss the topic and structure of your paper. Papers may be written in English or German (French or Italian fine too, if anyone prefers).

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

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

As indicated above, graduate students in the German program are expected to read German primary texts (e.g. *Faust*) in the original language, and cite them in German in their papers.

Note that you are indeed required to have your **print edition** of *Faust* with you at each seminar discussion. If you *additionally* want to bring an electronic edition with you, feel free to do so.

COURSE CANVAS WEBSITE

A website for this course is available to enrolled students at <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>. You will need to access this site to download the current syllabus and readings, and to submit work.

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: <https://ods.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/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

- **COPYRIGHT**

Note that unauthorized upload of materials created by the instructor and/or students for this course may violate the University Academic Integrity Policy and subject the student to disciplinary action.

- **TURNITIN PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Sakai, Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

1. 1/22 INTRODUCTION

2. 1/29 LITERARY BACKGROUND I

- *Faust*, lines 1-353.
- Bible, Genesis 1-3 (see <http://bible.oremus.org/> or <https://www.die-bibel.de/bibeln/online-bibeln/> for additional Bible text and notes).
- Bible, The Book of Job 1-13, 32-42.
- Hoffmeister, Gerhart. "Goethe's Faust and the Theatrum Mundi-Tradition in European Romanticism." *Journal of European Studies* 13.1-2 (1983): 42-55 [pdf].

3. 2/5 LITERARY BACKGROUND II

- *Faust*, lines 354-807.
- Brown, Jane K. *Faust: Theater of the World*. New York; Toronto; New York: Twayne Publishers; Maxwell Macmillan Canada; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992, 3-34 [pdf].
- *Das Volksbuch von Doktor Faust (Historia von Doctor Johann Fausten)*. Ed. Leander Petzoldt. Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1981 (anonymous, 1587), 8-30, 115-26 (chap. 1-9, 62-68) / *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*. London; New York: G. Routledge; E. P. Dutton, 1925, 65-80, 197-208 (chap. 1-8, 58-63) [pdf].

- Lessing, 17. Literaturbrief (1759) / Letter on Literature 17 [pdf].

4. 2/12 FROM *URFAUST* TO THE COMPLETION OF *FAUST* PART I

- *Faust*, lines 808-4612 (end of Part I of the play)
- Boyle, Nicholas. *Goethe: The Poet and the Age I* (Oxford, England; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1991), 212-29 [pdf].

5. 2/19 TYING UP THE PACT

- *Faust*, lines 4613-4727; 11043-12111.
- Kittler, Friedrich A., "The Scholar's Tragedy: Prelude in the Theater," in: Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990, 3-24 [pdf].

NB: Finish reading through *Faust I & II* at least once by end of February.

6. 2/26 QUIZ 1

- Quiz: five 10-minute short essays on passages (given in both German and English) from the portions of the play discussed in class so far (from *Faust*, lines 1-4727, 11043-12111). Identify in each passage: speaker, location in the text, thematic context; and briefly but clearly indicate larger ideas that are relevant to the passage.

- Hart, Gail K. "Errant Strivings: Goethe, Faust and the Feminist Reader." *From Goethe to Gide: Feminism, Aesthetics and the Literary Canon in France and Germany, 1770-1936*. Ed. Lesley Sharpe. Exeter, England: U of Exeter P, 2005. 7-21 [pdf].

Friday, March 6th: First paper due (undergraduate participants, and any others who opt for 2-paper option)

7. 3/4 PART II, ACT I

- *Faust*, lines 4613-6565.
- Gray, Richard T. *Money Matters: Economics and the German Cultural Imagination, 1770-1850*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008, 346-400 [pdf].

8. 3/11 PART II, ACT II

- *Faust*, lines 6566-8487.
- Alt, Peter-André. "Mephisto's Principles: On the Construction of Evil in Goethe's *Faust I*." *Modern Language Review* 106, no. 1 (2011): 149-63.

— Spring break —

9. 3/25 PART II, ACT III

- *Faust*, lines 8488-10038.
- Berman, Marshall. "Goethe's *Faust*: The Tragedy of Development," Ch. 1 in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1988, 37-86.

By April 1st: be sure to have discussed with me your ideas about your final paper topic.

10. 4/1 PART II, ACT IV

- *Faust*, lines 10039-11042.
- Mieszkowski, Jan. "Faust at War." *Studies in Romanticism* 48.1 (2009): 139-57 [pdf].
- Vaget, Hans Rudolf. "Goethe's *Faust* Today: A 'Post-Wall' Reading." *Interpreting Goethe's Faust Today*. Ed.

Cyrus Hamlin. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994. 43-58 [pdf].

11. 4/8 PART II, ACT V

- *Faust*, lines 11043-12111.
- Moretti, in: Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, Walter W. Arndt, and Cyrus Hamlin. *Faust: A Tragedy. Interpretive Notes, Contexts, Modern Criticism*. 2nd ed. New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2001, 611-34 [pdf] (the full text appears in Moretti, Franco. *Modern Epic: The World-System from Goethe to García Márquez*. Trans. Quintin Hoare. London: Verso, 1994, 1-98).

12. 4/15 QUIZ 2

- Final Quiz: same format and length as the midterm, but covering the entire play.
- Dante, *Divine Comedy, Paradiso, Cantos I-III; Inferno, Canto XXXIII*.

13. 4/22 SEMIOTICS, MEMORY

- Rennie, Nicholas. "Play with Memory and Its Topoi: *Faust*." Forthcoming in *Play in the Age of Goethe: Theories, Narratives, and Practices of Play around 1800*, edited by Edgar Landgraf and Elliott Schreiber. Lewisburg [Pennsylvania]: Bucknell UP, 2020.
- Flax, Neil M. "The Presence of the Sign in Goethe's *Faust*." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 98.2 (1983): 183-203 [pdf].

14. 4/29 IRONY, TRAGEDY

- Anderegg, Johannes. "Unrecognized Modernity: Intertextuality and Irony in Goethe's *Faust*." *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 39.1 (2006): 31-41.
- Tantillo, Astrida Orle. "Damned to Heaven: The Tragedy of *Faust* Revisited." *Monatshefte für Deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur* 99.4 (2007): 454-68.

Monday, **May 4, 2020: Final paper due:** 3,000 – 3,500 words, in English or German. Submit as an MS Word document via the *Assignments* link at the course Sakai site. When you're finished, be sure to double-check that your paper is indeed posted as an attachment at this site.

Student-Wellness Services:

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

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.

Crisis Intervention : <http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/crisis-intervention/>

Report a Concern: <http://health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help/>

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>.