

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: **Backgrounds and Foundations**

Course Number and Section

ENGLISH

2695E 550

Instructor Name(s): John Vanderheide

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Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL Brightspace is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

Course Description:

An introduction to foundational stories from different world cultures and different historical periods that are essential to an understanding of current textual and close reading practices in literary and cultural criticism.

Learning Outcomes: one outcome per entry

Develop effective strategies of close reading and research through various class assignments

Gain a broad understanding of some major myths and/or early literary works from a variety of cultural traditions informing cultural production in English speaking contexts and around the world

Develop an understanding of the narrative forms, genres and modes present in the different cultural texts covered in the course

Learning ways to approach how a text may rely for meaning on a web of interrelationships with other texts

Gain a sense of place and time for the various works studied

Gain an understanding of the oral and textual traditions connected to the various works in the course

Learning ways to construct coherent arguments about cultural narratives

Learning to write logically and persuasively using appropriate academic conventions for literary and cultural research

Learning how to engage with academic scholarship in the field of literary criticism

Textbooks and Course Materials:

Texts to purchase or borrow:

Homer, The Odyssey. Translated by Emily Wilson.

Circe, Madeline Miller.
Love in Color, Bolu Babalola
Arabian Nights and Days, Naguib Mahfouz
The Forests of Enchantment, Chitra Benerjee Divakaruni
Monkey King: Journey to the West. Wu Cheng En.
Tale of Genji: Murasaki Shibiku.

All other course material will be made available to read or view online, or in pdfs uploaded to the course Brightspace page

Methods of Evaluation: one assignment per entry

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Short Essay 1	10192026	15
Short Essay 2	12102026	15
Quiz 1	02222027	10
Winter Term Assignment	04082027	20
Final Exam	04302027	30
Attendance and Participation	04082027	10

Friday, August 14, 2026

Huron Brief Course Outline 2026/27

In-course Costs \$143.00

For Textbooks and Course Materials (below), you are required to include the cost of each textbook or other learning material.

Note whether there are any restrictions that would prevent a student from using a second-hand copy. Here is some suggested text:

- Required textbook: [author, title, edition, publisher, date]. Cost: [insert amount].
 - Or include the weblink of the textbook’s publisher site that includes the cost information.
- Students need to purchase this edition. Second-hand or older editions will not be sufficient.
- OR Students are welcome to purchase second-hand or earlier editions of this textbook.
- This course has an optional field trip that costs [insert amount].
- This course has a required field component that costs [insert amount].

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.