

Monday, September 16, 2024

ENG 271_WorldLitAssignments_ (UW Grant)

Professor Andy Gurevich

Journal Assignments

- **Wk#2Jrnl: Enuma Elish/Gilgamesh**

Please answer the following questions with complete sentences and reasonable, critical interaction with the assigned literature and support materials. Complete answers will be 100-150 words each and reference the text, the support materials and your own research. Please make these responses free from error and as academic as possible.

1. **The pantheon of Gods and Goddesses described in the *Enuma Elish* are the same ones influencing the action in Gilgamesh. Discuss how you think the behavior and temperament of these deities directly influences the decisions made by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.**
2. **Is Gilgamesh a static or dynamic character? Consult the lecture notes on characterization and use specifics from the text to support your answer.**

- **Wk#7Jrnl: The Mahabharata**

Please answer the following questions with complete sentences and reasonable, critical interaction with the assigned literature and support materials. Complete answers will be 100-150 words each and reference the text, the support materials and your own research. Please make these responses free from error and as academic as possible.

1. **Discuss the theme of exile or a journey into “nature” (forest, wilderness, desert, sea, underworld, etc.) and the trials of the hero as these are presented in the Mahabharata, Gilgamesh, and/or the Odyssey.**
2. **How would you measure Arjuna as a moral warrior? Compare and contrast his motivations for or against violence with those of other warriors you have read about this term.**

- **Wk#8Jrnl: The Bhagavad Gita**

Please answer the following questions with complete sentences and reasonable, critical interaction with the assigned literature and support materials. Complete answers will be 100-150 words each and reference the text, the support materials and your own research. Please make these responses free from error and as academic as possible.

1. **Krishna here speaks to Arjuna, a warrior afraid to fight: compare Arjuna's dilemma with that of Achilles, in the Iliad. Compare the code of behavior Krishna outlines to the violence in either of Homer's poems, or that in Gilgamesh.**
2. **The heroes of the Mahabharata, like those in Gilgamesh, the Iliad, and the Odyssey, are closely connected to the gods. Comment on the cultural differences and similarities you see in these divine-heroic relationships.**

- **Wk#9 Jrnl: Confucius**

Please answer the following questions with complete sentences and reasonable, critical interaction with the assigned literature and support materials. Complete answers will be 100-150 words each and reference the text, the support materials and your own research. Please make these responses free from error and as academic as possible.

1. **Examine the passage from Book II, 2.4 ("At fifteen, I set my heart upon learning. At thirty I had planted my feet firm upon the ground..."). What is the significance of this passage and how does it relate to the larger thematic principles of the text?**
2. **Examine Book VII, 7.1, in which Confucius states that he only transmits what has been taught to him but does not innovate or add anything of his creation. Why do you think this is the case? How does this approach complement Confucian ideology?**

- **Wk#10 Jrnl: The Tao Te Ching (Daodejing)**

Please answer the following questions with complete sentences and reasonable, critical interaction with the assigned literature and support materials. Complete answers will be 100-150 words each and reference the text, the support materials and your own research. Please make these responses free from error and as academic as possible.

1. **In the Daodejing, what is the Master's attitude toward action? Give specific examples from the text and compare this understanding with the behavior of one of the heroes you have read about so far (Achilles, Odysseus or Arjuna).**

2. **What does Lao-tzu imply about the obligation of the state to the individual it governs and about the obligation of the individual to the state? Is one much more important to the other? Using specifics from the text, establish what you feel is the optimum relationship between the two.**

Group Discussions

- **D1: The Enuma Elisa**

Discuss the following question(s):

- **What do you think about the commonalities between the Babylonian creation story and the Genesis creation account? What about the differences? How are we to read mythological creation stories in light of the scientific world view? How are we to read them in light of each other when they share so many similarities and so many differences?**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday** of this week.

This is an interactive discussion, so respond to each other's comments and ideas. Do not just write an answer down and forget about it. You need to respond to at least two other students' posts. Reply to at least two classmates **by Sunday**.

These discussions are meant to facilitate deeper understanding and communal awareness of the ideas we are studying. You may not always agree with what others are saying but please always be respectful, academic and fair-minded in your posts. We are not here to be right. We are not here to police one another and we are not here to win arguments. These stories are complex and will be understood differently by each of us. Let us use this space to explore all of the ways stories can mean different things to different people, rather than trying to find the one "correct" way while dismissing all the rest. Make sure you are going beyond the basic summary and passing observations and diving down deep into the historical, cultural and religious contexts of the stories we are reading.

Each week, I will add a response of my own that models what I think you should be focusing on in your work. I will also highlight and call out a student response that I think closely illustrates the kinds of responses that the week's prompts warrant. Getting "called out" in this way three times over the term will earn you extra credit points. Pay attention to these weekly examples. They will show you how to best engage in the discussion spaces. Grades are based on the substance and relevance of your initial posts and responses.

- **D2: The Epic of Gilgamesh**

Discuss the following question(s):

1. **What do you make of the behavior of the Gods towards the people? In one sense, they seem unconcerned and almost annoyed by the presence of the people who worship them. In other cases, they take mercy on them. Still in others, they seem to take pleasure in abusing, harming and even trying to rape and kill them. From a mythological and symbolic perspective, how are we to understand the nature of this relationship?**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday** of this week.

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- **D6: The Mahabharata #1**

Discuss the following question(s):

1. **How does India's long, complex and diverse past contribute to its evolving national identity? How is this tendency to find unity in the diversity (and vice versa) reflected in the structure and story of *The Mahabharata*?**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday** of this week.

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- **D7: The Mahabharata #2**

Discuss the following question(s):

1. **Explain the symbol of the righteous hand of action that is explored in the video as a symbol of the relationship between Drapudi and her five husbands. Are there other interpretations of this unorthodox marriage between the Pandavas and their wife that help the reader better understand the symbolic nature of the story? How do we know if these are legitimate interpretations of these aspects of the story?**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday** of this week.

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- **D8: The Bhagavad Gita**

Discuss the following question(s):

1. **After watching the video and reading the four "paths" to God that are set out in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which do you feel is the best path for your personality and view of the world? In other words, in your own way and in your own traditions, which of the four paths (*jnana*, *raja*, *karma* and *bhakti*) resonates most with the person you feel you most deeply are? Do you practice any traditions, rituals or spiritual discipline to help you manifest these things into your life and into the world?**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday** of this week.

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- **D9-10: Confucius & The Tao te Ching**

Discuss the following question(s):

1. **What do you think the Chinese mean by the phrase, "Every Chinese wears a Confucian cap, a Taoist robe, and Buddhist sandals?"**
2. **How do the Taoist teachings and the Confucian teachings compliment one another? In what ways are they like the twin elements of the Yin/Yang itself?**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday of Thanksgiving Week.**

This is an interactive discussion, so respond to each other's comments and ideas. Do not just write an answer down and forget about it. You need to respond to at least two other students' posts. Reply to at least two classmates **by Sunday of Thanksgiving Week.**

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- **D13: Finals Week Discussion - EXTRA CREDIT**

Discuss the following question(s):

1. **In the article posted in this module about the newly discovered fragments of the Gilgamesh epic, the authors state, "In a way, Gilgamesh is both the oldest and the newest member of the literary canon." Discuss what this means for us from an academic standpoint and from the standpoint of what this can teach us about how we live our lives? Is there an ecological message in Enkidu's final words?**
2. **After watching the videos in this module, talk about how the readings throughout this term have influenced the way you see the world and the way story, myth and culture each play significant roles in our ongoing definitions of ourselves.**

Create a Discussion thread and post your edited, thoughtful, clear answer. You can attach a document, but be sure to also paste the responses so everyone can access them easily. Please try to have your initial post completed **by Friday** of this week.

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• Final Exam Essay Questions

Please select THREE choices from the following list and write **four to five developed paragraphs in response to each**. You may use notes, your text and outside sources as long as you give proper citation for ideas that are not your own. This is your final exam so please provide well developed, well supported answers to each question that bring in specifics from the texts and perhaps even a few outside sources. Consult the library databases for some relevant academic sources to help you with these responses.

1. In a speech after the hero's death, Wiglaf expresses regret that his friends could not persuade Beowulf to leave the dragon alone. What do you think of this view? [Consider such aspects as these: the apparent absence of anyone else to cope with the dragon; the hero's motives (the glory and the gold); the responsibility of the king for the welfare of the people.]
2. What does Beowulf's choice of weapons tell us about him as a fighter and as a human being? Compare the weapons and the means of dealing with their enemies chosen by other heroes, looking for evidence about them in the same way. Consider (Gilgamesh, Achilles, Odysseus, Arjuna, etc.)
3. **In the *Gita*, Krishna enunciates a complex philosophy of action. What does Krishna mean by "action" and the "fruit of action"? Compare the teaching on assertiveness and action presented in the *Gita* with the teachings of Lao-Tzu in the *Tao Te Ching*.**
4. **Compare the battle descriptions in the *Mahabharata* with those in the *Iliad*. What is the attitude towards violence in these texts? How does such violence reflect epic literature's dry-eyed understanding of the human condition? Do the gods in these epics restrain or goad human beings on to unscrupulous means & actions? What does this say about how these ancient cultures viewed the relationship between morality and the divine?**
5. **Hospitality is one of the chief virtues of ancient and heroic cultures. Consider why this should be so, paying attention to the experiences of Odysseus in his travels, The Pandavas in the wilderness, and any other instances you can find in the texts we have read this term (including *Beowulf*).**
6. **Compare and contrast the role of the serpent in at least two of the narratives we have read so far. How does this symbol come to represent forbidden knowledge? Regeneration? What is the "punishment" or outcome of man's interaction with this knowledge in each case?**