Course Description “World Literatures: Ancient World through the Sixteenth Century,” introduces students to a representative sample of influential works from a variety of the world’s traditions—from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, to Greece and Rome, China, India, Japan, Europe and the Americas. Readings range from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Shakuntala* to *The Conference of the Birds* and *The Tale of Genji* to *Don Quixote* and *The Tempest*. In addition to such key literary works, the course will also include some philosophical, historical, and cultural texts that will help locate the literature in its unique time and place. The aim is not only gain a greater understanding of the development of literary forms and cultural traditions of the world, but to put these diverse texts into conversation with each other in order to gain a sense of history and get a feel for the varieties of human experience. In addition, students should be encouraged to consider how (or whether) literary works from these various cultures and historical periods relate to readers and the world today. Ultimately the course should promote strategies of active and historically and culturally informed discussing, reading and writing that places texts from the world’s literatures into conversation with one another in order to promote a culturally and historically informed reading that acknowledges multiple points of view; recognizes the interdependence of nations, cultures and peoples; and respects the cultural and human rights of peoples and nations within the global collectivity.

Objectives
By participating in class discussions, writing several short papers and a longer research paper, and writing short-answer and short essay quizzes and examinations, students will engage in a dialogic and reflexive conversation about literary texts; analyze, contextualize, and compare and contrast literary and extra-literary works from diverse traditions; show how those texts are related to their places and times of origin; identify recurrent themes, motifs, genres, and literary movements; and identify and evaluate the relationships among those works, as well as what makes each work distinctive or unique. In addition, students will be introduced to and discuss problems of translation and transculturation, and they will recognize and evaluate the rewards, as well as the problems and limits, of reading across time and place, across cultures and languages.

Learning Outcomes
Students will be able to

1. **situate** key authors and literary works from the earliest literatures of Sumeria to about 1650 (Engl 292) and from about 1650 to the present (Engl 293) within their historical and cultural contexts (in short essays and examinations);

2. **compare** and **contrast** works from different cultures and historical periods to those from other cultural traditions and other historical eras examining genre, style, and content or theme (in short essays and examinations);
3. **analyze** and **interpret** works from different historical and cultural traditions using appropriate critical terms of literary analysis and responding to questions about genre, style, and content or theme (in short essays and examinations);

4. **recognize** and **evaluate** how some literary works reflect historical, national, cultural, and ethnic differences, even as they invoke shared human experiences that may relate to readers and the world today (in short essays and examinations);

5. **write** with increasing proficiency critical essays characterized by original and insightful theses, supported by logically integrated and sound subordinate ideas, appropriate and pertinent evidence, and good sentence structure, diction, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

**Required Procedures and Evaluation**

Students in all sections must do the following:

1. **Examinations:** Take at least two quizzes, a midterm examination and a final examination containing identification, multiple choice, short-answer, and short essay questions, with a longer essay possible on the midterm and final.

2. **Papers:** Write at least fifteen pages (3,750 words) of writing assignments, preferably five three- to five-page critical papers assigned at regular intervals across the sixteen-week semester. Note: Keeping in mind that it is important that students engage in writing sequentially throughout the semester, the instructor may substitute a longer final paper or one or two creative assignments for one or two of the critical essays or one of the quizzes.

3. **Questionnaire:** Complete an end-of-term questionnaire to be collected by the undergraduate director or world literature program director at the end of the semester. Note: This questionnaire should be administered in the “dead week” before finals.

**Reading Requirements** The readings are divided into required, recommended, and optional. All section leaders must teach the required texts in full and choose one text from each category of recommended texts. Section leaders are free to include some texts of their own choice either from the *Bedford Anthology of World Literature*, Pack A, or from other sources. Keep in mind that one of the goals of the course is to place texts from different literary traditions into a dialogic relation—a conversation—with each other about particular topics, as well as to compare and contrast genres and movements across cultures.

**Required Texts:**

**ANCIENT WORLD**

1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
2. Homer, from *The Odyssey* and/or from *The Iliad*
3. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* or Sophocles, *Antigone*
4. Plato, *Apology* or “The Allegory of the Cave”
5. Virgil, from *The Aeneid*
6. Bhagavad Gita
7. Confucius, from *The Analects* or Laozi selections from *Dao De Jing* and/or Zhuangzi, selections from *Basic Writings*
8. At least one In the World unit from the Ancient World section.

**MIDDLE PERIOD**
1. Kalidasa, *Shakuntala*
2. Farid ud-din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*
3. Chaucer, from *The Canterbury Tales* or Boccaccio, from *The Decameron*
4. Dante, *The Inferno*
5. Lady Murasaki, from *The Tale of Genji*
6. At least one In the World unit from the Middle period section.

**EARLY MODERN**
1. Cervantes, from *Don Quixote*
2. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
3. At least one In the World unit from the Early Modern section.

**Recommended Texts:** (Choose at least one from each category.)

**ANCIENT WORLD**
1. The Descent of Inanna
2. Egyptian Love Poems
3. Hebrew Scriptures, *Genesis* and/or *Exodus*
4. Sappho, selected poems
5. Ovid, from *Metamorphoses* OR Catullus, selected poems
6. Buddhist Texts

**MIDDLE PERIOD**
1. The New Testament
2. The Quran
3. Poets of the Tang Dynasty
4. The Thousand and One Nights
5. Chrétien, from *The Song of Roland*
6. Andalusian and European Love Lyrics

**EARLY MODERN**
1. More, *Utopia*
2. Petrarch, from *Canzoniere*
4. Machiavelli, from *The Prince*
5. Ibn Ishaq, from *Il Muqaddimah*
6. The Ancient Mexicans