

DRAGONOLOGY

A Multidisciplinary Study of the Western Dragon Figure

Instructor: Sarah Line

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Office hours: TBD

Course Meetings: TBD

Introduction: This course aims to discover the varied representations and cultural significance of the Western dragon in varied forms of literature, from the Middle Ages to today. Our exploration will focus on research questions such as: Why are we fascinated with the dragon? What does the dragon represent? Do these representations change over periods? Why has the dragon prevailed into our modern world? By analyzing the historical background and resulting literature about dragons from Scandinavia, the British Isles, and Continental Europe, we will truly see the Western Dragon for what it is.

Course Objectives: While the superficial aim for this course is to give students a greater understanding of the Western dragon figure and its many forms, the course also purposes to catalyze students into questioning the cultural and historical significance of mythic figures as well as analyze the historical circumstances and contexts in which these figures both arise and maintain reputation throughout millennia. As an interdisciplinary course, students must be able to investigate a number of different forms and genres from a variety of time periods and apply cultural and historical lenses to their inquiry. In addition, the incorporation of both creative and research-based projects will allow students to diversely develop and express methods of critical analysis. At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to define the Western dragon and its cultural significance and explain how its connotation and reception has changed throughout time. In addition, students will have the capacity to make educated and well-researched decisions on mythic figures and explain these ideas to those unfamiliar with the historical background in both a verbal and written context.

Course Texts:

Introducing the Medieval Dragon by Thomas Honnegger

Dragons and Unicorns: A Natural History by Paul Johnsgard and Karin Johnsgard

A Natural History of Dragons: A Memoir by Lady Trent by Marie Brennan

The Dragon: Fear and Power by Arnold Martin (available online via IUCAT)

Other texts (both visual and literary excerpts) will be made available via Canvas.

Grading:

The following is a break down of how grades will be determined in this course. For more information on the assignments, see below. For detailed information, see the Assignment Sheets on Canvas.

3 Response Papers (50 points each) = 150 points
Leading Class Discussion with a Partner = 150 points
Short In-Class Assignments = 150 points
1 Multimedia Presentation = 150 points
1 Creative Representation = 150 points
Final Argumentative Paper = 250 points

TOTAL = 1000pts

Response papers. For each of our thematic sections, you must submit a 2-page response paper to some part of the material we have covered. This can include short readings done in class, the short story or excerpt, or the novel readings. While you must submit the response before the end of the unit, the exact date of your submission is up to you. Responses will not be accepted after the conclusion of the unit.

Creative representation. In order to stretch our creative muscles, you will be required to complete a creative project during the second half of our course. It may be a poem, short story, photo, painting, sculpture, or short film. Any other forms of creative expression may be used if they are pre-approved. Specific requirements for each project are listed in the Assignment Sheet.

Leading class discussion. Over the course of our class meetings, you will be required to lead the first-half of class (sign-ups during the first week of class). You will contextualize the day's readings, provide a short activity, and pose insightful questions to fuel the discussion. I am more than willing to work with you to come up with a helpful activity, though you will likely draw inspiration from your fellow classmates and our daily class activities.

Short in-class assignments. We will complete a variety of short assignments throughout the semester including mind maps and group work. All assignments in this category are completion only, and your participation requires your attendance in both presence and mind in class.

Multimedia project. This project will focus on explaining a dragon from an outside text to your classmates. The text may be an older, primary source that we have not discussed in detail or a contemporary text. See the assignment sheet for details and ideas. The project will be a 10-minute class presentation, complete with questions from your peers (think 7 minutes for the presentation, 3 for questions). This project may be

pre-filmed or presented live. You may use PowerPoint or other presentation tools. Accompanying the project will be a 2-page write up of the major points and ideas.

Final argumentative paper. This final project will require you to write a 6-8 page argumentative essay about the dragon figure. You may attempt to answer one of our research questions, something that has arisen in class, or another facet of our study that you have found interesting. You must incorporate at least 2 of the works we've discussed in class. All project topics must be approved by me.

Course Policies and Resources

Attendance. Attendance and participation is required in this course. Interacting with other students within Collins Living-Learning Center both contributes to the Collins' intellectual life and is important for us to create meaningful class discussion. Short In-Class Assignments are worth 150 points, which is 15% of your final grade. If you are not present for these assignments, you cannot receive credit for them. There will be no alternate assignments offered. If you foresee a problem with your attendance in this course that will severely impact your grade, please come and talk to me.

Class Roster. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is listed on the class roster, please let me know. Also, feel free to specify your preferred gender pronoun usage. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me.

Late assignments. The structure of this course allows you to take your own time with your assignments. However, as you'll see in the assignment descriptions, there are deadlines for each assignment. Ideally, assignments will be turned in before the deadline. All assignments turned in on the deadline must be done so at the start of class. If you do not meet these deadlines, a 10% deduction will be made for each calendar day that the assignment is late.

Meeting with me. I am available to meet with students on the office hours listed on the first page of this syllabus. Office hours conversations can focus on any aspect of the course: ideas, themes, projects, assignments, grading, and drafts. If you are unable to meet during my office hours, please email me with your availability, and I will check my schedule to set up an appointment. I check my email once a day; do not expect an immediate response.

Canvas. Be sure to check Canvas regularly this semester for updates, announcements, and course materials. This is where you will find all of your readings for class that are not in your required texts, and we will frequently use our class page to share and discuss ideas.

Technology in the classroom. I welcome the use of laptops and tablets in class, with the understanding that you limit your use to tasks that are directly relevant to our coursework; other uses are an unfair distraction to those seated around you. Please do not use mobile devices of any kind for texting, checking email, or any other activities not directly related to class discussion. You will receive one warning about distracting use of technology in class. If it technology continues to be a problem, I will be forced to ask you to leave, and you will not receive credit for any Short In-Class Assignment points missed.

Fair Use. The essays and other copyright materials that you will be working with in the course have been made available to you within the provisions of “fair use,” as explained in the US legal code that governs copyright. In general, this means that you will use these materials exclusively for their designated purposes within the course and that you will not post, email, or otherwise distribute them to others outside the class. If you have any questions about fair use, please ask me.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism. As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies detailed in the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct. This code ensures a safe learning environment for all involved, and also mandates that students respect one another’s work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course, or in any course on IU’s campus for that matter. Indiana University’s official statement on plagiarism is as follows:

Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else’s work, including the work of other students, as one’s own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered “common knowledge” may differ from course to course.

- a. A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, or pictures of another person without acknowledgement.*
- b. A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever:*

- 1. Directly quoting another person’s actual words, whether oral or written;*
- 2. Using another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories;*
- 3. Paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written;*
- 4. Borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; or*
- 5. Offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgement.*

All suspected violations of the Code will be reported to the Dean of Students and handled according to University policies. If you are concerned about citing another scholar or student’s ideas, please seek help from myself or Writing and Tutorial Services (WTS).

Religious Holidays Policy. Indiana University respects the right of all students' to observe their religious holidays and will make reasonable accommodation, upon request, for such observances. If you have such a request, it needs to be formally made by the second week of the course to the instructor. For a list of religious holidays recognized by the University in terms of this policy, please visit <http://enrollmentbulletin.indiana.edu/pages/relo.php>.

Student disability services. If you require assistance or appropriate academic accommodations for a university-documented disability, please speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you have not yet established your eligibility for disability support services through the Office of Disability Services for Students in the Herman B. Wells Library, Suite W 302, please contact them first (812-855-7578). Note: Disability services also extends to learning disabilities such as dyslexia or ADHD. Contact the Office of Disability Services for more detail.

Veteran Services. If you are a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves, in the National Guard, or a spouse/dependent of a veteran, please let me know if an aspect of your present or prior service affects your ability to fulfill the requirements of the course. I realize that you have no control over training and drill schedules, calls to active duty, GI Bill disbursements, and other aspects of service. I am happy to help in any way I can, especially by putting you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for veterans, service members, and families are located at Veteran Support Services on the mezzanine level in the Indiana Memorial Union. The VSS office can be reached at 812-856-1985, vetserv@indiana.edu, or veterans.indiana.edu.

Sexual Misconduct Policy. Title IX and Indiana University's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual misconduct. According to IU's policy, sexual misconduct includes discrimination on the basis of sex or gender in educational programs or activities as well as sexual harassment, sexual assault, other forms of sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or you know someone who has, the University can help. To speak to someone confidentially, you can contact:

The Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at 812-855-8900
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 812-855-5711
Confidential Victims Advocates (CVA) at 812-856-2469
IU Health Center at 812-855-4011

The Sexual Misconduct Policy also requires me, as an employee of the University, to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our campus' Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. Protecting a student's privacy is of the utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist the potential victim. In that event, those employees will work with a small number of

others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. For more information about available resources, you can visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html>.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). If you are struggling with your mental health, I highly encourage you to check out CAPS, located on the 4th floor of the IU Health Center. It is important to take care of yourself physically and mentally, and CAPS provides a variety of services including: academic concerns, relationship concerns, stress management, power and privilege, time management help, sleeping issues, adjusting to college life, anxiety, depression, substance use, body image, eating and exercising concerns, and sexual assault or abuse. Sessions with CAPS are offered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. You can schedule appointments at 812-855-5711, or contact their 24-hour crisis line at 812-855-8900.

Outline of Units (A full course schedule with assigned readings and daily meeting topics follows. In the final draft of the syllabus for students, this section will be extracted.)

Unit 1: Archeological Fragments

This unit explores mythic and religious explanations of dragons. What is a dragon? What does it look like, according to these accounts? Does it appear the same in all of these accounts? Is the dragon a good or bad figure?

Unit texts: *Beowulf*, the Elder and Younger *Eddas*, the Book of Revelations, select Old English poems and *liber monstorum* (books of monsters), select Old Norse sagas, Greco-Roman mythologies (specifically Jason & Medea), Celtic mythologies, select Middle English romances, Michael Camille's works on idolatry and the power of the image

Suggested activities: comparing visual representations with textual accounts, short analysis of different terminology used to describe dragons (linguistic-based), comparing texts based on genre, mind-mapping common trends and/or associated creatures

Unit 2: Seeing Green

Oftentimes the literary merges with the historical to create believable accounts. This unit analyzes the consequential texts and tracks where dragons have truly appeared in history. Is this the same dragon that appears in earlier mythic literature? Did past peoples truly believe in the dragon? Where do dragons come from?

Unit texts: Medieval bestiaries and encyclopedias, the travels of Marco Polo, Geoffrey on Monmouth, hagiographies, early Western accounts on dragon-like creatures (crocodiles, komodo dragons, etc.), *A History of Dragons*, early anthropological accounts

Suggested activities: Guest lecture from Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and/or East Asian Languages and Cultures department, mapping dragon "sightings"

throughout our texts, looking at medieval manuscript marginalia, integrating early anthropological accounts on “Others”

Unit 3: Where are they now?

Despite their heavy presence in the Middle Ages and other literary periods, dragons still lurk amongst us. This unit questions why dragons have achieved a sort of immortality by retaining their huge following in the modern era. We will ask: In what ways are modern era literary works employing the dragon? Is its purpose the same? Why have dragons and fantasy become such heavy themes in children’s literature?

Unit: *Game of Thrones* series (novels and television), *The Magicians* series (novels and television), *Lord of the Rings* series (film and novels), *Harry Potter* series (novels and film), *Eragon* series, *Dungeons and Dragons* (board game and manuals), *Skyrim*, *Dragon Age*, *Pete’s Dragon*, *Dragons Love Tacos*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, Disney’s *Sleeping Beauty*, *Dragon Tales*

Suggested activities: comparing dragons and records of dinosaur fossils, dragon vs. dinosaur debates, looking at dragons as fearsome versus “imaginary” (as in children’s texts), looking at how the word “dragon” has been employed in non-literary realms

Course Schedule*

*The following course schedule is set for twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) in the spring of 2021. This schedule can easily be adapted to accommodate a Monday-Wednesday schedule or even a three-day meeting schedule.

Date	Class topics	Assignment
Tuesday, January 12	Welcome & introduction to the class. Linguistic analysis of the word "dragon."	N/A
Thursday, January 14	Introduction to Unit 1: Archeological Fragments. Discussion of Greco-Roman Dragons. Additionally, begin class "Timeline of Dragons." Assigned: Response Paper #1 Creative Representation	Martin, "Dragons in Greek and Roman Mythology" pp. 13-42 The myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece (on Canvas)
Tuesday, January 19	Dragons in Western Religion. What role do dragons play in western religions? What connotations does this role come from? Are dragons evil?	Martin, "Dragons in the Bible and Saints' Lives" pp. 43-76 Honneger, "The Dragon and Medieval Religion" pp. 35-63 Bible excerpt from Revelations (on Canvas)
Thursday, January 21	Dragons in Old Norse Literature (specifically, Fafnir). Clips of History Channel's <i>Vikings</i> to address dragon slayer Ragnar Lodbrok.	<i>Volsunga saga</i> translation excerpt Excerpt: "Fafnir" by Joyce Tally Lionarons (Both on Canvas)
Tuesday, January 26	Dragons in Old Norse Literature (specifically, <i>Beowulf's</i> dragon). Who's to blame for the fight?	<i>Beowulf</i> translation excerpt (on Canvas) Martin, pp. 77-96)
Thursday, January 28	Dragons in Celtic Literature. Where does epic end and folklore begin?	Martin, "Dragons in Bestiaries and Celtic Mythology" pp. 119-134 Honneger, "The Medieval Dragon and Folklore" pp. 63-81

Tuesday, February 2	The Romance Dragon and Concepts of Chivalry. Why must the knight slay the dragon? A quick look at <i>Shrek</i> .	"Sir Degaré" translation (on CANVAS)
Thursday, February 4	Early images of dragons. What does a dragon look like? How is it functioning at the margins of medieval manuscripts?	"Fallen Angels: Demonic images" excerpt from Michael Camille (on Canvas)
Tuesday, February 9	Dragon remnants (1). How have we chosen to portray dragons today? Do we consider them to be in a certain	Johnsgard, "Dragons" pp. 1-45
Thursday February 11	Dragon remnants (2). What do the dragons we've discussed have in common? Why? How does man interact with the dragon?	Johnsgard, "Dragons and Man" pp. 46-78
Tuesday, February 16	Creative Projects Fair. Take time to explore your classmates' creative projects and wrap with a discussion of how we represented dragons and why.	Creative Project due. Last day to turn in Response Paper 1.
Thursday, February 18	Introduction to Unit 2: Seeing Green. Discussion of what constitutes an "eye-witness" account. Also, begin class "Dragon Sightings Map." Assigned: Response Paper #2 Multimedia Project	Blog posts: "Seven Things You Didn't Know About Medieval Dragons" and "Dragons: A Brief History of the Mythical, Fire-Breathing Beasts" (links on Canvas)
Tuesday, February 23	The taxonomy of the dragon. How do we categorize dragons? Where is their place in the world order?	Translation excerpts of Isidore's <i>Encyclopediae</i> and Trevisa's <i>On the Properties of Things</i> (on Canvas).
Thursday, February 25	A panel on Worldwide Dragons, featuring guest speakers from the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and/or East Asian Languages and Cultures department.	Martin, "Asian and East Asian Dragons" pp. 135-170

Tuesday, March 2	How real is the dragon? Discussion of dragons and dinosaurs: similarities and differences.	Translation excerpts of <i>The Book of John Mandeville, Secreta Secretorum</i> , and Richard Owen's <i>Dinosauria</i> (all on Canvas)
Thursday, March 4	Introduction to <i>A Natural History of Dragons: A Memoir of Lady Trent</i> . Discussion of first few chapters.	Brennan, pp. 1-109 (preface to chapter 8)
Tuesday, March 9	Class discussion on <i>A Natural History</i> . What similarities do we see between Brennan's work and Johnsgard's? What similar strategies are they utilizing?	Brennan, pp. 111-226 (chapters 8-16)
Thursday, March 11	Class discussion of <i>A Natural History</i> . How does Brennan make dragons both real and applicable to her modern day audience?	Brennan, pp. 227-334 (chapter 17-end)
Tuesday, March 16	Spring break, no class	
Thursday, March 18	Spring break, no class	
Tuesday, March 23	Day 1 of Multimedia Presentations.	N/A
Thursday, March 25	Day 2 of Multimedia Presentations.	N/A
Tuesday, March 30	Day 3 of Multimedia Presentations.	Last day to turn in Response Paper 2.
Thursday, April 1	Introduction to Unit 3: Where are they now? Discussion of where we see dragons in our society. Are they the same as those we've read about? What have we done with the dragon?	Martin, "The Old Dragon Revives" pp. 225-238 Honegger, "The Dragon and Medieval Scholarship" pp. 15-35
	Assigned: Response Paper #3 Final Argumentative Paper	
Tuesday, April 6	The Dragon in Modern Fantasy (novel). How do classic fantasy authors utilize the dragon figure? Is the dragon evil or something else?	Excerpts from John Gardner's <i>Grendel</i> , J.R.R. Tolkien's <i>The Hobbit</i> , and Christopher Paolini's <i>Eragon</i>

		(all on Canvas)
Thursday, April 8	The Dragon in Crossover/Pop-Culture Fantasy (novel). Do we witness an evolution as fantasy becomes a more mainstream genre? What is the dragon doing in these tales? What purpose is it serving?	Excerpts from J.K. Rowling's <i>Harry Potter</i> series, Lev Grossman's <i>The Magicians</i> series, and George R. R. Martin's <i>Game of Thrones</i> series
Tuesday, April 13	Dragons in Children's Literature. Why have dragons suddenly made an appearance in children's literature? Clips from <i>Dragon Tales</i> , Disney's <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> , and <i>Pete's Dragon</i>	Read: Adam Rubin's <i>Dragons Love Tacos</i> , excerpt from Cressida Cowell's <i>How to Train Your Dragon</i> series (both on Canvas)
Thursday, April 15	Dragons in Film. How are dragons portrayed? Do the special effects contribute to or detract our understanding of the dragon? What role does the dragon play in the narrative arc?	Read movie reviews of <i>How to Train Your Dragon</i> , <i>I Am Dragon</i> , and <i>Dragonheart</i> (all on Canvas)
	TONIGHT: Class showing of <i>How to Train Your Dragon</i>	
Tuesday, April 20	Dragons in Television. Do dragons make or break a television series? How are they received on a series versus in a film?	TONIGHT: Class showing of <i>How to Train your Dragon</i> .
Thursday, April 22	Dragons in video games. How do the questions we pose for dragons in film and television translate into video games? What does it mean to "play" with or as a dragon?	Watch YouTube clips of <i>Skyrim</i> and <i>Dragon Age</i> (links on Canvas)
Tuesday, April 27	Board Games. How do the questions about video games work with board games? Do we seek to control or defeat the dragon? What crossover do we see between board games and literary dragons?	The DND Monster Manual pp. 82-118 <i>Beowulf</i> board game instruction manual (both on Canvas)

Thursday, April 29	The Future Dragon. Will the dragon continue on or eventually become an extinct figure?	Last day to turn in Response Paper 3.
	After a truncated class discussion, we will address any questions about the final paper and then play some of the board games/video games we've discussed.	Final paper due by May 8 at 5pm.

Formal Assignment Sheets:

In this proposal, I have included a drafted assignment sheet for the "Final Argumentative Paper." Each assignment for this course has an assignment sheet that follows a similar format. Assignments are meant not only to enhance the student learning experience, but also to aid in the seminar's GenEd learning outcomes. I am happy to provide all of these assignment sheets upon request.

FINAL ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER

Assigned: Thursday, April 1

Due: Friday, May 8 (by 5pm)

Points: 250

Word Count: ~1500-1750 (about 6-8 pages)

Description: This argumentative paper is intended to strengthen skills of reading, writing, analysis, and research. You will be expected to identify a key question and research it accordingly. Your question should revolve around one of the overarching themes we have been developing throughout the course. These themes are not limited to the unit topics, but extend to other trends you might have noticed over the course of our class. Your topic must be approved by me prior to the final submission. A minimum of 4 sources is required, including two sources we have analyzed in class. One primary source must also be used. While you are not required to meet with me, I highly recommend it; we can draft an outline of your ideas or thesis in office hours.

How to approach this assignment:

Reading and Reflection Strategies

1. Review your class and reading notes on throughout the course. Is there a particular idea that strikes you?
2. If your notes do not spark any ideas, return to the syllabus and skim the class topics we've covered.
3. If you are still at a loss, meet with me in Office Hours so we can discuss and brainstorm possible questions.

Research Strategies

1. After you've identified your research questions, begin using library resources to look for questions related to your topic. Keep in mind you might not find an exact match, but sources may still have valuable information to offer you. Take notes.
2. Begin synthesizing your sources. What do they have in common? How do they differ?
3. Use your research to come up with a thesis statement. Keep in mind that thesis statements should be arguable and should answer your research question.

Writing and Edition Strategies

1. Outline the essay, beginning with your thesis. Come up with body paragraphs to cover your major points, including one that considers a counter argument.
2. Be thorough in our outline. What pieces of evidence contribute to each body paragraph?
3. When you are revising, be sure to meet with a partner or visit WTS. Reading aloud can also prove to be beneficial!

Possible Inquiry Questions

If you are having trouble generating an inquiry question, consider the following. They may be used for your essay.

- How has the function and/or physical description of the dragon changed over time? Why do you believe these changes have occurred?
- For how long did people believe in dragons? Were they conflated with dinosaurs?
- Are dragons always the antagonist? Why or why not?
- Will dragons continue to be a heavy influence in our society? Why or why not? What might the "new" dragon look like?
- Why are dragons so ingrained in children's literature? Does it minimize their effect?
- Is there a particular genre that dominates dragon literature (historical, fantasy, children's, etc.)? Why does it hold such a strong presence?
- Are the dragons preserved in literary, historical, and scientific texts different from one another? Why?