

IDH2952 *Hadestown* Syllabus

The Voice of Doubt: The Enduring Power of an Oft-Song Myth

General Information

This 1-credit course, offered through the UF Honors Program, meets during Period 8 (3:00pm–3:50pm) on Wednesdays in Honors Village 114.

Course Description

The ancient myth of Orpheus and Eurydice's doomed love has inspired countless retellings and reinterpretations from classical antiquity to the present day. These include the very first opera, the first operatic masterpiece, poetry, many award-winning films, and all the way up through the 2019 hit Broadway musical *Hadestown*. What is it about this millennia-old tale of death, doubt, and the power of art to persuade that has made it so durable? Why are artists, poets, playwrights, and, especially, musicians so drawn to retell it in seemingly every age? Through an exploration of the origins of the myth and some of the works it has spawned through the centuries, students will consider the power of this archetypal story and the ways in which it has been adapted to resonate through the eras with widely different audiences. We will use these activities to prepare for a performance of *Hadestown* at the Phillips Center for the Performing Arts in early November.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- (1) Identify the key elements of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.
- (2) Trace the evolution of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice across time and genre.
- (3) Appraise the actions of the characters in the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.
- (4) Criticize the musical *Hadestown* in terms of its use of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.
- (5) Develop a creative project that engages with the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Course Expectations

Students are expected to come to class weekly prepared to learn and participate as active and thoughtful members of the total classroom environment. Students must complete all required assignments and attend the play. Group tickets will be purchased by the Honors Program.

Course Evaluation

For this course, we use a grading scale that is not typical for UF classes.

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|-----|-------|-------|-----|
| 90+ | 80–89 | 70–79 | 69– |
| A | B | C | D |

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Assignments

Attendance and participation [20%] are graded on physical presence in the classroom as well as preparedness to participate in group conversations and activities. Students should familiarize themselves with the UF attendance

policy and note that perfect attendance is expected for this course. Excused absences are not penalized. Students who foresee issues with participating on certain days or in certain types of activities should discuss with the instructor in advance. This assignment category aligns with course objectives (1), (2), and (3).

Students will write two journal entries [10% each, 20% total] that review selected readings and topics from the course's prior modules. These 350-word informal write-ups need not be in academic prose but should have mostly appropriate language, grammar, syntax, and style. These will be typed and submitted via Canvas where a detailed grading rubric can be found. This assignment category aligns with course objectives (2) and (3).

Students will complete a critical review of the play *Hadestown* after watching it in November [10%]. The word count can range anywhere from 200–800 words and should be written in the style of a newspaper or website, including proper language, grammar, syntax, and style. This will be typed and submitted via Canvas where a detailed grading rubric can be found. This assignment category aligns with course objectives (1), (2), (3), and (4).

Students will participate in two in-class debates [10% each, 20% total], for which there will be assigned “sides.” No preparation is necessary, but all materials and questions to be considered — as well as team assignments — will be given ahead of time to allow for adequate preparation. Students will be graded mostly on participation but also on team cohesion, accuracy of argument, and maintenance of relevant talking points. A detailed grading rubric can be found on Canvas. Students missing these debates for excused absences will be given an alternative assignment to be decided later. This assignment category aligns with course objectives (2), (3), and (4).

Students will undertake a final project of their own choosing that explores the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in a creative way [30%]. Some ideas include, but are not limited to, a written contemporary retelling or a written retelling from a new perspective; a recorded dramatic monologue or dialogue (for which a partner project would be allowed); an artistic collage retelling the story; a playlist centered around a specific character's emotions; or a comparative essay. Students will submit a draft proposal with the instructor and develop their own individual rubric with the instructor's guidance. Draft proposals are due on October 26, while final drafts are due on December 12. Students are encouraged but not required to submit drafts along the way as well.

Course Materials

There are no required materials for this course. All readings will be provided via Canvas. Videos and films are readily available on the internet through YouTube or Kanopy, for which students receive free access through the UF Libraries. Some readings and films may require a physical presence on campus or the use of the VPN to access campus internet privileges.

University Policies

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

Honors Resources

- Honors Program, 201 Walker Hall, Phone Number: (352) 392-1519
- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu.
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

| DATE | TOPIC | PREPARATION(S) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1 Aug. 27 | Introduction | NONE |
| Week 2 Sept. 3 | Ancient Origins | <i>Homeric Hymn to Demeter</i> [Online] OCD 554, 640–41, 668–69, 1049–50, 1109–10 [Canvas] Tachi Yokut Native American myth [Online] Izanagi and Izanami Japanese myth [Online] Quetzalcoatl and Mictlan Aztec myth [Online] Savitri and Satyavan Indian myth [Online] |
| Week 3 Sept. 10 | Ancient Stories JOURNAL ENTRY (Sept. 14) | Vergil, <i>Georgics</i> 4.315–558 [Online] Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> 10.1–85, 243–97; 11.1–66 [Online] |
| Week 4 Sept. 17 | Ancient In-Class Debate IN-CLASS DEBATE | Background Article: Bowra 1952 [Canvas] Background Article: Sansone 1985 [Canvas] |
| Week 5 Sept. 24 | Medieval Orpheus | Tolkien (trans.), <i>Sir Orfeo</i> [Online] Poliziano, <i>Fabula di Orfeo</i> [Online] |
| Week 6 Oct. 1 | Artistic Orpheus | selections from <i>LIMC</i> [Canvas] |
| Week 7 Oct. 8 | Operatic Orpheus JOURNAL ENTRY (Oct. 12) | Peri, <i>Euridice</i> (1600) [YouTube] Monteverdi, <i>L'Orfeo</i> (1607) [YouTube] |
| Week 8 Oct. 15 | Small-Screen Orpheus | selections from <i>Doctor Who</i> [YouTube] selections from <i>Severance</i> [YouTube] |
| Week 9 Oct. 22 | Manuscript Orpheus DRAFT PROPOSAL (Oct. 26) | Derveni Papyrus: CHS Introductory Article [Online] Orphism: Medium Introductory Article [Online] |
| Week 10 Oct. 29 | Big-Screen Orpheus | Cocteau, <i>Orpheus</i> (1950) [Kanopy] Camus, <i>Black Orpheus</i> (1959) [Kanopy] |
| Week 11 Nov. 5 | Introduction to <i>Hadestown</i> | NYT Review: Green 2019 [Online] Dramaturgy Article: Wexler 2019 [Online] |
| Week 12 Nov. 12 | No Class: Show Week | |
| Week 13 Nov. 19 | <i>Hadestown</i> MUSICAL REVIEW (Nov. 30) | Mitchell 2020 [Canvas] |
| Week 14 Nov. 26 | No Class: Thanksgiving Week | |
| Week 15 Dec. 3 | Modern In-Class Debate IN-CLASS DEBATE | NONE |

FINAL PROJECT (due Fri., Dec. 12 @ 12pm noon)

* Forces outside of our control may cause this schedule to be modified.