

**Honors (Un)Common Read  
IDH2930: Queering the Classics—  
Miller's *Song of Achilles***



*Achilles discovered among the Daughters of Lycomedes*, 1630-1635.  
Peter Paul Rubens and workshop. Oil on panel. Modello for the  
tapestry on the same subject. (Source: [Museo del Prado](https://www.museodelprado.es/en))

For the <b>Spring 2025</b> semester, the class (#24352) will meet during <b>8<sup>th</sup> period (3:00-3:50 PM)</b> in <b>Honors Village (HV) 114</b> .
<b>Instructors:</b> Dr. TehQuin D. Forbes ( <b>Instructor of Record</b> ) and Jacob J. Roman ( <b>Peer Instructor</b> )
<b>Emails:</b> <a href="mailto:tforbes@ufl.edu">tforbes@ufl.edu</a> and <a href="mailto:jjonathan.roman@ufl.edu">jjonathan.roman@ufl.edu</a>
<b>Office Hours:</b> By appointment.

## **Course Description:**

Madeline Miller's critically acclaimed debut novel *The Song of Achilles (TSoA)* explores the heartfelt, enchanting, and ultimately immortal relationship between the eponymous ancient Greek hero and the mortal—but equally divine—protagonist, Patroclus. Drawing upon her extensive academic background in ancient Greek, as well as her knowledge of and affinity for theatre, Miller offers a compelling, queered retelling of the (hi)story of the Trojan War in the style of ancient Greek tragedy, no climax, trough, character arc, or pivotal shift held back. By way of the detail-rich, carefully crafted relationship between Patroclus and Achilles, the authoress takes us back to circa 1200 BCE to explore timeless themes such as (queer) love, loss, complicated relationships, the beauty of nature, the tragedies of war, belonging, adolescent angst, personal development, and the struggles of parent-child fealty and divergence. Drawing upon an interdisciplinary framework including such fields as classics, English literature, anthropology, sociology, history, and linguistics, this course will foster critical analysis and discussion of the text and its context as a means to view and understand the human past, present, and future—and the unique propensity for feeling inherent therein. Indeed, though the discipline of archaeology reminds us of society's epistemic power to create chosen presentations of the past in the present, one must also recognize that queer love and the stories told about it are as old and original to humanity as life itself. *The Song of Achilles* provides an ideal in-road to said recognition.

## **Learning Objectives:**

Throughout the semester, students will be asked to engage with the question of why it is important that we imagine the 'other' (people of color, queer people, women, etc.) in prominent positions in classic stories. By the end of the semester, students will be able to do the following:

- Conduct comparative multimedia analysis of various interdisciplinary and non-academic materials to critically understand how the Achillean story and queer identities have been variably constructed and construed throughout history.
- Convey deep interrogation of the primary source's (*TSoA*) plot by prompting the class with insightful questions when it is the student's turn to lead the in-class, text-based discussion, and by writing one mid-book reflection paper.
- Creatively teach about a selected theme/relationship from *TSoA* by presenting a non-essay project to their peers.

## **Required Readings:**

Miller, Madeline. *The Song of Achilles*. New York: Ecco Press, 2011.

(ISBN: 978-0062060624)

Please contact the instructors if you have concerns about accessing a copy of the required novel.

All other short readings and media will be posted on the course Canvas page.

### **Grading Scale (Percentage-Based):**

A (93-100), A- (90-92.99), B+ (87-89.99), B (83-86.99), B- (80-82.99), C+ (77-79.99), C (73-76.99), C- (70-72.99), D+ (67-69.99), D (63-66.99), D- (60-62.99), E (<60)

A minimum grade of ‘B’ is required to earn academic points towards your Honors completion requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a ‘C’). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course code/title and final grade from your unofficial transcript (a screenshot works well) into your Honors Canvas cohort, following the path Modules > Honors Completion > Academic Points > Two-Point Activities > Honors course (2+ credits; grade of B or higher).

### **Course Assignments (Grade Breakdown):**

Attendance and Participation.....	50%
Leading Class Discussion.....	10%
Mid-Novel Reflection Journal.....	10%
Book vs. Movie Essay.....	10%
Final Project.....	20% (15% Project, 5% Presentation)

### **Assignment Descriptions:**

**Attendance and Participation**—Showing up (both physically and intellectually) is half the battle, so to speak. As such, it is rewarded with half of the total course points.

**Leading Class Discussion**—Students will be assigned to groups, in which they will generate discussion questions; plan an in-class, text-based discussion; and ultimately facilitate said discussion based on the assigned reading for their group’s week.

**Mid-Novel Reflection Journal**—Halfway through the class’s reading of *TSoA*, students will be asked to write a journal-style reflection on their thoughts, feelings, and interpretations concerning the novel up to that point, and their predictions for the novel going forward.

**Book vs. Movie Essay**—After completing the novel, the class will watch the 2004 movie *Troy*, starring Brad Pitt as Achilles. Then, students will write a discursive analysis on the depictions of the book versus movie of key characters, such as Achilles and Patroclus, and key relationships, such as that between Patroclus and Achilles.

**Final Project**—Each student will select a two-character relationship from the novel (e.g., that between Patroclus and Briseis, Thetis and Achilles, Achilles and Agamemnon, Menoitius and Patroclus, etc.) as the basis for an original work representing their understanding of the chosen dyadic relationship. This project is intended to be creative, fun, and different from the other assignments considered throughout the semester; therefore, essays will *not* be accepted as a valid medium for the final project. Students may, however, choose any other medium: poem, ballad, painting, weaving, short film, short story, etc. Finally, students will each have about four (4) minutes to present their projects to the class during the last two or three days of class meetings.

More assignment details will be provided on the course Canvas page during the semester.

## Course Schedule:

Week # (Dates)	Agenda/Assigned Readings
Week 1 (Jan. 13 <sup>th</sup> – Jan. 17 <sup>th</sup> )	Introductions and Course Overview
Week 2 (Jan. 20 <sup>th</sup> [holiday] – Jan 24 <sup>th</sup> )	Foundational Material
Week 3 (Jan. 27 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> )	<i>TSoA</i> Part 1: Chs. 1-7 (pgs. 1-66)
Week 4 (Feb. 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> )	<i>TSoA</i> Part 2: Chs. 8-11 (pgs. 67-118)
Week 5 (Feb. 10 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> )	<i>TSoA</i> Part 3: Chs. 12-15 (pgs. 119-183)
Week 6 (Feb. 17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> )	<i>TSoA</i> Part 4: Chs. 16-22 (pgs. 184-243) <i>*Mid-Novel Reflection Journal is due by the start of class (3 PM) on Wednesday, Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>*</i>
Week 7 (Feb. 24 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> )	<i>TSoA</i> Part 5: Chs. 23-27 (pgs. 244-301)
Week 8 (Mar. 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 7 <sup>th</sup> )	<i>TSoA</i> Part 6: Chs. 28-33 (pgs. 302-369)
Week 9 (Mar. 10 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> )	<i>*NO CLASS*</i> (Movie night—showing of <i>Troy</i> [2004]—date/time TBD)
Week 10 (Mar. 17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> )	<i>***SPRING BREAK***</i>
Week 11 (Mar. 24 <sup>th</sup> – 28 <sup>th</sup> )	Special Topics (Adolescent Angst)
Week 12 (Mar. 31 <sup>st</sup> – Apr. 4 <sup>th</sup> )	Special Topics (Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece)
Week 13 (Apr. 7 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> )	Final Project Presentations
Week 14 (Apr. 14 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> )	Final Project Presentations
Week 15 (Apr. 21 <sup>st</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup> )	Final Project Presentations (if any remaining); Course Wrap-Up and Reflections

## Course Policies:

- **Attendance Policy**—The attendance policy of this course is consistent with UF’s attendance policy, which can be found at the following link: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. Moreover, given that this a discussion-heavy course, consistent attendance and participation are essential. Each student is allowed *one* unexcused absence without impact on their grade, which *may not* be used during final project presentations. Excused absences—meaning those accompanied by proper documentation and stipulated by the University’s attendance policy, or otherwise explicitly permitted by the instructors—do not count toward the student’s one allotted ‘personal day.’ For each unexcused absence beyond the first, the student will receive a 20% reduction in their overall ‘Attendance and Participation’ grade (which is worth half the student’s total course grade, as indicated under the ‘Course Assignments (Grade Breakdown)’ section on pg. 2).
- **Recording of Classes**—UF policy states that students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the only purposes for which these recordings may be used are the following: (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the University, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited, and students may not publish or distribute recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructors. For a list of in-class recording FAQs, please visit the following webpage: <https://aa.ufl.edu/policies/in-class-recording/#:~:text=A%20recording%20of%20a%20class,within%20the%20same%20class%20section.>

- **Late Work**—Within reason, and if infrequent enough, late work will not be an issue for this course. In other words, late work will be accepted. If the instructors are concerned with the volume of late work a student is turning in and require justification from the student, then the instructors will reach out to the student. However, if a student is planning to turn an assignment in late, then they are encouraged to provide the instructors advanced notice (i.e., to request an extension from the instructors).
- **Communication with Instructors**—Though you may often receive a much quicker response, please allow up to 48 hours, excluding holidays and weekends, for instructors to get back to you when reaching out. Please email the instructors directly, via GatorMail/UF email (see the instructor emails section on pg. 1), rather than through Canvas.
- **Course Evaluations**—Students are expected to provide thoughtful, respectful feedback on the design and quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals at the end of the semester. However, students are encouraged to share feedback with the instructors throughout the semester, as concerns or points of interest arise. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.
- **University Honesty Policy**—All UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’” It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The full Student Honor Code, which specifies a number of behaviors in violation of the code and their associated sanctions, can be reviewed at the following link: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>. In this course, all assignments should be of your own work. Any material drawn from other sources must be properly cited. Furthermore, students are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to the instructors. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructors.
- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**—Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations must first connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), which coordinates such accommodations. Visit <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/> or call (352) 392-8565 to get started with the DRC. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with the instructors and to discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester (please).
- **Respect for Diversity**—It is the intent of the instructors that students from all backgrounds and perspectives will be well-served by this course, that students’ learning needs will be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class will be viewed as a resource, a strength, and a benefit for all. It is the instructors’ intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diverse genders, sexual orientations, (dis)abilities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities, races, cultures, religious beliefs, perspectives, and other background characteristics. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of diversity in this class are encouraged and appreciated.



## **(Campus) Wellness Resources and Statement:**

**24/7/365 Resources:** If you are in an emergency or need immediate help, please call 911 (emergency services), 988 (suicide and crisis lifeline), 1-866-488-7386 (The Trevor Project's suicide hotline for queer youth), or 1-800-662-4357 (SAMHSA's National Helpline for those facing mental health and/or substance use disorders). For non-emergencies, UFPD is available at 352-392-1111.

As your instructors, we care about you as students, yes, but more importantly as human beings worthy of care, respect, and support. *We are here to help you* if there is anything we can do. Please reach out to us if you are in need of (mental) health or academic support, or if you would like to be put in contact with other campus resources specific to those areas of student life. Additionally, please see below for a few highlighted campus resources that may be of benefit to you or someone you know.

Students experiencing crises or personal matters that interfere with any aspect of their well-being are encouraged to utilize the University's counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides crisis and non-crisis services, including confidential counseling services, at no cost for currently enrolled students. U Matter, We Care connects students with various services across campus to help support students' holistic well-being. The Career Connections Center aims to help students cultivate their potential as emerging professionals and leaders by complementing academic preparedness with practical skills/training.

- University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 352-392-1575, <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>
- U Matter, We Care, 352-294-2273, <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>
- Career Connections Center (C3), J. Wayne Reitz Union (1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Suite 1300), 352-392-1601, <https://career.ufl.edu>

## **Honors Program Information:**

Location/Contact Information: 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519

Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email [advisor@honors.ufl.edu](mailto:advisor@honors.ufl.edu)

Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings:

<https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>

## **Acknowledgement of Indigenous Land and Sovereignty:**

The University of Florida is located on the homelands of the Muscogee (Este Mvskokvlke), Timucua, Seminole (simanó-li) peoples, and many more Nations who traded and migrated through these lands and waters that we now call Gainesville. The main campus sits on the original lands of the Potano people, a Timucua-speaking society that was victimized by colonial disease and violence. Their legacy includes advocating for the natural world, farming practices that heal the earth, and connecting to indigenous plants and wildlife through deep respect and conservation. Native peoples are not a relic of the past but continue to thrive in the state of Florida and elsewhere. As an academic institution, it is our responsibility to acknowledge the sovereignty and the traditional territories of these tribal nations, the violence that was used to remove them, and the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution since 1853. Understanding the historical and current experiences of Native Nations will help inform the work that we do and foster a more just educational environment.