

## The (Medieval) Walking Dead

Dr. Steven Brusco

ENGL3114 R21

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MTWTh 1-4PM

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Location: TBA

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**\*Note\*** I encourage you to contact me via email rather than by phone. I share an office with several other instructors, so the best way to reach me will be by email.

### Course Objectives and Description:

Ranging from stories of undead armies in “Branwen, Daughter of Llŷr” to eternally-damned ‘zombie’ knights in *Perlesvaus*, and from genres varying from chronicle to romance, this course explores the cultural significance of medieval ‘zombies,’ revenants, spirits, and other beings that we would classify as ‘undead,’ in order to understand how such monsters might relate to medieval concerns about living, death, dying, and the afterlife. How do the living relate to the dead in the Middle Ages? What happens to bodies and souls after death? How do concerns about morality and living affect the person in the afterlife?

### Requirements:

Regular attendance; class participation; weekly online responses; three essays.

### Required Texts:

The readings in this course are from the editions of the books noted below, as well as handouts I provide to you. You **\*must\*** purchase these specific editions, most of which are available used (for a few dollars) from a vendor of your choice.

*Beowulf: Facing Page Translation*. Trans. R.M. Liuzza. Second Edition. Peterborough: Broadview, 2012. ISBN 9781554811137.

*The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, ed. Trans. Matthieu Boyd. Peterborough: Broadview, 2017. ISBN: 9781554813193

*Middle English Romances*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd. New York: Norton, 1995. ISBN 978-0393966077

*Saga of Grettir the Strong*, ed. Ornlófur Thorsson, trans. Bernard Scudder. New York: Penguin, 2005. ISBN 978-0140447736.

*The High Book of the Grail*, trans. Nigel Bryant. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017. ISBN 978-1843841210.

*Eyrbyggja Saga*, trans. Hermann Palsson and Paul Edwards. New York: Penguin, 1989. ISBN 978-0140445305

*The Penguin Book of the Undead*, ed. Scott G. Bruce. New York: Penguin, 2016. ISBN 978-0143107682

*Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Stephen H. A. Shepherd. New York: Norton, 2003. ISBN 978-0393974645.

### **Expectations:**

Regular attendance; consistent class participation; weekly digital responses; two essays; final exam.

### **Grading:**

I will calculate your final course grade on the following five categories. I will assess your written work based on the classical trivium: effective grammar, sound logic, and persuasive rhetoric:

Attendance/Participation: 20%

Weekly Digital Responses: 30%

Essays (2): 40%

Final Exam: 10%

Assignments in the second category (Weekly Digital Responses) are graded on a Meets Expectations / Does Not Meet Expectations scale. An assignment either fulfills all expectations, or it does not. Assignments that do not meet expectations receive no credit, while those that do receive full credit. For this category, the “Meeting Expectations” bar has been set to achieving B-level success. In other words, if you do all the required work and meet the expectations for all of them, you receive a B in this category. If you fail to meet expectations on three assignments, you receive a C in this category. If you fail to meet expectations on more than three assignments, you earn a failing grade for the category. You can use Tokens (see below) for chances to try again for success.

If you want to aim for a higher grade, you need to complete more work (see Tokens below for opportunities). To earn a B+, you need to complete three extra assignments. To earn an A-, you need to complete four extra assignments. To earn an A, you need to complete five extra assignments.

For your other work (namely, on the presentations, essays, and the midterm and final exam), these standard letter grades apply: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, and F.

### **Essay-Grade Standards**

**A:** An outstanding grade. A-level papers present thoughtful and provocative ideas in a clear and compelling argument, using appropriate diction and an effective prose style, and with no grammar or punctuation errors.

**B:** A good grade. B-level papers offer sound ideas in an organized format yet lack a strong, analytic conclusion, or indicate less-than-perfect control over style, spelling and grammatical constructions.

**C:** An average grade. C-level papers fail to address the assignment adequately by not following instructions, or fail to establish a proper focus and structure in organizing the argument, or display evidence of an inability to address grammar or syntactical problems.

**F:** A paper plagued by all of the problems listed under a C paper; F papers **\*must be\*** rewritten.

### **Class Policies**

#### **Writing**

This is an advanced literature course. As such, all of your writing matters and will be graded for both content and style. Thus, all writing for class should be substantive and concise, as well as logically sound, grammatically correct, and rhetorically effective.

#### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. Absence, lateness, and failure to prepare will adversely affect your grade. **A student who has two absences will fail the course.** This is a Fordham policy for summer courses.

- If you know you must miss a class (school trip, athletics, doctor appt., etc.), inform me in writing and turn in any work in advance.
- If you are sick, arrange to have your work (and a note) delivered for you.
- Contact classmates about any work assigned on days you miss so you can turn it in on time.

Remember, much of the information you will need to complete this course successfully will be discussed in class and will not be repeated. After-the-fact exchange (whether electronic or in person) cannot substitute for being in class. You are responsible for learning from classmates about assignments and classwork.

## **Classroom Etiquette**

I expect you to be courteous to everyone in this class by

- \*coming to class on time
- \*treating all class members with respect
- \*listening attentively
- \*bringing all assignments completed on time
- \*speaking distinctly
- \*bringing the appropriate materials and pen & paper
- \*not leaving class early
- \*not stepping outside the classroom during class time
- \*turning off cell phones
- \*not reading or working on material unrelated to class

Cell phones and all electronic devices must be switched off (not silent, not vibrate; off). Neither myself, nor your classmates wish to be distracted by your ring tones or your phone vibrating. Please do not text message, web browse, or use your phone for any reason during class. **If I catch you doing so, I will mark you absent.** Laptops are also not permitted in class, unless you are directed to bring them. If you require the use of one (either for a single class or for the semester), please speak with me before doing so.

## **Late Assignment Policy**

Late assignments will not be accepted for credit. If you are absent and do not turn in your assignment on the due date, it will be considered late.

If you think that you will be unable to submit your work on time, you *\*must\** contact me at least 24 hours in advance and be prepared to show your work and discuss the extenuating circumstances. Please note that simply contacting me does not grant an extension--unless you receive permission from me, you should assume the assignment is still due on the original due date, barring a genuine emergency (ex. you've been hospitalized because you were in an accident). I reserve the right to grant or deny requests for extensions, which are rare and are handled on a case-by-case basis.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students are required to abide by "The Undergraduate Policy on Academic Integrity," as discussed at the academic orientation for freshmen and transfer students and as outlined in the Rose Hill Student Handbook for Undergraduate Studies. Academic dishonesty or plagiarism is a very serious offense. Any instance of academic dishonesty on your part will result in failure for the course and a report to your dean.

## **Tokens**

In order to account for scenarios that may arise during the semester, and to provide you with some degree of control over the unexpected, you start with **three tokens** that you can use to

replace or modify certain assignments. These are physical objects, so don't lose yours because they are our class currency. These tokens can be used to:

- Revise and resubmit an Essay (due TBA; requires a reflection on the process of revising. See Revisions handout in our Drive folder)
- Revise and resubmit a Weekly Response (either a Discussion Post or a Response Post; reflection also required)
- Waive the Late Penalty for one assignment (must be completed by TBA)
- Add 10 points **either** to your final exam (one use only)

Additional tokens can be earned throughout the semester by

- Attending events and writing a reflection on them (qualifying events and reflection guidelines will be announced)
- Submitting an additional Response Post to a classmate (subject to same Weekly Responses Expectations)
- Completing extra assignments: select an article from an academic publication (book or journal) on a topic related to our reading; then write a response to it, and be prepared to discuss your insights with the class (required to boost grade in Short Writing Assignments category, and subject to my approval; see me for details).
- Contributing exceptionally well to class discussions (I will award this to you directly)

9 Tokens can be redeemed to exempt yourself from the final exam

To use a token, hand it in with the assignment you are applying it to. For tokens used to boost the final, or for tokens used to exempt yourself from the final, send me an email with your intention to do so and hand in the requisite tokens the next time we meet.

## **Assignment Descriptions**

### **Weekly Digital Responses (See separate handout for more details)**

At the beginning of the semester you will sign up for one session during which you will be responsible for starting a Blog Discussion Post relating to that class's reading assignment in the class blog. Your Discussion Post should not be longer than a paragraph or two, and it *\*must\** analyze a passage that you select from the text that you think is important, difficult, puzzling, or relevant for some other reason. Your post will thus put forth an analytic claim, in order to spark a scholarly discussion. Analytic claims do not simply assert a matter of preference ("I like/dislike this character/plot element/ image," etc.), but instead they

attempt to shed light on how this passage helps us to understand something about the work as a whole.

Each class that you are not in charge of a new thread, you must write a short response to someone else's Blog Discussion Post. This means that you will be writing one entry for each class. (The class that you submit your Discussion Post for means that you are not also required to submit a response post, but you may choose to do so.) These responses should also be a paragraph or two in length and rely on close-reading and evidence from somewhere else in the text, so that you can either agree, disagree, or agree with a difference with what another student wrote about in his/her Discussion Post. For example, you might use textual evidence later in a text to challenge a claim that a classmate wrote about from earlier in the text.

These Weekly Responses are graded on a Meets Expectations/Does Not Meet Expectations basis: you either earn full credit for meeting the expectations, or you don't. See the handout for details.

### **Essays: (2) 4-6 pages, excluding Works Cited page.**

Please adhere to MLA formatting conventions, unless otherwise noted. I will not grade essays that do not adhere to these guidelines.

**First Essay:** Choose a discussion thread that interests you from those that we have created so far this semester and expand on it or revise it into an essay. You may take the ideas and issues that were raised in one thread and apply it to a different text if you prefer. Alternatively, you may propose an essay topic to me (subject to my approval).

**Second Essay:** Choose a discussion thread to expand, as you did in the first paper. You must choose a different text to work with than you did in your first essay, but you may use similar ideas and techniques. Alternatively, you may propose an essay topic to me (subject to my approval).

### **Resources**

#### **Syllabus**

If you have a question about the course or an assignment, your first go-to should be the assignment sheet itself (if applicable) and the syllabus.

#### **Your Buddy**

You will be assigned a buddy for the semester. If you will be absent to class, you must contact your buddy and arrange to have your work handed in for you. If you are not sure what you missed because you came in late or you were absent, you should contact your buddy and get your notes from him/her.

## **Me**

I hold office hours at least one scheduled hour a week. You are required to meet with me for at least two 10 minute conferences. You may, of course, come as often as you like to discuss your work. You may also email me with questions that cannot be answered by the assignment sheet or the syllabus.

## **Walsh Library**

Please acquaint yourself with Fordham's library as soon as possible, both in person and by browsing the library's extensive online databases, catalogs, and research tools. A number of assignments will require you to use the resources of the library. As a class, we will have one library visit.

## **Writing Center- (718) 817-4032**

Please take advantage of the Writing Center's numerous resources. The Writing Center is located in **the reference section of Walsh library**. You can sign up online for an appointment with a tutor. Visit [www.fordham.edu/writingcenter](http://www.fordham.edu/writingcenter) to do so. Tutors are all advanced Fordham graduate students who can help you at any point in your writing process.

## **Counseling and Psychological Services- 718-817-3725**

Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) is a comprehensive mental health center that offers a wide variety of free individual and group services to all students.

## **Offices of Disability Services- 718-817-0655**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, **all students** are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations.

## Schedule of Classes and Topics

### Week 1-

**July 5:** In-class diagnostic essay. Introduction to the course. **Read:** Book of the Undead, Introduction; Book of the Undead 1-25; Augustine, City of God (handout); Isidore of Seville, Etymologies (handout); Book of the Undead, 41-61.

### Week 2-

**July 9:** Discussion Undead in Antiquity; Medieval Inheritances and Debates about Undeath and Monsters. **Read:** Beowulf, “Introduction: Beowulf the Poem,” and 3-113

**July 10:** Discussion Beowulf 1. **Read:** Beowulf, 113-213.

**July 11:** Discussion Beowulf 2. **Read:** Eyrbyggja’s Saga (excerpts).

**July 12:** Discussion Eyrbyggja’s Saga. **Read:** Grettir’s Saga.

### Week 3-

**July 16:** Discussion Grettir. **Read:** Mabonogi, “Introduction,” and “Blanche Crowe, daughter of Ocean”

**July 17:** Discussion Branwen. **Due:** Essay 1. **Read:** Bede Ecclesiastical History (excerpts); Gerald of Wales, Conquest of Ireland (excerpts); William of Newburgh (excerpts).

**July 18:** Discussion Bede, Gerald of Wales, William of Newburgh. **Read:** Perceval (excerpts).

**July 19:** Discussion Perceval. **Read:** Sir Orfeo

### Week 4

**July 23:** Discussion Sir Orfeo. **Read:** Awntyrs off Arthure

**July 24:** Discussion Awntyrs off Arthure. **Read:** “Three Dead Kings” (handout); memento mori poems (TBA)

**July 25:** Discussion Three Dead Kings. **Read:** Chaucer, Canterbury Tales: General Prologue, Parson’s Prologue, Parson’s Tale (handouts).

**July 26:** Discussion Chaucer. **Read:** Malory, Morte Darthure (excerpts),

### Week 5

**July 30:** Discussion Malory. **Read:** “Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght” and “When Night Draws Swiftly Darkling On.”

**July 31:** Discussion Two Reformation Treatises. **Due:** Essay 2. **Watch:** George R. Romero’s Dawn of the Dead

**Aug 1:** Discussion Dawn of the Dead. **Watch:** Walking Dead, Season One, Episodes 1-4.

**Aug 2:** Discussion Walking Dead, Modern Zombies.

## **Week 6**

**Aug 6:** Final Exam.