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Spring 2008

Faust and the Faustian (Spring 2008) (Whitman College)

Robert D. Tobin

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WHITMAN COLLEGE

Spring 2008: German 388-A

FAUST AND THE FAUSTIAN

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Office Hours: MWTh, 11-12, but best by appointment

Course Room: Olin 314

Time: MW, 2:30-3:50

Along with Don Juan, Faust—the scholar who makes a deal with the devil—is one of the great myths of modernity. Based on an historical figure from the 16th century, the Faust story has inspired numerous literary, artistic, and musical tales. Some of the greatest works of literature tell the Faust story in a variety of ways, including Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Faust, and Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus. In this course, we will try to understand why this particular myth has resonated so strongly in modern Western culture. In particular, we will examine the ways in which the Faust story has been used to examine: knowledge, scholarship and the academic life; the creative process; political and historical questions; and humanity's perfectibility and/or guilt.

This course may be elected as German 388-A; students who take the course for credit in German will be reading portions of some of the texts in German and will be able to offer insights based on their experiences with the original versions of the texts.

Beyond a discovery of the issues directly related to the Faust tradition, I hope that we will make progress in a number of larger issues:

- Developing writing, speaking, and argumentative skills. With a variety of written requirements and a number of oral presentations, we will work on a full contingent of communication skills.
- Developing critical thinking. Many writers and artists have used the Faust story to develop complex theories of ethics, morality and the meaning of life. By reading multiple versions of this story, we will learn to read and analyze carefully.
- Preparing for citizenship. Because the Faust story is so often ultimately a story of damnation or salvation, it lends itself to questions of ethical responsibility—the ethics of scholarship, the ethics of science, the ethics of politics, the ethics of love. In the twentieth century, it has been one of the dominant metaphors for approaching questions of the Holocaust as well as those surrounding nuclear war. Thus, analyzing these texts can help us develop a clearer sense of our responsibilities as citizens in society.
- Preparing for a global society. By reminding ourselves of the cultural origins of the Faust myth (for instance: in central Europe, in German-speaking cultures, in

England, in the West), we will gain tools for thinking in terms of interrelatedness of the cultures of the world.

Required Reading

- Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus with the English Faust Book, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005).
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust I & II, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Boston: Suhrkamp, 1984)
Thomas Mann, Doctor Faustus, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Knopf, 1997).
Gino Segrè, Faust in Copenhagen: A Struggle for the Soul of Physics (New York: Viking, 2007).

You may choose or find other editions, but make sure that they are complete (especially Goethe's Faust is often abridged—make sure you have both Faust I and II). Be aware that translations might diverge wildly. If you do choose a different edition, it will be very helpful if that edition has line numbers marked, so you can easily find the passages that others are discussing.

Grading:

Short papers in German	25%
1 research paper in English (10 pages, 5 pieces of secondary lit)	25%
Class presentation	10%
Class notes on blog	10%
Commentary and activity on blog	10%
Participation in class	20%

Short Papers: these papers are about 2 pages long. They will emphasize your own reaction to the works that we have read and will be a chance for us to get acquainted with each other's writing styles and expectations.

Research Paper: This paper is longer. You will need to do research on secondary sources (try for around 5). But you will ultimately need to have your own thesis statement, which you defend with citations from the text.

Class Presentation: Everyone will give a class presentation. This will be a chance for you to lead the discussion in a direction that interests you particularly.

Class Notes on Blog: We will have a weblog in this course. Each day, one student will be the secretary and will report on the blog what we did. You should do this within 24 hours of class. This would also be the place to add a few thoughts on what we should have done! In addition, that student will make one other entry in the blog, linking the reading or discussion to something else out in the virtual world.

Blog Participation: At least once a week, everyone will respond to the blog entries posted by the blog managers. If you want to talk about something radically different than what the blog manager does, you may post your own entry rather than respond to theirs.

Class Participation: Even though this is a large class, it is important that you participate. If you are having troubles making yourself heard, let me know and we can come up with a solution (such as having me call on you more often). If you find you are talking a lot, take a breath and make sure that others are getting a chance to speak.

Grading

Grade Structure for Papers:

A: An "A" paper will have a clear and original thesis. It will be well written, with a lively sophisticated style. Arguments will be comprehensive, take into account obvious objections, and buttressed by strong evidence. There will be virtually no errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling.

B: A "B" paper will have a clear thesis and be solidly written.

C: A "C" paper will lack a clear thesis. Many arguments will not follow from the evidence given, or will be asserted, rather than proven. There will be errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

D: A "D" paper will have a topic, but no thesis. Many arguments will lack structure and not be to the point. Others will not follow from the evidence given or will be asserted rather than proven. There will be numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

F: An "F" paper will scarcely have a topic. Arguments will lack structure and not be to the point. There will be numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Grade Structure for Participation:

A: advances the discussion; contributes complex insights; will be articulate and engaging; and enhances and encourages the participation of others.

B: expresses text-based, substantial ideas; stays with the topic and continues the discussion; actively volunteers; asks good questions; shows genuine effort; but might fluctuate between "A" and "C" behavior.

C: shows acquaintance with the text if called on; tends to offer personal opinions without textual references; does not advance discussion; actively listens, but does not participate.

D: continued refusal to participate in discussion; exhibits signs of disengagement, such as sleeping, zoning out, or non-attendance; and reveals no evidence of having done the reading.

F: "D" behavior carried to the extreme.

Grade Structure for Managing the Blog:

A: original, clever links, well-written, snappy commentary, useful information

B: useful information, clear and lucidly presented

C: just the most basic information, showing little original thought

D: some important information lacking

F: little or no information provided

Grade Structure for Responding to the blog:

A: frequent, insightful, in-depth comments, cleverly and amusingly written

B: clear, thoughtful responses to entries

C: response tends to rely heavily on the entries of others, without adding much original

D: very cursory, not well-thought out, response

F: no response, very curt response (such as "I agree" or "right on"), flaming.

Two Final Notes:

Attendance: Attendance is vital for a seminar class. More than three absences may result in the lowering of your final grade by a whole letter.

Lateness: Late papers complicate the grading process. Therefore, I will take off a half grade for each day of lateness. I leave the calculation up to you whether the extra work you put into a paper will be worth the grade erosion caused by lateness.

Syllabus

- Jan 14 No class, Tobin gone
Jan 16 Introduction, Faust's History, The Faustian
Please come to class with an example of the use of a term like "Faustian Bargain" found in a newspaper or magazine article.
- Jan 21 No class, Martin Luther King Day. Go to Diversity Symposium.
Jan 23 The Faust Book (in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, pp. 67-151)
Please read the whole thing.
German Students: Pick an episode that you like and read the German version.
Short paper: write one page in English on the German of the Faustbuch; write another page in German, constructing another episode,
- Jan 28 Marlowe, Acts I-III
Jan 30 Marlowe, Acts IV-V
- Short paper due by Feb. 2 on the historical Faust. 5 pages.
- Feb 2 Goethe, Faust I: Dedication, Prelude, Prologue (pp. 3-11)
German Students: Read the same passages in German
- Feb 4 Goethe, Faust I: Scholar's Tragedy: Night-Witch's Kitchen (pp. 13-66)
German Students: Read in German: lines 385-409; 1110-1125; 1335-1344; 1675-1775
- Feb 11 Goethe, Faust I: Gretchen's Tragedy: A Street-Forest & Cave (67-87)
German Students: Read in German: lines 3216-3370
- Feb 13 Goethe, Faust I: Gretchen's Tragedy: Gretchen's Room-Prison (87-119)
German Students: 3375-3412; 4399-4614
Short paper (2 pages) in German: Discuss either the tragedy of the scholar or Gretchen's tragedy
- Feb. 18 No Class, President's Day
Feb 20 Goethe, Faust II: Act I (121-168). Government and Economics.
German Students: "Anmutige Gegend" 4613-4727
- Feb. 25 Goethe, Faust II: Act II (169-215). The Classical Tradition.
German Students: Dip in and out of the German, looking at passages that you find interesting in the English
- Feb. 27 Goethe, Faust II: Act III (216-253). Love
German Students: 9365-9417
- March 3 Goethe, Faust II: Act IV (254-278). War

German Students: Look ahead and start reading Act V in German—try to get through the Baucis and Philemon section.
March 5 Goethe, Faust II: Act V (279-305). Civil Engineering and Redemption.
German Students: Start at 11559—Try to get to end. Be sure to read the end.

Short paper topics:

- compare the classical and romantic Walpurgisnacht scenes
- compare the boy figures in Faust II: Homunculus, Eurphorion, the angels
- going back to the original pact or bet—how does Faust do?
- Why is Faust saved?

Spring Break

After spring break, let's consider how things are going for the German Students and we will decide what we want to do for the rest of the semester then

March 24	Mann, chapters I-XI (up to page 100)
March 26	Mann, chapters XII-XXI (101-197)
March 31	Mann, chapters XXII-XXVIII (198-300)
April 2	Mann, chapters XXIX-XXXIV (301-398)
April 7	Mann, chapters XXXV-XLIV (391-495)
April 9	Mann, chapters XLV-Epilogue (496-534)
April 14	Opera: Gounod's Faust
April 16	Music and the Faust Tradition
April 21	Film: Pabst's <u>Faust</u>
April 23	Film and the Faust Tradition
April 28	Segre, 1-154. Faust and Science
April 30	Segre, 155-272. Faust and Science
May 5	Conclusion
May 10	Final Research Paper Due (ten pages)