**The Conduct of Life**

**University of Oregon**

**HC 221**

**Fall 2013**

**Dr. Matt Sandler**

**msandler@uoregon.edu**

**Office: 101A Chapman**

**Office hours: Tuesday 2-5 pm and Thursday 4-5 pm**

Nowadays people don’t often think of “self-help” as “literature.” Premodern writers, on the other hand, saw the genres of literature as tools for communicating how to live. In this course, we’ll read some of the great works of Western Civilization as “how-to” books; the more technical term is “conduct of life” literature. How does the act of reading clarify ideas of manners and morals, love and death, or politics and religion? We will think about the relation between canons of behavior and literary canons, how a work of literature can resonate across everyday life and across history. Since this is an introduction to literature as well, we’ll use the above set of problems to think through the basics of literary analysis.

**Assignments and Grade Breakdown:**

3 Close Reading Papers: 50%

Final Paper: 30%

4 Quizzes: 20%

**Attendance and Participation:**

You may miss up to 3 sessions without penalty. If you miss more than three classes, your grade will go down one notch (from A to A- or a B+ to a B). Do not bother to email me with reasons, excuses, etc.

Your performance in seminar courses like this one depends heavily on your absorption of the conversation in class, and your ability to creatively process it in your written work. So missing class regularly will also affect your grades on the assignments.

Also please do come see me, either in office hours or after class (for shorter things) if you have any confusion or would like some elaboration.

**Texts:**

Be sure to get these editions/translations, even if you don’t buy the books at the Duckstore, because otherwise it will be difficult to keep up with class discussion.

Homer. *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1998.

Augustine. *The Confessions*. trans. Henry Chadwick. New York: Oxford, 1991.

Dante. *The Inferno*. trans. Robert M. Durling. New York: Oxford, 1996.

Montaigne. *Essays*. trans. J.M. Cohen. New York: Penguin, 1993.

**Schedule:**

T Oct. 1: Introduction

R Oct. 3: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Fate,” *The Conduct of Life* (.pdf)

T Oct. 8: Homer, *The Odyssey* (Books I-IX)

R Oct. 10: Homer, *The Odyssey* (Books X-XII)

T Oct. 15: Homer, *The Odyssey* (Books XIII-XX)

R Oct. 17: Homer, *The Odyssey*, (Books XXI-XXIV) **Quiz, Close Reading #1 Due**

T Oct. 22: Augustine, *The Confessions* (Books 1-3)

R Oct. 24: Augustine, *The Confessions* (Books 4-5)

T Oct. 29: Augustine, *The Confessions* (Books 6-9)

R Oct. 31: Augustine, *The Confessions* (Books 10-11) **Quiz, Close Reading #2 Due**

T Nov. 5: Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno* (Cantos 1-10)

R Nov. 7: Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno* (Cantos 11-17)

T Nov. 12: Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno* (Cantos 18-30)

R Nov. 14: Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, (Cantos 31-34) **Quiz**, **Close Reading #3 Due**

T Nov. 19: Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays* (T.B.A.)

R Nov. 21: Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays* (T.B.A.)

T Nov. 26: Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays* (T.B.A.)

R Nov. 28: **Thanksgiving Break, No Class**

T Nov. 3: Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays* (T.B.A.) **Quiz**

R Dec. 5: Wrap-up, **Final Paper Due**