

Department of English & Writing Studies

**Seminar in Medieval Language and Literature:
The Consolation of Philosophy and its English Afterlives
English 4312G (001)
Winter 2023**

Instructor: Dr. Anne Schuurman

Location: University College 4401

Course Day/Time: Thursdays, 9:30-12:30

Prerequisites: 1.0 from English 2200-2250, English 3200-3210, Theatre Studies 3205F/G, or permission from the department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

Few works have influenced English thought and literature as profoundly or for as long as *The Consolation of Philosophy*, a dialogue written in the sixth century by the Roman philosopher and statesman Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius. In this seminar, we will begin by studying the *Consolation* in a modern English translation, with the aid of scholarship that will help us interpret the text with some understanding of its original language and context. We will then consider medieval and early modern translations of and responses to the *Consolation*; In the third and final part of the course, we will consider some expressions of modern Stoicism as well as recent texts that invoke Boethian themes. As we survey this long tradition, we will reflect on Boethian ideas that remain constant over time and those that change in response to changing historical circumstances, paying careful attention to the various modes and politics of translation that shape these ideas. Some key themes that will guide our reading and discussion include: forms of consolation and desire; the nature of suffering and of the good; the problem of evil and theodicy; time and temporality; philosophy as therapy of the soul and care of the self; paradoxes of allegory and mimesis.

Course Materials

Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. Douglas C. Langston. New York and London: Norton, 2009.*

*No substitutions. You must purchase this edition of the text because it contains contextual material that you will be required to read.

English 4312 Custom Courseware.

Both required texts are available at the Western Bookstore.

Methods of Evaluation

Attendance & Participation	15%
Primary Text Presentation	15%
Criticism Presentation	10%
Reading Responses	20%
Research Essay	40%

Attendance & Participation:

Attendance is mandatory and will be recorded on a sign-in sheet in every class. Each unexcused absence will result in a 1% deduction from your participation grade. A pattern of lateness will likewise affect your participation grade. An absence will be excused if you supply legitimate documentation to the Academic Counseling office.

To earn full participation marks, you must attend class regularly, come prepared with your textbook to discuss the assigned readings, listen actively to all lectures, and participate meaningfully in discussions. You will also be assigned the role of designated respondent for another student's oral presentation. As respondent, you may ask for clarification, formulate questions for discussion, or present counterpoints to the presenter's thesis.

Primary Text Presentation:

You are required to give a 15-minute presentation on the primary text assigned to be read on the day of your presentation, and to lead a discussion following from your presentation. You must analyze the text under consideration, not summarize it. The aim of your presentation is to open and lead class discussion. You will be evaluated on the content of your ideas, the clarity of your presentation, and your efficacy in leading discussion.

Criticism Presentation:

In this presentation, you are required to summarize the argument of the assigned work of literary criticism. Explain the particular contribution this critic makes to our understanding of Boethius or some aspect of the Boethius tradition. Suggest how this reading connects to primary texts and to larger questions guiding the class. Conclude with questions for your classmates that aim to spark thoughtful discussion.

Reading Responses:

You must submit **three** short response papers (500-700 max words) in which you discuss and analyze a key idea or passage in the reading assigned for the week; **do not summarize or generalize**. Suggested topics are provided on the Reading Response Assignment Sheet (on OWL) Your papers must be submitted electronically (in Word by email attachment) to me by Sunday at midnight before Monday's class. Do not submit a response paper in the weeks that you are giving your presentations.

Research Essay:

2250-2750 words. Detailed instructions and topics for all assignments can be found on our OWL site, in the Assignments folder.

Late Policy:

Work submitted late will be penalized 2%/day. If your work is more than one week late, please contact me.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Laptop/device Policy

There are no digital devices allowed in the classroom: no cell phones and no laptops.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The full policy is set out here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Timetable (Subject to change)

Please have the following texts read in preparation for each class.

January 12	Introductions
January 19	<i>Consolation</i> , Book 1
January 26	<i>Consolation</i> , Book 2
February 2	<i>Consolation</i> , Book 3
February 16	<i>Consolation</i> , Book 4
February 23	Reading week – no classes
March 2	<i>Consolation</i> , Book 5
March 9	<i>Alfred's Metres of Boethius</i> (CCW); "The Wanderer" (CCW)
March 16	<i>Boece</i> (CCW); "Lack of Steadfastness" (CCW)
March 23	<i>A Dialogue of Comfort</i> (CCW)
March 30	<i>Arcadia</i> (CCW)
April 6	<i>Arrival</i> (in class) and discussion
April 10	Classes End