SIS 2038: Monsters Medieval Style
Spring 2017

Monster Research Paper Assignment
Conferences on Topics/Planning: Mar. 2-3
Paper Due: Mar. 28 (in class or on BB by class time)

RATIONALE:

This assignment is designed to allow for deep engagement with material related to our course concerns (the monster) while allowing you to follow up an area of interest. Because you will be working with material from different cultural products, the essay also supports our course learning objective “to employ a range of disciplinary perspectives and lenses to gain a fuller understanding of cultural meanings of the monstrous.” We are also practicing textual analysis of literature and published scholarship.

DIRECTIONS AND DESCRIPTION:

Trace the history of a type of monster/creature of your choice (e.g., werewolf, dragon, mermaid, etc.) and, by drawing on several materials as outlined below, discuss what you see as the monster’s cultural meaning or significance. When, where, and how does the monster appear? What does it seem to represent? Where does it come from (e.g., historical origins such as classical influences), and/or how does it influence later depictions? What are some key associations?

You should think of this paper more as an exploratory project than a thesis-based essay. Rather than proving one thesis about your monster, you are exploring origins, resonances, and potential meanings. This is an opportunity to pursue a figure that intrigues you.

Your exploration should include:

✓ 1-3 cases where your monster appears in medieval literature;
✓ Review of research on that monster in scholarly sources;
✓ Incorporation of at least 4 scholarly sources, at least 1 of which must be from the field of literary studies;
✓ Discussion of at least 1 other type of cultural product beyond medieval literature where your monster appears (e.g., a modern film, art from any era, work of non-medieval literature).

IMPORTANT TOPIC PARAMETERS:

Your chosen monster must be a creature that appears somewhere in medieval literature, either as a major character or as a reference.

Almost certainly, you won’t be able to address all aspects or appearances of your type of monster; therefore, you should focus on a specific cultural context(s) and set(s) of texts. For example, “the dragon in the world” will be way too big and unmanageable.
Instead, you might narrow to a topic such as “encounters between dragons and knights in medieval epics,” and focus on one or two medieval examples alongside a depiction in a modern film featuring such an encounter.

We will have individual conferences to discuss topics. I am also willing to review drafts; however, if you would like me to review a draft, it is up to you to arrange a separate conference. To make the best use of draft conference time, I recommend providing me with your draft 24-hrs in advance of your conference.

**FORMAT REQUIREMENTS:**

Final essays must:
- Be 6-8 pages in length (typed, double spaced, and in a standard font such 12-pt Times New Roman. Do not use Courier New)
- Properly document all sources using a recognized system of scholarly citation (MLA, Chicago, or APA), both in text and with a Works Cited/ Bibliography
- Include the McDaniel Honor Code

**ASSESSMENT/Criteria for Evaluation:**

In evaluating your essay, I will be looking for the following:

- **Selection of Materials:**
  - Meeting parameters of the assignment for selection of topic, literary and scholarly sources, and cultural product / 20
- **Textual Analysis**
  - Thorough explanation and close textual analysis of instances when your monster appears in medieval literature and your other example / 20
- **Use of Sources**
  - Thoughtful engagement with, and application of, information from your scholarly sources / 20
- **Synthesis**
  - What conclusions and relationships can you draw between the materials, and ultimately what can you conclude about the cultural meanings of your chosen figure? / 20
- **Mechanics**
  - Clear, grammatically correct, and proofread prose / 10
- **Basic Requirements and Citation**
  - Meeting the basic requirements of the assignment, including length, format, and proper citations / 10