Engl. 4960.01 – Senior Year Capstone:
“Shakespeare, Or Not”
[Topic chosen by instructor. Prerequisite: 2200. [3] (No AXLE credit)]
Kathryn Schwarz
TR – 2:35-3:50
This is not a course about Shakespeare. We will read a few Shakespearean texts across the arc of the semester: Richard III, Hamlet, The Tempest, The Sonnets. But we will use these texts, and the later responses that constellate around them, to think about our own active, changeable relationships to creative expression. Why do canonical works inspire the production of so many works that may or may not be recognized as literature? How might we connect this inventive, often irreverent response, in which reading catalyzes further acts of original writing, to the response presumed by our own processes of learning? We will take the complex, multifaceted afterlife of ‘Shakespeare’ as a fulcrum for conversations about what demands we make on literature, and what demands literature might make on us. Our readings will be loosely tethered to the idea of Shakespearean adaptation, but will range widely: ‘literary’ fiction and detective fiction; critical commentaries, historical artifacts, and pedagogical tools; films and other visual media; cross-cultural revisions and parodic appropriations. For any given class, you might read an anthropologist’s account of explaining Hamlet to an audience who does not share her culture’s assumptions, or you might watch YouTube videos in which people interpret Shakespeare’s sonnets, or you might read excerpts from Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own, or you might write a new story for a Shakespearean character. Our shared purpose is to illuminate dynamic links between our investment in literature and our analytical, creative participation in the world beyond the classroom.
Note: The Senior Capstone is open to all English majors who are interested regardless of whether in the old or new major.

Engl. 4960.02 – Senior Year Capstone:
“Tales (Re)Told”
[Topic chosen by instructor. Prerequisite: 2200. [3] (No AXLE credit)]
Julie Fesmire
TR – 1:10-2:25
Greek, Latin, and Biblical literature used to be part of everyone’s education. Joseph Campbell, in The Power of Myth, has argued that to the extent these texts have been lost, a whole tradition of Occidental mythological information is lost:

It used to be that these stories were in the minds of people. When the story is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life. It gives you perspective on what’s happening to you. With the loss of that, we’ve really lost something because we don’t have a comparable literature to take its place. These bits of information from ancient times, which have to do with the themes that have supported human life, built civilizations, and informed religions over the millennia, have to do with deep inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage, and if you don’t know what the guidesigns are along the way, you have to work it out for yourself.

The texts I have chosen for this class will, I hope, provide an opportunity for us to learn something about how literature has developed and changed from classical antiquity. Our task, of course, is to decide whether Professor Campbell is correct or whether subsequent literature builds on and adds to the classical traditions. We will use a variety of critical methodologies to examine the texts, focusing specifically on what each tells us about the culture in which it was created.

To that end we will examine a number of pairings: the epic of Gilgamesh and the film Pulp Fiction; The Tragedy of Sohráb and Rostám and The Kite Runner; Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead; Northanger Abbey and Atonement; Madame Bovary and Flaubert’s Parrot.

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Engl. 4999.01 – Honors Thesis
[Prerequisite: 4998. [3] (No AXLE credit)]
Teresa Goddu
M – 3:10-5:00