

ARIADNE'S THREAD: YOUR GUIDE TO WORLD LIT

If this course is a labyrinth, this document is your [thread](#) to follow to make it out with a positive experience (and the grade you want).



VERSES & CONTENT

This course has six content verses, arranged with a mind to geography but more oriented around culture, philosophy, synchronicity, refuge, story, wonder, pilgrimage, and so on. No verse is walled off from the others; all speak to each other and bleed into one another. Through these verses, we'll contemplate how multicultural literature makes us human, fosters our growth as human beings, and deepens our sense of ourselves and our shared humanity. The verses are:

- Verse 1: Deep Time
- Verse 2: Becoming Myth
- Verse 3: Black Diaspora
- Verse 4: Native America
- Verse 5: Refugee Voices
- Verse 6: Mystic Scripture

For each verse, we'll be accompanied by many guides to help us through. The guides who will be joining us include contemporary poets such as Joy Harjo, Tracy K. Smith, Javier Zamora, Mai Der Vang, Marie Howe, Naomi Shihab Nye, and others, along with writers, artists, and storytellers across time, place, and culture.

Each verse will come with its own content guide sheet that will include links to online readings, podcasts, films, and other material related to the particular verse. The material on each guide sheet will form the basis for your coursework—journals, quizzes, reflections, and projects. I will provide commentary on the content for each guide sheet along the way.

Hold on, why verses? Previously, I called these “units” rather than “verses.” “Unit” is probably the more common way to refer to things like this—in fact I don't know anybody who uses the term “verses” this way—but I think “unit” does a slight disservice to the content. The main problem as I see it is that “unit” implies something on its own, separate, neatly walled off from other subjects and issues. But you can't deal with world literature like that, because what we're talking about is the human story. Yes, there are important differences in the way this story has manifested and been told across time and place and culture, but it's not as though the particular way an individual or a culture has told a part of the story is entirely isolated and without influence. “Unit” also implies some sense of completion or finality, and there is no way, for example, to learn all one can about Native American literature in a lifetime, let alone a semester or a “unit” within a semester. To me, “verse” just implies more interconnection and vitality. All verses are unique, but they depend on one another and are incomplete without one another. You can't just “move on” from a verse the same way you can move on from a unit; verses stay with you. Another thing about a verse, as Walt Whitman [said](#), is we get to contribute our own.

COURSEWORK & GRADING

Along with the six content verses, this course is organized by six main coursework categories you'll piece together to form the overall grade you want. Named for mythical beings that share certain traits with them, the categories are:

- **Sibyl: Coursework proposal**
- **Cerberus: Quizzes (3 total)**
- **Fairy: WTF journal (15 entries)**
- **Unicorn: Verse reflections (6 total)**
- **Behemoth: Course project**
- **Gargoyle: Bonus** (This is why my painting of a gargoyle is on the first page of this guide.)

(Heads up: There's also a Minotaur subcategory lurking for those who fail to slay Cerberus, but more on that when we get there, as I don't intend for any of you to not slay Cerberus. The following assumes you'll get the job done with the Cerberus category. If you don't and need to face the Minotaur, details are with the Minotaur subcategory description.)

Before continuing, let me add that the Cerberus category (and the Minotaur Category if you end up needing it) is the only category where I might use metaphors like "slay" or "defeat." Sibyl, Fairy, Unicorn, Behemoth, and Gargoyle—while all should be approached with a degree of mindfulness—are helpers.

So here's how grading will work:

- * To achieve an A, you'll complete all six categories: Sibyl, Cerberus, Fairy, Unicorn, Behemoth, and Gargoyle.
- * To achieve a B, you'll complete four categories: Sibyl, Cerberus, Fairy, and your choice of Unicorn or Behemoth.
- * To achieve a C, you'll complete three categories: Sibyl, Cerberus, and your choice of Fairy, Unicorn, or Behemoth.
- * To earn a D, though I sincerely hope that's not your goal, you'll complete two categories: Sibyl and Cerberus.
- * To earn an F, you can complete Sibyl if you wish, but really you don't need to do anything.

The math:

Sibyl and Cerberus are worth 30 points each. Fairy, Unicorn, and Behemoth are worth 10 points each. This amounts to 90 points. To round things out to 100, those who satisfactorily complete Sibyl, Cerberus, Fairy, Unicorn, and Behemoth will receive automatic 10-point credit for the Gargoyle category.

The Gargoyle category is totally symbolic, however; its primary use is to square the gradebook math. There's no difference, grade-wise, between a 90 and a 100. Both would be an A. This is why Gargoyle doesn't apply to the lower grades. If your goal is an A, you'll be piecing together 100 points. If your goal is a B, you'll be piecing together 80. If your goal is a C, you'll be piecing together 70. If your goal (again, ill-advised) is a D, you'll be piecing together 60.

All categories are all or nothing. There's no partial credit for incomplete work. For example, completing fewer than 15 entries for the Fairy category would mean you wouldn't get credit for Fairy. Completing fewer than six unit reflections would mean you wouldn't get credit for Unicorn. And so on.

In this system, there is no such thing as "losing points." I'm not a fan of the whole concept of points, anyway. This is education, not basketball (and that's no disrespect to basketball). Basically, you are completing the amount of work that corresponds to the grade you want. If your work is complete, sincere, and thoughtful, you'll earn your credit. If your work is not, in whole or part, I'll tell you that I can't accept it and will give you the chance to redo it if there's time.

To me—and to former students, based on course evals—the beauty of this system is it allows you to name and control your own destiny, taking the guesswork out of grades and thus opening a path to presence, sincerity, and creativity.

CATEGORY DETAILS

- **Sibyl Category: Coursework Proposal | 30 points | See schedule for due date**

The [Sibyl](#) Category connects a grade value to your *planning, intent, and self-motivation*, allowing you to create your own destiny and speak your success into existence. It is a foundation of the class and as such is required for all grade outcomes, though it's a completion grade. The coursework proposal is a straightforward Q&A document that you can complete and submit through D2L, over email, or in hard copy through the mail—that's right, through the mail. I'll email the template for this category and post it to D2L by the end of the first week of class.

- **Cerberus Category: Quizzes (3 total) | 30 points | See schedule for due dates**

The [Cerberus](#) category connects a grade value to *reading completion and content intake*. Over the course of the semester, we'll have three quizzes valued at 10 points each. Each quiz will have ten multiple-choice questions valued at 1 point each. Each quiz will cover readings and content for two verses. So, for example, the first quiz will cover material from Verses 1 and 2, and so on.

To earn credit for this category, you'll need to average a score of 70% or higher on each of the three quizzes, which amounts to earning at least 21 out of 30 points for all three quizzes combined. Provided you complete readings and content guide sheets and are engaged with class, achieving this percentage is an incredibly likely outcome. Quizzes will be completed electronically and can be submitted through D2L or email.

Because of the point value, getting the full 30 points for this category is required to pass the class. Given the the weight of this category, those who do not earn at least 70% will have the option of a partial do-over by completing the Minotaur Category—essentially, a final, comprehensive test. See below for more info.

- **Minotaur Subcategory: Final Exam (aka Cerberus Do-Over) | 30 points | See schedule for due date**

[Minotaur](#) is a subcategory of Cerberus, essentially a second chance for those who didn't earn the points for the Cerberus category. If you got credit for the Cerberus Category—in other words, if you slayed Cerberus—you're good and don't need to worry about taking on the Minotaur. The Minotaur category cannot be used to replace any category other than Cerberus, because Cerberus is the only category that's not a completion grade (though you still shouldn't have trouble with it provided you complete readings/materials and stay engaged with class).

I'll have more details on Minotaur near the end of the semester when I have an idea how many folks might need it. Hopefully nobody will. *So take heart!* Just follow [Ariadne's thread](#) and you won't have to worry about the Minotaur at all.

- **Fairy Category: WTF Journal | 10 points | See schedule for due dates**

The [Fairy](#) category connects a grade value to your *engaged presence and intellectual energy*. To get credit for this category, you'll complete all 15 of our weekly journaling activities based on what you wonder, think, and feel regarding course readings, discussions, and content for a given week. I'll provide prompts over email. Entries will periodically include self-assessments of the intellectual energy you're contributing to our classroom community.

Format: While I strongly encourage journaling by hand and approaching your journal itself as a piece of art, you can complete your reflections electronically if you prefer. Whatever you do, you should think of your journal as a sacred space reserved for this class. Relatively nice journals or composition books are preferable to spiral notebooks, etc.

This is an all-or-nothing category, meaning you'll complete 15 entries to earn credit. There is no partial credit for completing fewer entries. This category is also 100% trust and honor system. Near the end of the semester, you'll tell me if you earned credit for this category. You are not required to share your entries with me, though if I have doubts you're completing journals, I could ask for proof (but hopefully I'll have no reason to doubt). More importantly, if you do want to share your journals or particular entries with me, you're welcome to and I encourage you to.

- **Unicorn Category: Verse Reflections | 10 points | See schedule for due dates**

The [Unicorn](#) category connects a grade value to *processing, analyzing, interpreting, reflecting upon, and even applying course content*. To achieve credit in this category, you'll complete and submit one reflection for each of our six verses, making six reflections total.

Each verse reflection should be 600 – 1000 words, or 5 – 10 minutes for audio/video, addressing, through sincere and specific examples, any combination of these questions:

- How did the content from this verse deepen your sense of your humanity/who you are as a person?
- What did you learn about the topics covered in the verse? What did you learn about yourself through the content?
- What about the verse did you find interesting? Challenging? Boring? Enlightening? Enraging? Strange? Encouraging? Inspiring? [Insert your own descriptor if none of these speak to you.] Why?
- What new questions did content from this verse create for you? What insights did you gain from this verse?
- How did you expand on verse content through your own thinking and research? How might you continue to do so?

You can revise/expand upon journal entries as appropriate in addressing the questions. Be sure to cite specifics from class materials (including classmates' perspectives when relevant and available), readings from the verse's primary online texts and materials, and anything you accessed on your own. Your reflections should display care, but do not necessarily need to be cohesive essays. A list, bullet-point, or fragmented approach is fine. You can also take a multimedia approach and format your reflections as blogs, websites, podcasts, and/or videos.

You have two options for submitting your reflections: You can submit them two at a time by due dates along the way, or you can submit them at one time near the end of the semester as a portfolio—i.e., a single, organized PDF, Word document, blog, website, podcast, or video consisting of six reflections total. That means if submitting a portfolio of all six reflections, that portfolio should be 3600 – 6000 words or 30 – 60 minutes of audio/video, or equivalent combination. Feel free to mix and match formats from one reflection to another.

Refer to the schedule for individual due dates; the portfolio option will be due near the end of the semester and is also on the schedule. Individual reflections and portfolios can be submitted via D2L, through email, or postal mail. If you are taking the individual submission approach and miss a deadline, simply include the reflection for the deadline you missed when submitting your next reflection. If you miss two deadlines, you'll default to the portfolio option.

- **Behemoth Category: Course Project | 10 points | See schedule for due dates**

The [Behemoth](#) category connects a grade value to *applying and extending upon course content* through a project. This project can be based on anything from the course that interests you and can take any number of formats including but not limited to: podcasts, websites, blogs, social media pages, art portfolios, creative essays, poetry collections, videos, films, presentations, performances, research papers, academic essays, field experience journals, etc.

The due dates for the project plan and the project itself are on the schedule. All project plans require approval, which means projects won't be accepted without a plan. The project should be substantial yet fun and engaging, and will involve independent research, field experience if applicable (following social distancing and safety guidelines), creative output, and/or holistic reflection.

The idea is to find a spark from your journal and/or unit reflections to engage with in more detail. From there, expand that spark/idea into a substantial project addressing and extending upon the same basic questions listed in the Unicorn category. In other words, course projects should not merely be "reports"; rather, they should include or imply some kind of takeaway and show why you care about the focus of your project, what you've learned, why it matters, and how you might carry your learning forward.

Defining "substantial": As a rule of thumb, no matter your format, project creation should take at the very least 10 – 15 hours of planning and implementation. Text-based projects should be at least 1500 – 3000 words. Audio/video projects should be at least 15 – 30 minutes. If you pursue a project for which the connection to course content might not be inherently clear, you should clarify the connection through a reflection. For example, things like art portfolios and

original poems would benefit from a reflection addressing ways your work relates to, was inspired by, or is in conversation with course content. This reflection could be written but could also take any of the previously noted formats. Reflections of this sort should be 500 words or about 5 minutes of audio/video. The reflection aspect can also take place through virtual conversation or presentation.

Because of the wide range of possibilities with this project, it is of course difficult, if not impossible, to set minimums and parameters for every outcome. This is where the project plan comes in: Using the above information as a guide, you'll make the case for why your project is substantial and define things like word counts, time duration, etc. If I agree, you'll get the green light. If I feel your project as described in your plan isn't quite substantial enough or needs a little work, I'll provide some feedback and work with you to make your project as strong of a behemoth as it can be.

- **Gargoyle Category: Bonus | 10 points | No due date**

The [Gargoyle](#) category is its own thing and mostly symbolic; its practical function is to round out the gradebook math, bringing the total possible points in this course to 100. If you satisfactorily complete all the main categories—Sibyl, Cerberus, Fairy, Unicorn, and Behemoth—you'll get an automatic 10 points for this category, which will bring your grade from a 90 (an A) to a 100 (also an A). If you only complete four or fewer of the main categories, you won't get these points, but again, this doesn't really matter. There's no distinction between a given letter grade's numerical range when it goes into Owl Express, and there's no +/- system here at KSU. An 80 is a B, just as an 89 is a B, and so on.

PARTNERSHIP & GROUP WORK

Any partner or group work should be done virtually. Please don't meet in person.

Note: Taking a partnership or group approach to eligible categories does not necessarily mean the minimum requirements as described on the previous pages would need to double or multiply, but a partnership or group approach should leave no question as to whether the work you've undertaken and completed is substantial or whether all partners and members contributed something substantial. In forming groups and partnerships, be wary of vampires and Gollums—those would drain your work and intellectual energy without putting in much work and intellectual energy themselves or those who would feign interest in your quest only to abandon you at the end.

- Sibyl can only be completed and submitted solo. That said, if you plan to complete any work this semester as a partnership or group, it would be a good idea to virtually conference with your potential partners/groupmates as you complete your coursework proposal.
- Cerberus should be completed and submitted solo, but you are welcome to converse with others virtually if you wish. Please note that “converse” means just that—“to engage in conversation.” Messaging a classmate for answers *is not* conversation. Meeting a group of classmates over Zoom to discuss readings and share perspectives *is* conversation. Be a pro. Know the difference.
- Minotaur, if you need to face it, can only be completed and submitted solo. Hopefully it won't be an issue.
- Fairy can only be completed solo, though you can certainly share and discuss journal entries virtually.
- Unicorn can be completed and submitted solo, with a partner, or in groups of up to three. If working with a partner or small group, each individual should still submit the reflection(s) so everyone's work will be accounted for. If working with a partner or small group, it is crucial that the reflections demonstrate conversation. So, for example, if taking a text-based approach to the reflections, it would be a good idea to use one another's names, show differing perspectives, and maybe even format it like a script. However, if working with a partner or small group for this category, a conversational podcast or video, rather than a text-based approach, would probably be the best way to go.
- Behemoth can be completed and submitted solo, with a partner, or in groups of up to three. If working with a partner or group, each individual should still submit the project so everyone's work will be accounted for. If working with a partner or group, it is crucial that the project demonstrate significant conversation and collaboration. This conversation and collaboration will be outlined on your project plan.
- Gargoyle is its own thing, so solo, partnership, and group distinctions don't apply.