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What do Batman (the Dark Knight) and Orlando (Charlemagne’s wise paladin) have in common? What is the thread that connects the Jedi knights of Star Wars and those that sat around king Arthur’s round table? How did medieval history and Renaissance poetry inform the expanded universes of superhero movies and fantasy literature, along with the inexhaustible fan-fiction that further extends and queers them?

Chivalry, as a code of conduct and a network of symbols, inspired some of the most entertaining stories of the so-called Western canon, blurring the divide between high and popular culture. It offered storytellers (and nerds) of all ages a set of norms to question, bend, and break—especially in terms of gender. It challenged the very format of books, re-defining for good concepts like literary irony, seriality, and inter-mediality.

This seminar proposes six pretty good trans-historical archetypes of fictional knights, combining iconic figures such as Marvel’s Iron Man and Italo Calvino’s Agilulfo, Ludovico Ariosto’s Bradamante and Game of Thrones’ Brienne of Tarth, Don Quixote and the Mandalorian. By analyzing together their oaths, weapons, armors, and destinies we aim to develop reading and writing skills to tackle any text, from epic and scholarship to TV- shows and comic-books.

# Program Structure

Students enrolled in this course take part in the Six Pretty Good X program, a cluster of First-Year seminars in the Humanities. In addition to the seminar, which meets twice a week for 75 minutes, they enroll in 3-hour weekly Writing Lab along with all the other participants in 6PGx courses. Together, the 6PGx Seminar and Lab are worth 1.5 credits that students can count toward distribution requirements for Writing (WR) and Humanities (HU).

Seminar is where students learn to unpack challenging texts together with their professor and classmates. Seminar grade (50% of a student's course grade) is determined by individual faculty as a measure of a student's overall performance in seminar.

Writing Lab follows a scaffolded curriculum to give students the skills, practice, and feedback they need to write college-level essays. Our three hour lab has time for writing workshops, working independently and with a partner or a group, and conferring one-on-one with classmates, or members of the Writing Staff. Lab grade (50% of a student's course grade) is based on the assessment of a series of academic writing tasks (see the Calendar below).

## Seminar Components

### 1. Participation (an often misunderstood component)

Attendance is important for the success of this class. If you absolutely cannot attend a class meeting, please inform me in advance and let's figure out together how to make up for the missed class. Since this course is based on reading and discussion, and every week touches on a different topic, it is absolutely crucial to come to class prepared, and ready to contribute. If serious reasons prevent you from completing the readings for a class, please be present anyway and inform me about such reasons. Not all readings require the same level of attention and investment, but you are expected to come to class with impressions and, ideally, questions about each of them.

Actively participating in discussions and activities during class time is the most obvious way to show your participation. You are always encouraged to be vocal, and to let me know how to make it easier for you to speak in class. However, there are many other ways to show that you are participating. You can, for instance, take good notes (which may include drawings, photos of marginalia on your copy of the readings, quotes from class discussion) in class and submit them, as a separate document, with your reading journal or final project (see below). You can also come to my office hours or schedule a zoom appointment just to have a conversation, one on one, about what we discussed in class, and show me that you were present and actively learning. In sum, I expect you to find your own way to make your participation visible and in line with your learning style. I am always available to give you feedback and suggestions on this part of the assessment.

### 2. One Word Lecture (not your usual presentation)

Most Monday classes will include this exercise, which is entirely led by a student or a small group of students. The task is to think of one word (accompanied, if you want, by one image) that has the potential of connecting the week's readings and defining the main topic(s) of the class. In no more than

fifteen minutes, the lecturer will explain why they chose that specific word and/or image, and will open a general discussion on the readings and themes of the week by asking no more than three questions to the entire class. I will include a slide with the word and/or the image in my power-point, so please send it to me (along with the questions) in advance – no later than 9 am on the day you are lecturing, please! When more than one student is lecturing on the same day, they are encouraged to share their experience and collaborate, but they are not expected to choose the same word and/or image. This portion of the grade is not determined by your performance, but by the generativeness of both the word (and image) that you chose and the way you offer the questions to the rest of the class. If you are uncomfortable speaking in public, you can provide me or another student with a written version of your lecture or a one-on-one oral explanation of the word and/or image: the designated speaker, on behalf of the lecturer, will read the text or report to the rest of the class about the conversation they had with the lecturer. The questions attached to your lecture should be clear, succinct, and, ideally, they should be ‘real questions’ (i.e. questions to which you don’t have an answer yet). Time limits should be respected in order to leave room for discussion. You are welcome to share your word/image in advance with me to get some guidance or feedback.

### 3. Reading Journal (a sort of cumulative Midterm)

In addition to what you will do during class meetings, an important part of the course is based on the time you will spend with the material outside of class meetings (required readings, images, films, and further readings). In the first half of the course (weeks 2-8) you will work on a journal about your learning experience. The journal will be centered on your personal response to the assigned material (how it relates to what you already knew, what you learned from it, how it connects with the rest of the course). This journal can take many forms, depending on your specific skills, goals, and learning style: you can write, you can include images and other media, you can record your voice, you can translate, you can include texts that were not assigned and annotate or interpret them. I expect you to work on the equivalent of 1 double-spaced page of written text each week. You will submit the first entry of this Journal at the end of week 2, for initial feedback/assessment. Then you will submit a comprehensive journal, including the first entry and the following 6, by the end of week 8. The resulting document (equivalent to 7 pages of written text cumulated throughout the first half of the semester) will count as a Midterm for the seminar.

If most of your journal is not a written text, you should put into it the same amount of time and energy that seven 1-page responses would require. The best way to approach this task is to work on the equivalent of a 1-page response each week, and to revise and polish the cumulative document when wrapping up the submission. It is important that you work on this journal weekly, rather than concentrating the work in the days before submission: the journal should have an arc, and it is meant to document your engagement with the readings and your progress in the course. While submission of the first entry is required, I welcome informal submissions of journal entries any week: my feedback on them will not affect this portion of the grade, which is determined by the quality, breath, and honesty of your 2 official submissions (the first entry and the comprehensive journal). Students seeking Italian credit will write this journal in Italian, or will combine Italian and English in their entries. If any student wants to add portions of text in languages other than English or Italian, they should provide a translation. You are encouraged to attach to the journal any material that you produce while working for this class, including notes for the preparation of your one word lecture, brief reviews and impressions about material related to the course’s themes that you encounter during the semester (film, tv, books, songs, webpages, etc.), reports of conversations and discussions with other students, ideas from other classes that connect with what we are doing in our seminar. Take ownership of this task and use it to show your participation, work, and interest.

# Readings and Calendar

Seminar: Fighting Mother		Lab: Beinecke
Tuesday, September 5	Thursday, September 7	Friday, September 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Ludovico Ariosto, <i>Orlando Furioso</i>, Canto I (epic poem, 20 pages)</li> <li>· Illustrations from 16th century editions of the <i>Furioso</i> (images)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Quentin Tarantino, <i>Kill Bill vol. 1</i> (motion picture)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Visit to the Beinecke Library, tour of the exhibition "Art &amp; Protest", ice-cream in Beinecke Plaza</li> </ul>
Seminar: Fighting Mother		Lab: Close Reading
Tuesday, September 12	Thursday, September 14	Friday, September 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Ludovico Ariosto, <i>Orlando Furioso</i>, excerpts from various episodes: Merlin's cave, Fiordispina's queer desire, Tristan's castle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Hideaki Hanno, <i>Neon Genesis Evangelion</i> (anime)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What question or problem is suggested by your close reading? Turn in 1-2 pages including: a photo or scan of your annotated passage, notes on your discoveries, and a significant question or problem generated by your close engagement with the passage.</li> </ul>
Seminar: Empty Armor		Lab : Proposal
Tuesday, September 19	Thursday, September 21	Friday, September 22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Italo Calvino, <i>The Nonexistent Knight</i>, Chapters 1-5 (novel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Italo Calvino, <i>The Nonexistent Knight</i> (Chapters 6-7)</li> <li>· Shane Black, <i>Iron Man 3</i> (motion picture)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Proposal for a close-reading essay (1-2 pages)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Due by 8pm</b></p>
Seminar: Empty Armor		Lab: Draft
Tuesday, September 26	Thursday, September 28	Friday, September 29
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Italo Calvino, <i>The Nonexistent Knight</i> (Chapters 8-11)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Carlo Collodi, <i>Pinocchio</i>, Chapter 1 (novel)</li> <li>· Joss Whedon, <i>Avengers: Age of Ultron</i> (motion picture)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Initial draft for a midterm essay (2-4 pages)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Due by 8pm</b></p>

Seminar: Codes and Chaos		Lab: Revision
Tuesday, October 3	Thursday, October 5	Friday, October 6
· Adam Moore, <i>Batman: The Killing Joke</i> (comic book)	· Miyamoto Musashi, <i>The Book of Five Rings</i> (17th century code of swordsmanship) - Book of Earth and Book of Void	· Complete draft for the midterm essay (5-6 pages) with essay self-assessment  <b>Due by 8pm</b>

Seminar: Codes and Chaos		Lab: Midterm + Art Gallery
Tuesday, October 10	Thursday, October 12	Friday, October 13
· Frank Miller, <i>The Dark Knight Returns</i> (comic book)	· Anonymous, <i>Ordene de chevalerie</i> (poem)  · Ludovico Ariosto, <i>Orlando Furioso</i> (Orlando's madness)	· First visit to the Yale University Art Gallery  · Submission of the final version of your midterm essay (5-6 pages)  <b>Due by 8pm</b>

<b>Break</b>
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Seminar: Delusional Nerd		Lab: Sources + Art Gallery
Tuesday, October 25	Thursday, October 26	Friday, October 27
· Miguel de Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i>  · Selections of images and videos	· Miguel de Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i>  · Selections of images and videos	· Second visit to the Yale University Art Gallery  · Worksheet on how to work with primary and secondary sources  <b>Due by 8pm</b>

Seminar: Delusional Nerd		Lab: Exhibit Label
Tuesday, October 31	Thursday, November 2	Friday, November 3
· Miguel de Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i>  · Scholarship on cosplay	· Lope De Vega, <i>Gatomaquia</i> (chivalric poem in which all the characters are cats, first canto)	· How to put two objects into conversation  · How to write an Exhibit Label

Seminar: Iron Maiden		Lab: Beinecke
Tuesday, November 7	Thursday, November 9	Friday, November 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Torquato Tasso, <i>Jerusalem Delivered</i> (the duel between Tancredi and Clorinda)</li> <li>· <i>Star Wars: The Last Jedi</i> (clip: duel between Finn and Pasma)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Preparation for Beinecke visit (Arthurian vs Carolingian chivalry, history of comics and chivalric poems as objects, armory)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Visit to the Beinecke Library, show and tell of objects that the 6PGx teachers are fond of</li> <li>· Submit a YUAG-style z, including an image of your object and at least 2 secondary sources</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Due by 8pm</b></p>

Seminar: Iron Maiden		Lab: Proposal
Tuesday, November 14	Thursday, November 16	Friday, November 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Mulan</i> (integral reading from Shiamin Kwa's edition of five versions of the classic Chinese legend)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <i>Mulan</i> (integral reading from Shiamin Kwa's edition of five versions of the classic Chinese legend)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Proposal for the end-of-semester essay (2-3 pages including 2 objects you are considering, images and/or passages, &amp; an explanation for why and how you think they speak to one another, &amp; a question suggested by their encounter)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Due by 8pm</b></p>

<b>Break</b>
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Seminar: Oath Keeper		Lab: Draft
Tuesday, November 28	Thursday, November 30	Friday, December 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Jon Favreau, <i>The Mandalorian</i> (Tv show, 2 episodes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Jon Favreau, <i>The Mandalorian</i> (Tv show, 2 episodes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· First draft of an end-of-semester essay (4-6 pages, including one secondary source for each object)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Due by 8pm</b></p>

Seminar: Oath Keeper		Lab: Revision
Tuesday, December 5	Thursday, December 7	Friday, December 8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· G. R. R. Martin, <i>A Game of Thrones</i> (novel, 2 of the "Brienne" chapters)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Homer, <i>Iliad</i> (excerpts about Achilles)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Full draft of the end-of-semester essay (5-7 pages, including a list of sources)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Due by 8pm</b></p>

End of semester essay (+self-assessment & portfolio) is <b>due</b> on Monday, December 14, by 5pm
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