

Goethe's *Faust*

ARU 2025

Quarter 2 (January-March)

All logistical details are included in the [course website](#). Please also familiarize yourself with the [ARU Handbook](#) if you have not already done so. Unless specified otherwise in this syllabus or on the course website, all policies in the Handbook are in effect for this course.

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Goethe's dramatic poem *Faust* is a monumental work of literature that takes the reader on a journey "from Heaven through the World to Hell." In exquisite and memorable verse, it tells the story of a Medieval scholar who, frustrated with the limitations of human knowledge, enters into a bargain with the Devil in order to experience "all that is the lot of human kind."

In the course of his striving Faust progresses from suicidal despair to "highest joy," from wretched ignorance to "highest wisdom . . . the best that mankind ever knew." *Faust* is a work of timeless beauty and philosophical significance in which Goethe presents the human soul's aspiration to cast off the shackles of the Middle Ages and emerge into the glorious daylight of the Enlightenment.

The recommended text for this course is the abridged English translation by philosopher Walter Kaufmann, which gives all of *Faust* Part I and the most important sections of *Faust* Part II. In Kaufmann's own words, his edition is for "those who would like to enjoy Goethe's *Faust*—as opposed to those who want to be able to say that they have read it, all of it."

The goal of this course is to read *Faust* slowly and carefully, savoring the poetic beauty and reflecting on the philosophical wisdom of the work. Students are encouraged to read important passages multiple times so as to grasp their meaning as fully and deeply as possible. We will also discuss major artworks in other media (visual, musical) inspired by Goethe's masterpiece.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

- Week 1: Goethe's life and work, a history of *Faust* in literature, Goethe's work on *Faust*; "Dedication," "Prelude in the Theater," "Prologue in Heaven" (lines 1-353).
- Week 2: Part I: "Night" (Faust's opening monologues), "Before the City Gate" (lines 354-1177).

- Week 3: “Study” (Mephistopheles introduces himself), “Study” (Faust’s pact with Mephistopheles) (lines 1178-2072).
- Week 4: “Auerbach’s Keller,” “The Witch’s Kitchen” (lines 2073-2604).
- Week 5: The tragedy of Gretchen, to “A Garden Bower” (lines 2605-3216).
- Week 6: The tragedy of Gretchen, to “Cathedral” (lines 3217-3834).
- Week 7: “Walpurgis Night,” “Dungeon” (Gretchen’s death) (lines 3835-4612); Part II: Act I, “Charming Landscape” (lines 3835-4727).
- Week 8: Act V, Faust’s last speeches and death, “Entombment” (gruesome jaws of hell), “Mountain Gorges” (Faust’s redemption) (lines 11043-12111).

READINGS

Goethe’s *Faust*, Translated and with an Introduction by Walter Kaufmann (or any English verse translation with line numbers)

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

Your course grade will break down as follows:

- 80% of total = short assignments (500 words maximum) based on the readings for the week, due before each live discussion and graded on a scale of 0 to 5
- 20% of total = course participation grade

Your participation grade will be determined by how often you attend and participate in the live discussion sessions and by the office hours you attend. If you are unable to attend class live, you should attend at least one office hour appointment during the quarter.