**COLT 810: How Not to Be a Hero**

Tues and Thurs, 9–10:20

J. Walter Wilson 501

Haynes

Office: Marston Hall 101

Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:30 to 11:30

Shakespeare wrote two great, intense plays about ancient characters who were irredeemable failures: *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*. What can failure teach us? What kind of strength does a language of failure possess? We will also read the ancient sources themselves (Livy, Lucian, Plutarch), and modern adaptations of these stories (Bertolt Brecht, T. S. Eliot, Günter Grass, Wyndham Lewis).

**Course requirements:**

**(a)** Satisfactory attendance of, and adequate participation in, classes.

**(b)** Three short papers, each of approximately 1,500 words

**Paper 1** (due in class on September 25): Is *Coriolanus* a tragedy or a satire?

**Paper 2** (due in class on October 9): Where, if anywhere, is Shakespeare’s presentation of Coriolanus’ rise and fall original?

**Paper 3** (due in class on October 23): Discuss the uses made of the Coriolanus story by two authors writing after Shakespeare, with particular attention to the relation depicted in those works between private and public ethics.

**(c)** One long paper, of approximately 3,000 words

**Paper 4**: (due on December 12): Write about some aspect of *Timon of Athens*, its sources, and subsequent adaptations of the Timon story; or more generally, about the figure of the misanthrope in a literary work.

**Assigned Texts:**

William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. Philip Brockbank (Arden Shakespeare)

William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, ed. H J Oliver (Arden Shakespeare)

Günter Grass, *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, tr. Ralph Mannheim (Harcourt)

Hermann Melville, *The Confidence-Man* (Northwestern)

Menander, *The Grouch* (U Penn Pr)

Molière, *The Misanthrope* (Mariner)

*Other texts will be handed out in class*

Thursday, September 4 Introduction to course

Tuesday, September 9 *Coriolanus*, Act I

Thursday, September 11 *Coriolanus*, Act II

Tuesday, September 16 *Coriolanus*, Act IIII

Thursday, September 18 *Coriolanus*, Act IV

Tuesday, September 23 *Coriolanus*, Act V

Thursday, September 25 Coriolanus in Hollywood. **Short essay 1 due**

Tuesday, September 30 Coriolanus in Plutarch.

Thursday, October 2 Coriolanus in Dionysius of Halicarnassus

Tuesday, October 7 Coriolanus in Livy and fragmentary Roman historians

Thursday, October 9 Coriolanus in the 18th century: Thomson. **Short essay 2 due**

Tuesday, October 14 Coriolanus in the 19th century: Beethoven and Brontë

Thursday, October 16 Coriolanus in the 20th century: Brecht and Grass

Tuesday, October 21 Coriolanus in the 20th century: Eliot and Schwartz

Thursday, October 23 Coriolanus in the 21st century: Geoffrey Hill. **Short essay 3 due**

Tuesday, October 28 *Timon of Athens*, Act I

Thursday, October 30 *Timon of Athens*, Act II

Tuesday, November 4 *Timon of Athens*, Act III

Thursday, November 6 *Timon of Athens*, Act IV

Tuesday, November 11 *Timon of Athens*, Act V

Thursday, November 13 Wyndham Lewis, *Timon*

Tuesday, November 18 Misanthrope in antiquity: Menander

Thursday, November 20 Modern misanthrope I: Molière

Tuesday, November 25 **No class**

Tuesday, December 2 Modern misanthrope II: Rochester and Pope

Thursday, December 6 Modern misanthrope III: Swift

Tuesday, December 9 Discussion

Friday, December 12 **Final paper due**