Course Title: Reading Antiquity: Historical Fiction Book Club  
Course Code: LIT 106 B  
Instructors: Michael Shanks and Gary Devore

Course Summary:  
All history requires creative reconstruction, and we never possess a full picture from the sources. Today we are in a golden age of the historical novels and films that return us to ancient Greece and Rome. Those who write fictionalized accounts of any period in history work with the remains of the past and can deliver extraordinary insights into the way things were or even could have been. In the best fiction, reader and viewer are drawn into a revived past. Creative works make the past live again, forging personal links through human experience.

Each quarter in this ongoing series we will read works of fiction and watch a film, all set in antiquity. We will range far and wide in our discussions both in our definition of antiquity and the themes covered, including the shape of history, the deep movements and structures of change, sexual representations, violence and politics, famous and marginalized voices, constructed realities, and the agendas that drive the writings of history.

Our reading planned for this quarter includes *Circe* by Madeline Miller, a re-imagining of the life of alchemist and sorceress Circe from Homer’s *Odyssey*; Anthony Burgess’ *The Kingdom of the Wicked*, a literary novel about the formation of early Christianity; and *The Last World*, by Christoph Ransmayr, a surrealist dream-like reworking of figures from the Roman poet Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Our scheduled film will be Federico Fellini’s poetic, multifaceted metaphor for how we should engage with the ancient past, *The Satyricon*.

Grade Options and Requirements:  
We will be reading a text every two or three weeks. Each text will receive a video introduction from the instructors, a collection of supplemental readings providing historical context, and students will be invited to share their thoughts and questions with their peers and the instructors on an online forum in the class Canvas website as they read. Each week (Mondays from 7-9:05 pm Pacific time), we will hold a 2-hour online Zoom session to discuss the

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365 Lasuen St., Stanford, CA 94305  
continuingstudies@stanford.edu  
650-725-2650
material. The Zoom discussions are optional and will be recorded so those not able to attend can watch them later.

A brief final essay exam is available for those wishing to take the course for credit or a grade. The grade options are:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
  - Score will be determined by passing grade on the final essay exam.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
  - Score will be determined by the final essay exam.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

**Tentative Weekly Outline:**

Week 1: Introduction to the Course and Historical Fiction

Week 2: Reading: *Circe* by Madeline Miller

Week 3: Reading: *Circe* by Madeline Miller

Week 4: Reading: *The Kingdom of the Wicked* by Anthony Burgess

Week 5: Reading: *The Kingdom of the Wicked* by Anthony Burgess

Week 6: Reading: *The Kingdom of the Wicked* by Anthony Burgess

Week 7: Reading: *The Last World* by Christoph Ransmayr

Week 8: Reading: *The Last World* by Christoph Ransmayr

Week 9: Movie: *Fellini Satyricon* (1969), directed by Federico Fellini

*Special note on the film: Students can purchase the DVD or other physical media of the film, or rent it online through a streaming service. The Watch Together Session will not be a broadcast of the film to the class (because of copyright limitations) but a live chat session as we all watch the film together in whatever method we possess.*