

## ENGLISH 102 INQUIRY INTO THE HEROIC

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In this course, students will conduct and present research related to the concept of the hero and how it has changed through time. We shall focus upon the hero in traditional literature such as the epic as well as folklore and modern characterizations in fantasy and film. Through the study of epics such as the *Iliad* and *Beowulf*, folklore (including Native American and African American folktales), and modern fantasy literature (*The Hobbit* and Harry Potter), we shall consider how images of the hero show continuity as well as transformation in different time periods, cultures, and media. We shall also consider how modern filmmakers portray the heroic in films such as *Troy* and *Kingdom of Heaven*, and to what extent these films reflect contemporary viewpoints about heroes and heroism. We shall furthermore consider the impact of catastrophic events such as the Vietnam War and 9/11 upon modern concepts of the heroic. Finally, we shall examine the question of whether we live in a post-heroic age, an age without heroes, or whether the contemporary interest in medievalism, fantasy, and science fiction signifies that we are entering a new heroic age.

Each student will be responsible for leading one class discussion and presenting a short piece of research pertaining to the reading or film discussion for that day. Students must also post a minimum number of responses to other students' presentations on Blackboard. A reading assignment of 20-30 pages or watching a film will be required before most class meetings. There will also be periodic unannounced essay quizzes about reading or film assignments for the day. Students will write three out-of-class essays, all of which involve research.