

IP312-15 The Quest I: Departures and Heroic Journeys

24/25

Department

Liberal Arts

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Bryan Brazeau

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

The idea of the "quest" was an animating principle throughout the premodern world. Through the quest an individual could fight evil, heal a broken social order, discover previously-unknown worlds, forge new alliances, and find their true selves along the way.

How do we conceive of the quest in an age that Max Weber characterised as dominated by rationalisation, intellectualisation, and above all, a profound sense of "disenchantment" (Entzauberung)? What currency does the idea of the quest have in the modern, bureaucratic, secular world?

This module explores two key problems that lie at the outset of all quests:

1. The departure from emotional comfort and epistemological certainty to face unknown realms. Why do we leave? What do we hope to gain? How can we truly depart and break down what holds us back?
2. What makes a hero? What makes a journey heroic? How are heroic models and discursive structures conceived and consolidated? From what perspectives are they critiqued, or even condemned? Can heroic values be framed as universal or are they a reflection of broader

cultural anxieties?

The module explores these problems through case studies that focus from various fields. Each case study is framed through the lens of a particular "quest," with each path converging on the central problems of departure, heroic models, and facing the unknown. As such, "the quest" lens functions as an intervention in multiple contemporary problems that resist easy solutions, and can only be approached from a transdisciplinary perspective, such as that of the "disenchantment of the modern world," and the many avenues we seek out in order to re-enchant it and construct meaning.

Students should note that this module will involve a significant amount of reading and preparation outside of class time (approx 100 pp./week).

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

This module complements other core and optional modules offered in Liberal Arts and encourages students to draw upon and extend prior knowledge. The purpose of the module is for students to explore the problems involved in how quests from various disciplines frame the concept of departure and facing the unknown. Through an exploration of these issues, students will learn to think critically about problematising the straightforward narratives they receive through the idea of the quest in popular and contemporary culture.

In addition to the learning outcomes below, students will benefit from this module by further refining their transdisciplinary analytic skills through collaborative problem-solving and student-led learning. As the module focuses on the problem of engaging with the unknown, it is hoped that students will also develop their own strategies for grappling with unfamiliar ideas and perspectives outside their comfort zone.

The module will be an optional module for Liberal Arts students but also open to students from across the university. It will help students think along transdisciplinary lines, and further refine their capacity for original transdisciplinary analysis by engaging with complex problems that resist simple solutions.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The indicative outline syllabus below provides an overview of the key sections and subsections of the module rather than a week by week breakdown.

A) Introduction: Leaving Home

i) Quest Archetypes: The Hero's Journey and its Discontents

ii) Quest Archetypes II: The Heroine's Journey and Feminist Approaches to Heroism

ii) Education as Quest: Why and how do we leave?

B) The Quest for Love: Departure, Desire, and Discontent

- i) Enchanting the Beloved: Don Quixote, Dulcinea, and Deconstructing the "Damsel in Distress"
 - ii) Your Princess is in Another Castle: Gendered Agency in The Legend of Zelda and other Video Games
- C) Entrepreneurship and The Quest for Freedom
- i) "Titans of Industry?" Problematizing Heroic Models of Entrepreneurship
 - ii) Space Quest: Entrepreneurship and the Race to Mars
- D) The Quest for Significance: Exile
- i) Postmodern Heroes, Metaphysical Detectives, and Self-Deconstructing Quests
 - ii) Selfhood and Fragmentation: Irony and Hypertext
 - iii) The Holy Grail: Perceval, Galahad, and other Extremists
 - iv) Relic or Souvenir? Knick Knacks and Invested Objects
- F) Conclusions

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Identify key quest archetypes and heroic models, applying them to contemporary problems.
- Consider, in detail, the motivations, features, structure, and problems inherent in such quests along with their—often unforeseen—social, intellectual, economic, cultural, and ecological impacts.
- Apply advanced cognitive skills to build transdisciplinary knowledge that fosters transformative dialogue between fields such as: philosophy, literary studies, social sciences, theology, intellectual history, politics, and other fields.
- Implement meta-cognitive skills in approaching complex contemporary problems, such as the quest for new myths, critiques of the quest for sustainability, and new conceptions of home and homelands.
- Collaboratively create their own versions of a “modern quest”, along with a critical analysis of its motivations and multifaceted impacts
- Critically analyse heroic journeys, values, and themes across disciplines, cultures, and time periods.

Indicative reading list

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004.

Auster, Paul. David Mazzucchelli, and Paul Karasik. *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*. Reissue with introduction by Art Spiegelman. New York: Picador, 2004.

Belting, Hans. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. trans. Edmund Jephcott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Benson, Sarah. “Reproduction, Fragmentation, and Collection: Rome and the Origin of Souvenirs.” In *Architecture and Tourism*, edited by D. Medina Lansansky and Brian McLaren, 15-36. Oxford: Berg, 2004.

Berman, Morris. *The Reenchantment of the World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.

- Bird, William L.. Jr. *Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes, and Curios from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History*. Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History in association with Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 2013.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 3rd Ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *Don Quijote (1605)*. Translated by Edith Grossman. New York: Ecco Press, 2005.
- Davenport, Christian. *The Space Barons: Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and the Quest to Colonize the Cosmos*. London: Hachette, 2018.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*. Edited by Michael North. Norton Critical Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.
- Etchells, Pete. *Lost in a Good Game: Why We Play Video Games and What They Can Do For Us*. London: Icon Books, 2019).
- Fassone, Riccardo. *Every game is an island: endings and extremities in video games*. London: Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Homer, *The Odyssey*. Trans. Emily Wilson. New York: W.W. Norton, 2018.
- Jasko, K., Webber, D., Kruglanski, Arie W., et al. "Social context moderates the effects of quest for significance on violent extremism." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2019). Doi: 10.1037/pspi0000198
- Kruglanski, Arie W., Michele J. Gelfand, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, et al. "Significance Quest Theory as the Driver of Radicalization" in idem., *Resilience and Resolve* (London: Imperial College Press, 2015), pp.17-30.
- Lacy, Norris J., ed., *The Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*. 5 vols. (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993–1996).
- Lawrence, Chris. "What if Zelda Wasn't a Girl? Problematizing Ocarina of Time's Great Gender Debate." In Harper T., Adams M., Taylor N., *Queerness in Play*. 97-113. Palgrave, 2018.
- Lee, Raymond M. "Weber, Re-Enchantment and Social Futures." *Time and Society* 19.2 (2010): 180-192.
- Lester, Anne E. "What remains: women, relics and remembrance in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade." *Journal of Medieval History*, 40 (2014): 311-328.
- McPhillips, Kathleen. "Believing in Post-Modernity: Technologies of Enchantment in Contemporary Marian Devotion." In *Popular Spiritualities: The Politics of Contemporary Enchantment*, ed. Lynne Hume and Kathleen McPhillips, 147-158. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.
- Murdock, Maureen. *The Heroine's Journey*. Boulder, CA: Shambhala Publications, 1990.

Nicholson, Sarah. "The Problem of Woman as Hero in the Work of Joseph Campbell," *Feminist Theology* 19.2 (2011): 182–193. doi: 10.1177/0966735010384331

Osborne, Richard L. "The Dark Side of the Entrepreneur," *Long Range Planning* 24.3 (1991): 26-31. Doi: 10.1016/0024-6301(91)90181-M

Rushdie, Salman. *Quichotte*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2019.

Saler, Michael. "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *The American Historical Review* 111, 3 (June 2006): 692-716.

Segal, Robert A. *Theorizing about Myth*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*, edited by J. Paul Hunter. Second Norton Critical Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011.

Sutcliffe, Steven M., "Practising New Age Soteriologies in the Rational Order," 159-174. In Hume and McPhillips, eds., *Popular Spiritualities*.

von Eschenbach, Wolfram. *Parzival*. Translated by Cyril Edwards. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Westover, Tara. *Educated*. New York: Random House, 2018.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Research element

Students will write a rigorously researched final paper with the instructor's guidance. They will be expected to conduct significant research for this assessment.

Interdisciplinary

Like all Liberal Arts modules, this one is radically interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. The module combines a wide variety of materials and perspectives from literary studies, philosophy, psychology, business studies, medical humanities, sociology, game studies, material culture, and religious studies.

International

The module is inherently international and intertemporal. It combines sources, authors, and perspectives from multiple traditions (and readings will always be made available in the original languages to draw on students' prior knowledge if applicable). Moreover, it encourages students to think about the topics and problems we will examine from a global and international perspective (for example, when discussing relics, souvenirs, and tourism around the globe).

Subject specific skills

Students will gain increased familiarity with transdisciplinary knowledge and contemporary problems. Moreover, this module will allow them to draw on existing knowledge from other

modules in the department (Art and Revolution, Science, Society, and the Media, Consumption, Sustainability) both to apply to problems under examination and as material for their own critical examination through the lens of the quest.

Transferable skills

In Liberal Arts we do not use the term "transferrable skills" as our students gain direct skills that will be useful in their future careers. Through our problem-based learning method, students learn skills such as leadership, coaching, collaboration, presentation skills, and self-directed learning. Some skills that students will acquire in the module are listed below:

Critical and independent thinking – developed through: Weekly tasks, readings, and homework; encounters with and employment of complex theories of mythography, feminist critiques of heroic models, and the dark side of entrepreneurship; encounters with quest narratives regarding departure, enchantment, and self-deconstructing quests from ancient world to present day and the need to find, evaluate, and critique connections between these (along with their reception); and Problem-Based Learning activities and in-class discussion. Written communication – developed through: Research Essay; and weekly reflection diaries (blogs) with ongoing weekly feedback for each student. Oral communication – developed through: Presentation at the end of term where students create their own heroic quest explain why/how they created it in line with texts and theories seen in the module; and weekly seminar tasks and presentations. Research and evaluation – developed through: Weekly problems and tasks that require the students to research and evaluate issues concerning the origin, function, purpose, and power of heroic models and quest narratives; the final research paper involves the formulation of their own research question and conducting their own in-depth reviews and analysis of theories, archival materials, case studies, or interpretations of expressive works (fiction, non-fiction, and many works that defy and question this binary). Time and self-management – developed through: Weekly groupwork and problems; a series of five pop quizzes throughout the term that measure engagement both with the readings and with in-class discussions; group presentation where students create their own heroic quest and provide analysis of the choices that shape the underlying heroic journey, benefit (or lack thereof) to the community, and underlying problems in their quest construction. The project requires consistent group work, task management, and the keeping of a groupwork diary/log; and weekly readings, problems, and tasks (sometimes in groups, other times individually).

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (36%)
Private study	35 hours (64%)
Total	55 hours

Private study description

Students will engage in private study of approx. 3.5 hours per week to prepare readings, weekly tasks, problem development, and group discussion topics.

Costs

Category	Description	Funded by	Cost to student
Books and learning materials	<p>While there will be no mandatory costs, students will be encouraged to purchase two key texts: 1) Joseph Campbell's /Hero With A Thousand Faces/ and 2) Miguel de Cervantes' /Don Quixote/ (Grossman translation recommended). The total cost below reflects the cost for both books in the UK as of February 2022.</p> <p>We will also reflect on the differences between physical texts and online e-books/e-texts.</p>	Student	£25.00

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Troll Challenges (Pop Quizzes)	20%	5 hours	No

Over the course of the term, the module will feature 5 pop quizzes, each composed of 5 multiple-choice questions.

These will be direct and simple in nature, but will test whether or not students have been engaging with the in-class discussion and readings.

The mark on the lowest of the 5 quizzes will be dropped, and the average (mean) of the top four quizzes will be used for this assessment.

The Critical Quest	50%	60 hours	Yes (extension)
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Students use the thematics of the quest as developed throughout the module to examine a problem of their own choosing (either one seen in the module or one related to their own interests) in significant depth. The topic is open but should be linked to the students' own research interests, along with one of the themes discussed in the module.

Students will explore the problem they choose by framing the problem within broader temporal and multidisciplinary contexts and conducting independent research.

Your Modern Quest	30%	30 hours	No
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Students will work together in small groups to design their own quest based on the frameworks and lenses seen in class. The quest can be a video, a podcast, a series of branching scenarios

Weighting

Study time

Eligible for self-certification

on Moodle, a video game design, a choose-your-own-adventure text-based quest, or another format discussed with the instructor.

Students will share their quest with the class one week prior to its presentation. During this time, other groups will undertake the quests that have been designed. Students will then present their quest to the class and critically analyse the motivations for their choices and the impact of their design while receiving encouraging and collaborative feedback from peers.

Feedback on assessment

Detailed feedback for written assignments will be provided via Tabula. Students can choose to have additional feedback in person via a feedback appointment.

Group feedback on the media assignment will be provided via Tabula.

Availability

Pre-requisites

Some familiarity with other modules in Liberal Arts would be helpful, as would familiarity with some of the texts/traditions we will be examining (but this is not necessary).

Familiarity with other languages is always an asset as it will allow the student to either read texts in that language or to explore scholarship with unique/different cultural perspectives.

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts
 - Year 2 of LA92 Liberal Arts with Classics
 - Year 2 of LA73 Liberal Arts with Design Studies
 - Year 2 of LA83 Liberal Arts with Economics
 - Year 2 of LA82 Liberal Arts with Education
 - Year 2 of LA95 Liberal Arts with English
 - Year 2 of LA81 Liberal Arts with Film and Television Studies
 - Year 2 of LA93 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 2 of LA97 Liberal Arts with History
 - Year 2 of LA91 Liberal Arts with Life Sciences
 - Year 2 of LA75 Liberal Arts with Modern Languages and Cultures
 - Year 2 of LA96 Liberal Arts with Philosophy
 - Year 2 of LA94 Liberal Arts with Theatre and Performance Studies

This module is Unusual option for:

- UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts
 - Year 2 of LA99 Liberal Arts
 - Year 3 of LA99 Liberal Arts
- Year 4 of UVCA-LA98 Undergraduate Liberal Arts with Intercalated Year