LS 658: Revisiting the Classics

This course will revisit some ancient classics to see what they have to tell us about the big questions—good and evil, life and death, suffering and redemption, God and humanity. Front and center will be the classics that have challenged readers for many ages and inspired countless adaptations. We will explore The Book of Job, a Hebrew fable and meditation on human suffering and on divine justice (or injustice). and then look at its anguished sequel, Elie Wiesel's memoir of the holocaust, Night. (We may also look at Archibald MacLeish's cynical modern retake, IB, and Bernard Malamud's whimsical *Angel Levine*.) Homer will sing again of Troy, honor, fate, and the warriors who fall to the earth like so many leaves; Derek Walcott will weave Homeric themes and rhythms into his Caribbean epic, *Omeros*. We shall accompany Dante the pilgrim part-way on his journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, then see how T. S. Eliot used this journey to characterize the modern world. We will look at *Hamlet* and its adaptations into other works entirely, John Updike's *Gertrude* and Claudius or Tom Stoppard's witty send-up Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. As a capstone, John Milton will attempt to justify God's ways to man in the incomparable Paradise Lost.

Requirements include seminar presentations, short essays, a research paper, and a final.