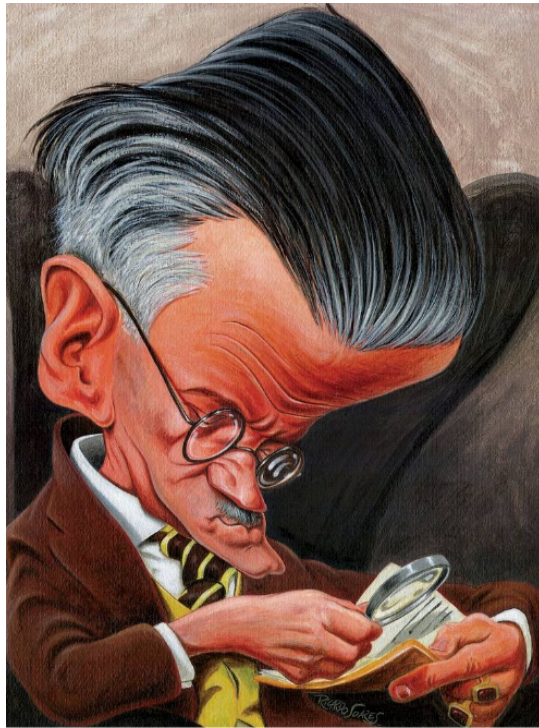


SYLLABUS for “Powering through *Ulysses* Together”

OLLI-DC Fall 2024 Study Group 674 - Thursdays (11:45 AM -I 1:15 PM)
(Course Description, Class Schedule, Bio, Preliminary Thoughts)



James Joyce by Ricardo Soares

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An opportunity to optimally experience James Joyce’s *Ulysses* - that is to say to read or reread it in sequenced steps with information and orientation designed to provide maximal benefits.

But, all don't have to conquer the entirety of "Mount Ulysses" in the same Sherpa-guided way - we all have different mindsets, brain plasticity and evolving perspectives, and just reading highlights or selected chapters can also be rewarding. If you appreciate something in *Ulysses*, you'll probably want to come back for more at a later time. *Ulysses* is a kaleidoscope of comical thoughts, emotions, characters and literary experiments that should fuel good discussions for us.

The *Ulysses* highlights that we will be reading in class are from the 2022 script used for the OLLI Centenary Celebration of *Ulysses*. They are posted on the course website (<https://sites.google.com/view/poweringthroughulyssesstogether/powering-through-ulysses-together>), along with other course materials. The full *Ulysses* text from Project Gutenberg that is posted on the course site is perfectly adequate for our purposes. The differences in *Ulysses* editions are not significant enough to matter for us - you are free to read any one that you like.

B. SCHEDULE OF CLASSES/SUBJECTS COVERED:

CLASS 1 - Thursday, September 26 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

- **Introduction:**
 - James Joyce bio and circumstances leading to composition of *Ulysses*
 - Joyce books that came beforehand and afterwards
 - Related Literature that came beforehand and afterwards
 - Overall Plot and outline of *Ulysses*
 - Joyce's *Ulysses* Table
 - Preview of chapters covered next time
(Plot summaries and key elements)
 - Discussion, Q&A

One of the chief objectives of the first class is to help you determine your strategy for the course - that is to say how you personally will experience the treasures of *Ulysses*. We all have different mindsets, experiences, and familiarity with the book - we should be having a gamut from beginners to re-readers.

The course website home page - [POWERING THROUGH ULYSSES TOGETHER](https://sites.google.com/view/poweringthroughulysses-together/powering-through-ulysses-together) (<https://sites.google.com/view/poweringthroughulysses-together/powering-through-ulysses-together>) has resources to enable and enhance your efforts and enjoyment - in addition to the basics on the home page (scripts of highlights, summaries, orientation commentaries) you will find recordings, music and films on the [ULYSSES AUDIBLE](#) web page. You can design your approach to suit yourself (e.g. just reading summaries and then text may be fine - but you might want to start out with a recorded reading, a film, or music, for example)

- **Suggestions for homework for first class** - watch the 6 minute Ted Ex Video, "Why Read *Ulysses*?" posted on the course website or available at (<https://youtu.be/X7FobPxu27M?si=en4kg018Q1pxbcYJ>) and read the entire Rosenbach Library summary of *Ulysses* (posted on course website or available at <https://rosenbach.org/ulysses-plot-summary/>)
- **Suggestions for homework for 2nd and each subsequent class** - read relevant Rosenbach library chapter plot summary before reading each assigned chapter (text or highlights)
- **Homework for second class** - Read first three episodes (Episodes 1 (Telemachus), 2 (Nestor) 3 (Proteus))- in entirety or highlights (from script of highlights used for Celebration of James Joyce's Birthday in 2022 - printout provided and available on website home page).
- Reading of either full text or highlights from chapters is your choice. Reading the highlights in the 2022 script provided is like reading a severely abridged version of the book (about 12%).

CLASS 2 - Thursday, October 3 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episodes 1 (Telemachus), 2 (Nestor) 3 (Proteus)

- Presentation For each chapter:
 - Plot summary
 - relevant commentary
 - Reading of highlights
 - Discussion
 - Preview of next class

Homework for next class - read Episodes 4 (Calypso), 5 (Lotus Eaters), 6 (Hades) - in entirety or highlights.

CLASS 3 - Thursday, October 10 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episodes 4 (Calypso), 5 (Lotus Eaters), 6 (Hades)

- Presentation for each chapter;
 - Plot summary
 - relevant commentary
 - Reading of highlights
 - Discussion
 - Preview of next class

Homework for next class - read Episode 7 (Aeolus), Episode 8 (Sylla & Charybdis), Episode 9 (Lestregonians) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 4 - Thursday, October 17 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 7 (Aeolus), Episode 8 (Sylla & Charybdis), Episode 9 (Lestregonians)

- Presentation for each chapter;
 - Plot summary
 - relevant commentary
 - Reading of highlights
 - Discussion
 - Preview of next class

Homework for next class - Read Episode 10 (Wandering Rocks), Episode 11 (Sirens) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 5 - Thursday, October 24 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 10 (Wandering Rocks), Episode 11 (Sirens)

- Presentation for each chapter;
 - Plot summary
 - relevant commentary
 - Reading of highlights
 - Discussion
 - Preview of next class

Homework for next class - Read Episode 12 (Cyclops) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 6 - Thursday, October 31 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 12 (Cyclops)

- Presentation for Cyclops
- Plot summary
- relevant commentary
- Reading of highlights
- Discussion
- Preview of next class

Homework for next class - Read Episode 13 (Nausicaa), Episode 14 (Oxen of the Sun) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 7 - Thursday, November 7 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 13 (Nausicaa), Episode 14 (Oxen of the Sun)

- Presentation for each chapter;
- Plot summary
- relevant commentary
- Reading of highlights
- Discussion
- Preview of next class

Homework for next class - Read Episode 15 (Circe) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 8 - Thursday, November 14 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 15 (Circe)

- Presentation for Circe
- Plot summary
- relevant commentary
- Reading of highlights
- Discussion
- Preview of next class

Homework for next class - Read 16 (Eumaeus), Episode 17(Ithaca) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 9 - Thursday, November 21 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 16 (Eumaeus), Episode 17(Ithaca)

- Presentation for each chapter;
- Plot summary
- relevant commentary
- Reading of highlights
- Discussion
- Preview of next class

Homework for next class - Read Episode 18 (Penelope) in entirety or highlights

CLASS 10 - Thursday, December 5 (11:45 AM - 1:15 PM)

Episode 18 (Penelope)

- Presentation for Penelope;
- Plot summary
- relevant commentary
- Reading of highlights
- Concluding remarks and Discussion:

C. BIO OF STUDY GROUP LEADER (BOB KOLODNEY, A *ULYSSES* OBSESSIVE) AS RELATES TO THE BOOK

- *Ulysses* has been a steady presence as "lay bible" during my unruly trajectory
- from perpetual adolescent to lawyer>consultant>manager>serial entrepreneur>angel investor>OLLI Study Group Leader awaiting Nirvana
- Have always been drawn back to *Ulysses* by its humor
- Took Shakespeare course from James Joyce scholar at 19
- Read *Ulysses* on the third try at 26
- Attended first Bloomsday (June 16 *Ulysses* reading) at Shakespeare & Co at 28
- Organized Bloomsday events in early 2000s
- Organized annual OLLI Bloomsday and Joyce Birthday (Feb 2) readings from 2016 to 2023
- Taught OLLI short course *Ulysses* Introduction in February 2021
- Have accumulated scripts of literary highlights and other resources for us to draw upon

D. PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

MAGIC: James Joyce's *Ulysses* is a magical book. No matter how many times one reads it, there will be new experiences, and I like to think of it as a fountain of youth. This is very surprising and paradoxical because on the surface *Ulysses* is just a simple story of:

- a son looking for a lost father replacement and
- a father looking to replace a lost son,
- walks through the city of Dublin and
- their meeting up on June 16, 1904.

How then can this book be about everything in the world and the universe and the broad gamut of human thoughts and emotions? We will try to figure this out.

Reading *Ulysses* is like looking over the shoulder of the literary genius who took 7 years to write it. I took 7 years to read it - successfully completing the novel on my third try.

INSTRUMENT OF CHANGE: Western novels are sometimes categorized as before and after Flaubert, and Joyce did read all of Flaubert. But, with respect to the border between Modern and Postmodern novels, novels can be more distinctly classified as "before and after *Ulysses*"..

VARIETY AND EXPERIMENTATION: The book doesn't want for variety - each of the 18 chapters (known as "Episodes") is written in a different style, and the author continually experiments to get different effects well beyond what the predominant narrative styles call for. Although *Ulysses* does parallel the *Odyssey*, the relationships are tenuous and provide only a general framework to orient the author and reader.

SATISFYING EVERYONE'S INNER NONCONFORMIST: *Ulysses* plays to a desire present somewhere in everyone not to be dictated to, not to be bored, not to have to conform. It is like the weather in the British Isles - if you don't like it, wait a bit and it will change. It is a multifaceted jewel with ever-changing patterns. This is the way that literature and the other arts developed - and with Joyce we get to the postmodernist era - art for art's sake, variety, a mixing of the old and new, experiments that break the old rules, with respect to style, form, attitude and the things that could be described and dealt with. Concepts of taste and morality fell by the wayside, and experimentation became the rule of the road.

REALISM AND CURIOSITY: Curiously enough, Joyce who included all sorts of crude, outlandish, and disgusting things in his writing in order to reflect life was quite proper in his everyday life most of the time - he avoided most cursing and foul words likely to make others uncomfortable (except when initiating barroom quarrels - such as those he called upon Hemingway to settle physically). But, he had a deep curiosity about most things; everything was grist for his mind and his creative mill. In his writing experimentation was the name of the game - he was trying something new in almost every paragraph of *Ulysses*.

SOUND: Little by little Joyce's eyesight failed him - and he appeared to have developed a special sensitivity to the sounds and patterns to compensate, as happens with blind musicians. But, Joyce was obsessed with writing even though he was a good musician with an excellent tenor voice. Words and word patterns were his tools to perceive the world, to express his ideas, innovations and reactions to everything around him. One might say that Joyce played his brain like a musical instrument and telepathically communicated effects and concepts to the brains of his readers. Or more simply put, taking into consideration what we have learned about the human brain and its functioning, you could say that he played the brains of his readers like musical instruments.

Ulysses comes alive when read aloud, and Jim Norton did one of the best readings ever done (posted on the website at the *Ulysses* Audio page where the link to the superb RTF recording is also provided) - as well as *Ulysses* music and films.

A BLIZZARD OF STYLES: We will look at the different stylistic tools that Joyce employed - e.g. word-play, metaphors, contrasts, sound and sense interplays, exaggeration, catalogs and lists, epiphanies, contrasts of rhythm and pace, many varieties of internal monologue (or stream of consciousness), of which he was a master. Often you think that you are really inside the heads of characters, as though AI had already brought us telepathy. Joyce was very

articulate - the Ulysses lexicon is about the same as that of Shakespeare, about 33,000 words. And Joyce could use them for clear explanations, for poetical effects, to reflect the personalities of narrators and characters, to bring out the ironies in human existence. The manner in which these tools is used is often unusual and exceptional - e.g. multiple interrelated metaphors and similes - and it could be argued that Joyce's postmodern followers never exceeded him.

HUMOR: *Ulysses* is above all else a funny book - and that is what has kept pulling me back like a magnet despite initial difficulties in reading it, and the false impression that I have gotten everything I could from the book. Joyce once said that upon his honor as a gentleman there is not a single serious word in *Ulysses*. What does this mean? No matter what narrative voice is being used the author's attitude is one of irony and skepticism, incongruities are the fuel that makes the book progress with surprises, discoveries, resolution of inconsistencies, the pleasure of unraveling paradoxes, great and small. There is plenty of parody and satire, and in some ways you might say that *Ulysses* is a parody of a novel.

MAIN OBJECTIVE: Above all, welcome to the course - *Ulysses* is a funny book, and our main objective is to have some fun!

