In this course, we will read four canonical literary texts with their twentieth and twenty-first century counterparts. Our concern will be with how recent writers revise and re-imagine the concerns of writers from earlier periods and other countries. We will also consider the extent to which contemporary authors extend, challenge, or subvert the texts they revise. Sean Meredith’s film features hand-drawn puppets, is full of references to American culture and politics in the last fifty year, and is a satirical update of Dante’s Inferno. While Baz Luhrmann’s postmodern filmic retake of Romeo and Juliet seeks to remake and popularize that play for a contemporary audience, we will add a third layer to our investigation of Romeo and Juliet by attending a performance of Cardinal Stage’s production of the play. In Seth Grahame-Smith’s Pride and Prejudice and Zombies, monsters roam the Regency England of Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice. Finally, in The Graveyard Book, we will see Neil Gaiman offer a ghoulish, graphic-novel inflected rewrite of Kipling, whose book we will also see remade, and drastically cut, in Disney’s The Jungle Book. In each case, we will address the knowledge and expectations of the initial audience for each work, examine the controversies some of these rewrites have engendered, and ponder whether and how the tale we read or view second or third causes us to re-read and re-interpret the tale we read first.

Reading

Dante, Inferno.
Sean Meredith, Dante’s Inferno (Film).
William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet.
Baz Luhrmann, William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet (Film).
Walt Disney, The Jungle Book (Film).
Rudyard Kipling, Jungle Book.
Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice.
Seth Grahame-Smith, Pride and Prejudice and Zombies.

Requirements.

- Three six to eight page essays. 80% of final grade.
- A library exercise that will test your ability to find material in IUCAT and a variety of subject-specific online databases. 10% of final grade.
- Participation in class discussion and in-class activities. 10% of final grade.
- Participation in evening viewing at a performance of Luhrmann’s William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet.