In this course, we will read two canonical literary texts alongside and against their twentieth and twenty-first-century counterparts, and when we turn to Junot Diaz, we will examine how the same character, Yunior, is represented in three books published over a period of sixteen years. For much of the class, 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 years, and is a satirical update of Dante’s *Inferno*. Masculinity, and Dominican masculinity in particular, is always a central issue in Diaz’s fiction. Yunior, while archetypally masculine, is sometimes tortured by his behavior towards women, and our concern will be primarily with how Diaz represents Yunior’s masculinity and his changing view of it and the model on which it is based. In *The Graveyard Book*, we will see Neil Gaiman offer a ghoulish, graphic-novel inflected rewrite of Kipling. 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 or character we read or view second causes us to re-read and re-interpret the tale or character we read first. The historical context in which the work was written and rewritten will thus always be at the heart of our concerns.

**Reading**

Dante, *Inferno*.
Sean Meredith, *Dante’s Inferno* (Film).
Rudyard Kipling, *Jungle Book*.
Junot Diaz, *Drown*.
Junot Diaz, *This Is How You Lose Her*.

**Writing Requirements and Grades**

- Three essays, each of which is six to eight pages in length. 65% of your final grade. You may revise your first essay if it receives a grade below B+.
- On seven occasions during the semester, you will post responses on the Course Blog, 25% of your final grade will be based on your blog responses and on your participation in class.
- 10% of your grade will depend on a Library Exercise you will complete during our visit to the Wells Library.