

Mr. Francis  
E3-EL

### Another Journey to the Underworld

Visions of the afterlife have populated Western art since at least the time of Homer's Odyssey. The home of the dead is also described in the Epic of Gilgamesh. As an epic set piece, the Underworld plays a prominent role in Virgil's Aeneid, Dante's Inferno, and John Milton's Paradise Lost. As a comment on morality and a statement about cosmogony, visions of a potential life after death have a compelling thematic element.

Choose an offense<sup>1</sup> to add to Dante's Inferno. Write an essay in which you discuss the offense in the context of our discussions. Describe your offense and how it is amoral.<sup>2</sup> Identify the range of actions that qualify as this offense. To what extent is it a violation of orthopraxy or a sin against orthodoxy? Place it within Dante's hierarchy of offenses: in what sense is it an example of incontinence, of violence, of fraud? Use the text of Dante's Inferno to compare and contrast your offense with those the poet considers. Finally, propose a "counter-punishment" for the offense that would be acceptable in our contemporary society and explain your rationale for it.

Offenses:

- Plagiarism
- Cheating on an exam
- Bullying
- Cutting class/Truancy
- Vandalism

Using the above as models, you may also propose your own offense--but you must get your proposal approved before you begin writing.

You will also compose a short verse (7-22 lines) in terza rima, to introduce your circle and to serve as an epigram to your essay.

Please use standard MLA format. The essay must be double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around. Please use a 12-point, Times New Roman font. All papers must have an appropriate and creative title. Length guideline: 2-3 pages. No coversheets.

You will be expected to submit a one-page proposal. You must complete a full rough draft to be peer edited in class. The proposal and your peer-edited rough draft should be attached with a staple to your final drafts.

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<sup>1</sup> L offendere "to strike against" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition)

<sup>2</sup> L a-moralis "not custom" (ibid.)