

# COLT 101g: Masterpiece and Masterminds “Literature & Thought of the West”



*Cupid & Psyche* (Jacopo Zucchi)

## Professor Vincent Farenga

introduces you to masterpieces and master thinkers of Western culture from Homer to Rousseau. Through works of literature, philosophy, religion, and history, we will put these questions to the test:

- Do human beings have a soul?
- Is the soul a reality or an illusion?
- Is it the source of life, of mind or consciousness—or all three?
- If the soul exists, is it spiritual or material or both?
- Is it immortal or mortal? If immortal, is there an afterlife?
- Does it experience reincarnation?
- Can it change its appearance and species through metamorphosis?
- Is it individual or collective--or both?
- Is it gendered or neutral?

In pursuit of the soul we will pass through epic narratives like the journeys of Odysseus and Aeneas, tragic dramas about Oedipus, Ovid’s erotic fantasies of metamorphoses from one life form into another, the folktale encounter of Cupid and Psyche, Dante’s descent into Hell, the legend of Dr. Faustus, the Princess of Clèves’ exploration of modern self-consciousness.

Original thinkers will guide us: philosophical dialogues by Plato & Socrates about the soul, rhetoric, and a truly just society; the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth on ethics & salvation; Augustine’s autobiography; intellectual supermen of the early modern age (Pico, Nostradamus, Faust, Descartes); and extend the frontiers of human knowledge by expanding the capacities of Rousseau’s pre-Romantic call for the soul’s freedom, moral autonomy, and solitude.

*Requirements: Midterm & Final Exams; short quizzes; 2 essays (5 pp. each); participation.*

**Fall 2019 • Tuesdays & Thursdays • 11:00- 12:20pm • THH 202**