

German 2252H

# The Faust Theme

GE course

Spring Semester 2014 | 3 credit units

W F 9:35 --10:55

This course will be taught in English.

**F**aust, the man who sells his soul to the devil, is one of the few mythical figures created by the modern age. His story has, for hundreds of years, been told and retold in poems, dramas, puppet plays, ballets, novels, paintings, symphonies, book illustrations, operas, and films.



Eugene Delacroix, Goethe's *Faust*

Faust's infinite attractiveness for the arts stems from the very idea he embodies, namely that of struggle. But the forces that are seen at war with each other change with every century, author, and composer. Faith and heresy, hope and nihilism, sensuality and asceticism, love and lust, art and politics – all of these battle for redemption or damnation in different versions of Faust. This course on the Faust theme will thus shed light on the different ages and mentalities that are expressed in each version. From a close study of the many facets of the Faust theme, we will trace an outline of the cultural history of Germany and examine the myth's reverberations within other cultures over the centuries.



This class approaches the Faust theme from a variety of different angles. We will consider its early roots and its first important dramatic embodiment in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* from Elizabethan times. Our main focus will of course be on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, as well as on a late 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic re-imagining of the theme: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Our approach to the theme will however also include studying a wide range of representations of the Faust theme in the arts, such as in painting, etching, film and music.

still from Friedrich Murnau's silent movie *Faust*