

CCIV/CLAS/THEA 202: GREEK DRAMA
PASSIONS AND POLITICS ON THE ATHENIAN AND MODERN STAGE
SPRING 2014
TU/TH 10:30-11:50 FISK 210

Professor Eirene Visvardi
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Downey 213
Office Hours: Monday 2:00-4:00 and by appointment

This course will introduce students to Greek drama as produced in its original setting and adapted in modern times. Our Greek material will include tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides along with selections from Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* among other texts. We will consider issues such as: What kind of artistic medium is theater when it first comes to life? What would the experience of performing and watching Greek tragedy have been like? What are the emotions of tragedy for the fictional characters and for the audience and why have we been talking about catharsis for centuries? What is the relationship between emotion and decision-making, between feeling and judging - for individuals and for groups? How does theater reflect the personal, social, religious, and political life of the Athenians? Are stage and (democratic) state in dialogue? For the last part of the course, we will turn to adaptations of Greek tragedy in the 17th-21st centuries to examine how similar questions/issues are replayed and revised in response to changing social and political circumstances such as the Second World War, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and immigration and homelessness in contemporary NYC among others.

REQUIRED TEXTS

P. Woodruff (1998) *Euripides Bacchae*. Hackett

P. Burian and A. Shapiro (2011) *The Complete Aeschylus: Volume I: The Oresteia* (Greek Tragedy in New Translations). Oxford University Press

P. Meineck and P. Woodruff (2007) *Four Tragedies: Ajax, Women of Trachis, Electra, Philoctetes*. Hackett

R. Mitchell-Boyask (2005) *Euripides Hecuba*. Focus

R. Fagles and B. Knox (2000) *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone; Oedipus the King; Oedipus at Colonus*. Penguin Classics

D. A. Svarlien (2007) *Euripides: Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus*. Hackett

P. Murray and T.S. Dorsch, (2000) *Classical Literary Criticism*, Penguin Classics

Brecht B. (2000) *Antigone*, trans. by J. Malina. Applause Theatre & Cinema Books

J. Glowacki (2010), *Antigone in New York*, Samuel French Inc.

S. Kane (2002), *Phaedra's Love* (Modern Plays Series), Bloomsbury Methuen Drama

J.-P. Sartre (1989) *No Exit and Three Other Plays*, trans. by S. Gilbert. Vintage

J.-P. Sartre (2007) *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. by C. Macomber. Yale University Press

Y. Farber (2009) *Molona*, Oberon Modern Plays.

CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS

Academic Integrity

The Honor Code applies to all activities for this class. Please visit:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/honorboard/honorcode.html>

All violations of the Code will be referred to the Honor Board.

If you have any questions regarding what the Honor Code involves, please come to discuss it with me.

Laptops

This class is meant to steep you in the language of different plays from different periods and of influential theories on the role of tragedy and theater more generally. This is easier to do when you are not being distracted by many sources of information. To help in this process, no laptop use is allowed during class time

Cell Phones

Please silence cell phones, blackberries, or other electronic devices and do not use them for texting, note-taking, or any other reason during class time.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me during the 1st week of classes, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html>

Assignments and Grading

Participation (5%) and Response Papers (15%): 20%

Midterm Exam: 35%

Final Exam (or Production): 45%

The exams will be a combination of identification of terms, short answer identification questions (on primary texts or article excerpts), and longer essay questions. For the final you will be expected to review Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Sophocles' *Antigone* from the first part of the semester. The option of Production: If you earn a grade between A+ and B+ on the midterm, you will have the option to produce a play instead of taking a final exam. In addition to the production itself, a three-page double-spaced paper will be required to present your point of view on the production and its connection to issues we discussed in class.

The response papers are 3 three-page double-spaced responses to 1) Peter Meineck's talk, recorded production of Euripides' *Heracles*, or workshop (precise dates TBA; these will be after Spring break); and 2) two responses of your choice: to one or both of the two movies we will watch - one response per movie (dates and times TBA); and/or to one of the readings (either philosophical/theoretical readings or scholarly articles). The purpose of the papers is to tie the talk/production/workshop/movies to questions we have raised in class; and to respond critically to how philosophers/playwrights/scholars view the plays and their function. You will be graded with a check minus, check, or check plus.

Even though this is primarily a lecture course, I will consistently invite your thoughtful contribution to the questions we raise. Three-five (depending on final enrollment) students will be "on call" each class. This means that you will likely be called on to answer questions about topics during that class and also contribute your own point of inquiry. On call students should have a quotation or two that he/she is able to bring up to the class with a question or thoughts.

Assignment Schedule

This schedule includes the readings to be prepared in advance for the day they are listed under. A few more readings may be added in the course of the semester. Readings with a star (*) are to be found on Moodle.

Week 1

Thursday January 23: Introduction

Week 2: Dionysus, the god of drama: drinking, ritualism, violence, sexuality and theatricality

Tuesday January 28

Euripides' *Bacchae*

Thursday January 30

Euripides' *Bacchae* and R. Schechner, *Dionysus in '69*

Zeitlin, F. "Dionysus in 69", pp. 49-76 in Section I: Dionysus and the Sex War in: E. Hall, F. Macintosh, A. Wrigley (eds.) (2004) *Dionysus since 69: Greek tragedy at the dawn of the third millennium*. [ebook available through the Wesleyan library]

Week 3: Judgment and Emotion (1); Anger and Revenge

Tuesday February 4

Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*

Thursday February 6

Aeschylus' *Agamemnon & Libation Bearers*

N. Loraux, "Measures Against Feminine Excess", pp. 9-28 in *Mothers in Mourning* (1998)*

Week 4: Judgment and Emotion (2); Anger, Justice, and the Rule of Law

Tuesday February 11

Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers & Eumenides*

Thursday February 13

Aeschylus' *Eumenides*

Thucydides, Funeral Oration*

R. Solomon, "Justice vs. Vengeance: On Law and the Satisfaction of Emotion", pp.123-148 in S.A. Bandes (1999) *The Passions of Law*.*

Week 5

Tuesday February 18: The body in Pain, Exclusion, Sympathy, and the Politics of War

Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

Thucydides, The Plague*

Thursday February 20: Back to Anger, Revenge, and Justice: War and Law at the Edges of the World; Empathy and Decision-Making

Euripides' *Hecuba*

Week 6

Tuesday February 25

Euripides' *Hecuba*

Thucydides, the Mytilenean Debate*

Sternberg, R. "The Nature of Pity", pp. 15-47 in *Pity and Power in Ancient Athens**

Thursday February 27

Friends vs. Friends: Family-Obligations and Political Dissent

Sophocles' *Antigone*

Week 7

Tuesday March 4

Sophocles' *Antigone*

Foley, H. "Sacrificial Virgins: Antigone as Moral Agent" 172-200 in *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*.*

Meineck, P. and Woodruff, P. "Hegel on *Antigone*" 214-216 in *Sophocles: Theban Plays*.*

Thursday March 6

Midterm

SPRING BREAK

Week 8: Peter Meineck Visit

Recording (to watch and discuss in class): Euripides' *Heracles* at BAM

Making the Mask Move: A Mind/Body Dissociation Workshop

Talk: *The Face of Athenian Drama: Emotion, Empathy, and the Masks of Greek Theater.*

Week 9: Different Wars: Erotic Passion, Gender Conflict, and Shame; Divine and Human (Free) Will

Tuesday April 1

Euripides' *Hippolytus*

Thursday April 3

Euripides' *Medea*

Week 10: Transition to Philosophical Approaches to Tragedy

Tuesday April 8

Euripides' *Medea*

The Ideal State and the Ideal Soul; the Centrality of Poetry

Plato, *Republic*, Bks. 2, 3 on Poetry: pp. 15-39 in P. Murray and T.S. Dorsch, *Classical Literary Criticism*

Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 4: http://www.literatureproject.com/republic/republic_14.htm *

Thursday April 10:

Mimesis, Tragedy, and their Detrimental Effect to the Human Soul

Plato, *Republic*, Bk.10 - pp. 40-56 in P. Murray and T.S. Dorsch, *Classical Literary Criticism*

A New (Aristotelian) Soul and a New Theory of Poetry

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 2:

<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/nicomachean/book2.html> *

Aristotle, *Poetics* in P. Murray and T.S. Dorsch, *Classical Literary Criticism – Selections* (1)

*****Movie Week**

Week 11: From Ancient to Modern Theory: From Catharsis to Teaching through Alienation

Tuesday April 15:

Aristotle, *Poetics* in P. Murray and T.S. Dorsch, *Classical Literary Criticism* – Selections (2)

Bertolt Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theater* – Selections (1)*

Thursday April 17: Antigone and the Second World War

Bertolt Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theater* – Selections (2)*

Bertolt Brecht's *Antigone*

Week 12

Tuesday April 22: Hippolytus and Phaedra (2): Desire, Lack of Shame, and Social Decay recast in contemporary England (and America)

Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's Love*

Thursday April 24: The *Oresteia* in the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Anger, Revenge, and Justice Recast

Video from Yale archive: http://trc.law.yale.edu/video_episodes.htm

(91 episodes, please choose one or two to view before class)

Yael Farber, *Molera* – Lecture by Professor Sonali Chakravarti

Week 13

Tuesday April 29: Back to Second World War with the *Oresteia*

Freedom, Responsibility, and Justice from an Existentialist Point of View

Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies*

Thursday May 1:

Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies*

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*

Week 14

Tuesday May 6: Closing Discussion

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, May 15: 9:00am-12:00