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CCIV 220: Homer and the Epic

Gen Ed Area Dept: HA
Prerequisites: None
Grading Mode: Graded

Course description:

In this course we will read Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in translation. These epics of war and homecoming, the first major texts of the Western literary tradition, have inspired and influenced historians, literary and visual artists, from at least the 6th century BCE to the present day. Through close reading, we will consider issues such as the heroic code; the relations between humans and gods; and the structure of Homeric society (e.g., the culture of fame; the status of women; and the importance of clan and community). We will also read the 5th century tragedies *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* by Sophocles, and a number of contemporary critical essays to help us frame our discussions.

Required texts:

Homer, *Iliad* (translator Stanley Lombardo; Hackett Publishing); Homer, *Odyssey* (translator Peter Green; Univ. of California Press, ISBN 978-0-520-29363-2); *Cambridge Companion to Homer* (ed. Robert Fowler; Cambridge U. Press); *Four Tragedies: Ajax, Women of Trachis, Electra, Philoctetes* (trans. Meineck and Woodruff; Hackett Publishing).

Schedule:

Classes meet from 10 am – 12 pm, and 2 pm – 4pm. I will be available to meet during office hours on weekdays from 1 – 2 pm, and from 4 – 5:15 pm.

Expectations:

This is not a lecture class. You should come prepared to participate in discussion, having taken extensive notes on the assigned reading.

In addition to the written assignment you will hand in on the first day of class (see below), you will write **four** papers (no fewer than 3 pages each, double-spaced, typewritten) in response to a prompt.

You should routinely check your email before and after class; I often send updates, clarifications, and reminders via email. You are responsible for reading posts on the class

Moodle page as instructed. Use of laptops or tablets in class will be restricted; students who need to take notes by any means other than writing by hand should let me know.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The Homeric epics have complicated plots and a slew of characters. As you read, summarize the events of each book. *This is especially important because we are reading at such a fast pace.*

While I don't expect you to remember, e.g., the name of every soldier who gets killed in the *Iliad* – there are so many! – you should still take notes on plot points. Also take careful notes about what you don't understand, and passages you wish to discuss in class.

You have a significant reading and writing assignment due on the first day of class. In the *Cambridge Companion to Homer* (hereafter *CCH*), read the following essays: "The *Iliad*: an unpredictable classic," by Donald Lateiner; "The Story-Teller and his audience," by Ruth Scodel; "The speeches," by Jasper Griffin; and "The epic as genre" by John Miles Foley. For each of the articles, write a one-paragraph summary of what you found to be the author's key points. Again, this is due on the first day of class. (It would also be a good idea to start reading the *Iliad*.)

Send this and every paper to me as a *Word documents only*; no Google docs or PDFs. Label them with your last name and the date.

T	1/8	In addition to the above, *Iliad*, Books 1-5.
W	1/9	*Iliad* 6-11; "Gender and Homeric Epic," N. Felson and L. Slatkin, *CCH*
TH	1/10	**First paper due. Send all papers as Word documents only.** *Iliad* 12 -16; "The Gods in the Homeric Epics," E. Kearns, *CCH.*
F	1/11	*Iliad*, 17-20; W.H. Auden, "The Shield of Achilles" [PDF]; "Manhood and Heroism," M. Clarke, *CCH*
M	1/14	*Iliad*, 21-24;.
T	1/15	*Odyssey*, 1-5; "The Odyssey and its exploration," Michael Silk, *CCH*

		Second paper due, and, yes, as a Word doc.
W	1/16	*Odyssey*, 6-11; "Land and Sacrifice in the Odyssey," Pierre Vidal-Naquet [PDF]
TH	1/17	*Odyssey*, 12-16, Robin Osborne, "Homeric Society," *CCH*
F	1/18	*Odyssey*, 16- 20
		Third paper due. I haven't changed my mind about the Word doc.
M	1/21	*Odyssey*, 21-24
T	1/22	Sophocles' *Ajax* [additional background reading TBA] and *Philoctetes*
W	1/23	**Last class; fourth paper due.** We'll use today to catch up as necessary. Read in *CCH*, "Homer and Greek Literature," Richard Hunter, and Lorna Hardwick, "Shards and suckers: Contemporary receptions of Homer"