

[Bobrick.3.Winter2020.]

**Elizabeth Bobrick**  
**Winter Term Syllabus**  
**Jan. 7 – 22, 2020**

### ***Homer's Iliad and the Tragedies of Troy***

The cultural authority of the *Iliad*, Homer's great epic of war, has endured for centuries as a foundational text of the Western literary tradition. His influence on the creators of what we now broadly conceive of as 'ancient Greece' – namely, on the Athenian playwrights, visual artists, and historians who flourished in the 5<sup>th</sup> century – was profound.

In this course, we will read the *Iliad* along with five 5<sup>th</sup> century tragedies inspired and informed by the epic. (All reading will be in translation). In class discussion and written work, we will focus on themes that are central to the *Iliad* and to the tragedies that reconceive the heroic code for their 5<sup>th</sup> century audiences (a majority of whom were combat veterans or orphans of war). These themes include but are not limited to the culture of honor and dishonor (both divine and human); the effects of war on women, regardless of social status; and how war instigates the collapse of community among the victors as well as the defeated. Our examination of the literature of mythological societies debilitated by violence may create a lens through which to consider the effects of rage and resistance in our own society.

#### **Reading and required texts:**

The bulk of our reading will be the *Iliad* and the tragedies – Sophocles' *Ajax*, Euripides', *Women of Troy* and *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. We will also read a number of contemporary scholarly essays to help us frame and deepen our discussion and written work.

Required texts: Homer, *Iliad* (translator, Stanley Lombardo); Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*; Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* and *Trojan Women* (translations TBA). These will be available through RJ Julia, or you may order them yourself. Information about the specific translations required will be sent to students after registration.

In addition, chapters from e-books (e.g. *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*), and links to scholarly articles posted on the class Moodle are also required reading. Throughout the semester, you will be assigned one, two or three of these scholarly articles per week, depending on length. (For example, see below, 1/8 assignment.) The rest of the readings and the dates when they are due will be announced and posted on Moodle once the semester has begun.

### **Daily schedule and attendance**

Class will meet for four hours, Monday - Friday, from 10am - 12pm, and 2pm - 4pm. I will be available for office hours after 4 pm and by appointment.

In case inclement weather prevents me from driving to campus, or from starting class on time, missed class(es) or class time will be rescheduled, either for the weekend or by meeting for additional time during the week. For this reason, it's not a good idea to make unalterable plans for being away from campus on weekends.

Except in cases of illness, emergency, or special permission, daily class attendance *and timely arrival* are required. If you wish, you may inform me, in confidence, or your class dean, of any chronic medical conditions that may affect your attendance and/or your ability to complete assignments on time. Please do so prior to the beginning of class so that we can put a plan in place for you to catch up on work if needed.

**If you must miss class(es) because of an extended illness or an emergency, you are required to notify your class dean.**

### **Papers:**

Writing assignments will focus on developing the skills of close reading, i.e., critical analysis focusing on significant details and patterns in the text(s), and their relationship to each other and to major thematic concerns. We will practice close reading by working in small groups throughout the course.

You will write **three** papers total, 4-5 pages (1000-1250 words), 1 inch margins, double-spaced, 12 point font. The first two will be in response to a prompt; the third paper will be on a topic of your choice after consultation with me. You will post these to the class Moodle as directed.

### **Moodle Posts**

Before every class, you will be responsible for submitting on Moodle a discussion topic for the next day's reading, either a question or an observation. Your posts should be thoughtfully composed to show the care with which you are reading. We will do our best within the limitations of time to discuss at least some of them. Posts are to be submitted to the designated forum before midnight the day before each class. See **Preparing for the first day of class (and beyond)** below, under the heading **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**.

At the end of the semester, I will ask you to write a reflection about the class in response to my questions. These are not be graded or required, and may be anonymous if you wish. I get more helpful information from them than I tend to do from the official student evaluations.

### **Grades:**

**Class participation counts for 60% of your grade; written work counts for 40%.**

**What makes for successful class participation?** Your contributions to class should make it clear that you have read the assignments carefully. In addition, you are asked to post thoughtful and pertinent comments/questions daily on Moodle; make positive contributions to class discussion by listening carefully to others and building on their comments; allow others to speak rather than dominating conversation, if so requested; or work towards contributing to discussion, even if you typically find it challenging to do so.

**How is written work evaluated?** Your ideas should be supported fully by the text; if you are using secondary material, you should not use it as a substitute for your argument; your writing should be clear (i.e., the reader does not have to puzzle over your meaning); the paper as a whole should be well-organized, free of redundant statements, grammatical and spelling errors, and should respond fully to the prompt(s), when applicable; there should be no 'filler' to help you meet the required word length (e.g., extended plot summary; introductory or concluding paragraphs consisting mainly of generalities); and your paper should show evidence of original thought.

I expect your skills in critical analysis, both in discussion and written work, to develop and improve from the beginning of the semester to the end; therefore, I take your progress into account when arriving at a final grade.

#### **Use of electronics in class:**

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 meet with Dean Laura Patey in the Office of Accessibility for these and any other accessibility issues.* Use of cell phones during class is absolutely prohibited.

#### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

##### **You will be expected to routinely check your email before and after class.**

Email is the only way I have to communicate with you when we aren't in class. If I make a change to the assignment of any kind – which I will try to do as infrequently as possible – or cancel class due to weather, reading your email is the only way you have to find out about it. In addition, I will occasionally post a follow-up to our discussion, and I expect you to have read it.

##### **Preparing for the first day of class (and beyond):**

**For our first class meeting, everyone is required to post a response to the following on the class Moodle forum:**

- (1) What did you find to be the most important and/or intriguing passages in the first reading assignment, both in the text and the critical essays assigned? What themes do you see developing in the first three books of the *Iliad*?
- (2) What questions or observations do you have about the critical essays?

**Reading to be completed before the first class meeting:** The introduction to our translation of the *Iliad*; *Iliad*, Bks. 1 – 3; read the introduction to Lombardo’s translation of the *Iliad*, by Sheila Murnaghan; “The *Iliad*: an unpredictable classic,” by Donald Lateiner; and “The Gods in the Homeric epics,” by Emily Kearns. The latter two will be made available to you as PDFs.

**1/7:** *Iliad* Bks. 1-3. In addition to discussing the assignment outlined for the first day above, we will discuss key terms for discussion, and the art of translation.

**1/8:** Bks. 4-7; “The Divided World of *Iliad* VI,” Marilyn Arthur.

**1/9:** Bks. 8-11

**1/10:** Bks. 12-15

**[Saturday 1/11: Paper #1 due by midnight]**

**1/13:** Bks. 16-19

**1/14:** Bks. 20-22

**1/15:** Bks. 23-24

**1/16:** Reading(s) on Athenian tragedy and the Peloponnesian War, TBA; Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*

**1/17:** Sophocles’ *Ajax*; Euripides, *Women of Troy*;

**[Saturday 1/18: Paper #2 due by midnight/ Sign-up sheet for individual consultations about papers posted on Moodle]**

**1/20:** Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*; Individual consultations about paper topics

**1/21:** Individual consultations about paper topics

**1/22: Paper #3 due – post on Moodle by**

**Final reflection due (not graded – in response to prompts)**