Homer's *Iliad* and the Tragedies of Troy: War and its Aftermath

Please note: readings and assignments will be due during winter break, prior to arriving on campus for Winter Session. Please visit the Winter Session website for the full syllabus – http://www.wesleyan.edu/wintersession

**Course description:**
The *Iliad*, Homer’s great epic of war, had a profound influence on the creators of what we now broadly conceive of as ancient Greek culture. Athenian playwrights, visual artists, and even its first historians were inspired and informed by Homer’s harrowing depiction of the effects of war on the victorious and the defeated alike.

In this course, we will read the *Iliad* along with five 5th century tragedies populated by the victorious warriors and defeated women of the Trojan War. (All reading will be in translation). We will examine the social codes of Homeric society in the *Iliad*, and the ways in which tragic playwrights re-presented and reassessed the Homeric hero for their audiences -- a majority of whom were soldiers, combat veterans or orphans of war. In these ancient stories of social bonds destroyed by violence, we may find a lens through which to examine issues of rage and the desire for restitution in our own society.

**Reading and required texts:**
The bulk of our reading will be the *Iliad* and the tragedies – Sophocles’ *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, 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* (trans. Meineck and Woodruff); Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (trans. TBA); and a course packet of scholarly articles and relevant excerpts from the works of Herodotus and Thucydides, historians of the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, respectively. Additional PDFs or links to articles may be posted on Moodle.

**Daily schedule and attendance:**
Class will meet for four hours daily, from 10am – 12pm, and 2pm – 4pm. I will hold office hours on a regular basis, TBA, and by appointment as needed.
In case inclement weather prevents me from getting to campus, or from starting class on time, missed class(es) or class time will be rescheduled to a Saturday or Sunday. 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, of any chronic medical conditions that may affect your attendance and/or your ability to complete assignments in a timely manner. 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.

**Written work:**
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), 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 (3-4 pages each, double-spaced, typewritten) in response to a prompt, and a final paper on a topic of your choice, in consultation with me (no less than 5 pages, as above). I will also ask you to write a reflection about your experience of the class in response to my questions; this will not be graded.

**Grades:**

Criteria for your final grade are as follows: participation in class discussion (see below)*: 40%;

Your preparation for class as evidenced in your Moodle post: 20%

Your written work: 40%

I expect that your skills in critical analysis as evidenced 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.

*Class discussion: Successful class discussion depends on your preparation, as evidenced in your ability to support your contributions with the text; your willingness to listen to and build on your classmates’ contributions as opposed to simply stating your point of view and/or interpretation of the text, regardless of the direction of discussion; your willingness to let others speak rather than dominating conversation, if so requested; and your willingness to work on contributing to discussion even if you typically find it challenging to do so.

**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 strictly prohibited.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

You will be expected to **routinely check your email before and after class.** This is how I communicate with you when we aren’t in class, and if I make a change of any kind – which I will try to limit – reading your email is the only way you will know. In addition, I will occasionally post a follow-up to our discussion.

**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:

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*?

Please do not post your responses as a document. Your post should be available for everyone to read. You may respond to others’ posts as well.

**1/7: Day 1 – to be completed before the first class meeting:**

*Iliad*, Bks. 1 – 3; and 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 either in the course packet or as PDFs.

**1/8 – 1/22:**

A detailed schedule of reading and writing assignments for the rest of the *Iliad* and for Sophocles’ *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, Euripides’ *Women of Troy* and *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, and Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* will be sent out to students before the end of the Fall semester ’19.