

AMHERST COLLEGE CLASSICS DEPARTMENT COURSES

CLAS 111 / SWAG 110

The Bodies of Tragedy

Since its invention in Athens, tragic drama has focused upward on the great or mighty as they fall but also outward on the disempowered as they are for once given public voice: women, slaves, and barbarians. The cosmic forces of fate and the gods play out along social fault lines with conflicting viewpoints. We look to a "hero," but, changing his mask, a Greek actor could go from god to wife to peasant. This multiplicity complicates itself in modern stagings and films as they cast actors with specific gender and racial identities. Female actors now have indisputable claim on the once-male roles of Antigone, Cassandra, Medea, and Electra, as they do on Shakespeare's Cleopatra. The dialects of tragic performance are multiple: translationese, Shakespeare, and Spanglish.

In this course we start with the formation of Hellenic identity and notions of heroism in Homer's *Iliad* and then look at the performance of plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare in their historical context, as well as at adaptations in film and dance. We also consider remakings of the myths within modern realities, including *Antigone in Ferguson*; Rita Dove's *The Darker Face of the Earth* (Oedipus); and Luis Alfaro's *Mojada* (Medea), *Electricidad* (Electra), and *Oedipus El Rey*. For the bodies of comedy, we'll look at Spike Lee's recasting of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* in *Chi Raq*.

The course aims to give students independent command of influential plays, as well as insight into the aesthetics and politics of putting contemporary bodies into classic roles. We consider and apply core concepts relating to the representation of gender, race, and sexuality. Three class hours per week.

Limited to 30 students.

CLAS 114

Classics for All

Ancient Greeks and Romans thought about the world and its inhabitants in racialized categories. Climate, diet, bloodlines, and other factors supposedly made some peoples inherently superior and others immutably inferior. The writings and assumptions behind this racialized thinking were taken up and used by western intellectuals from the Renaissance forward, becoming a repository of ideas that could continually be drawn from by those engaged in forming racist ideologies, regimes, and policies in the twentieth century and even now. This seminar explores the entanglement of ancient racialized thinking and modern expressions of racism as well as ways Classics can and has been reimaged for racial justice and its intersections.

Three class hours per week.

CLAS 121

Greek Myth and Religion

A survey of the gods and heroes of ancient Greece, their representation in Greek art and literature, and the sanctuaries and rituals in which these divine figures were worshiped. We will give particular attention to myths that live on in Western art and literature, in order to become familiar with the stories which were part of the repertory of later artists and authors. Three class hours per week.

Limited to 75 students.

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CLAS 123 / SWAG 123

Greek Civilization

We read in English the major authors from Homer in the 8th century BCE to Plato in the 4th century in order to trace the emergence of epic, lyric poetry, tragedy, comedy, history, and philosophy. How did the Greek enlightenment, and through it Western culture, emerge from a few generations of people moving around a rocky archipelago? How did folklore and myth develop into various forms of “rationality”: science, history, and philosophy? What are the implications of male control over public and private life and the written record? What can be inferred about ancient women if they cannot speak for themselves in the texts? How does slavery work in a culture when it is based on capture rather than racial difference? What do we hear when people in bondage are given voice in epic and drama? Other authors include Sappho, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, and Thucydides. The course seeks to develop the skills of close reading and persuasive argumentation.

The requirements are three essays, the first ungraded, as well as two take-home, open book tests with time and word limits. Three class hours per week.

CLAS 124

Roman Civilization

A study of Roman civilization from its origins to the Empire, with emphasis on major Roman writers. The material will be interpreted in the light of Roman influence upon later Western civilization. The reading will be almost entirely from Latin literature, but no knowledge of the ancient language is required. The course also prominently addresses race and ethnicity in the ancient world and its reception in the post-classical era. Three class hours per week.

Limited to 50 students.

CLAS 128

Making Classics: Roman Literature in Translation

What makes a text a classic? Why do certain texts leave a mark, being reread and adapted over and over, but others not so much? This course is an atypical introduction to Roman literary history that pairs better- and lesser-known representatives of Rome’s major literary genres, with an eye to processes of reception and canon formation. In other words: an opportunity to (re)discover famous masterpieces as well as forgotten misfits of Roman literature. Students will also consider modern reinterpretations of some of these texts and try their hand at updating them for a contemporary audience. Topics of discussion will include the role of chance in transmission; translation in and of Roman literature; the connection of literature to empire; and the gendered and ethnic identities of authors. Authors may include Virgil and Silius Italicus (epic), Virgil and Calpurnius Siculus (pastoral), Lucretius and Manilius (didactic), Livy and the *Historia Augusta* (historiography), Vitruvius and Frontinus (technical literature), Catullus and Sulpicia (lyric), Juvenal and ‘the Other Sulpicia’ (satire).

Three class hours per week.

CLAS 132

Greek History

A chronological survey of ancient Greece from the Bronze Age to the age of Alexander, with attention to the range of Greek political systems and religious life in each historic period, and to the wars that punctuated and to a large extent defined the different phases of Greek history. We will focus on primary sources, including a variety of texts as well as the fundamental histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, and also the archaeological evidence of monuments and other physical remains that contribute to our understanding of the Greeks, their borrowings from neighboring cultures, and their legacy to the modern world. Three class hours per week.

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CLAS 133

Comedy and Free Speech Throughout Ancient Greek History

An introduction to the Ancient Greek world through the lens (or funhouse mirror) of comedy and free expression. Humorous writing is unusually suited to give us access to otherwise underlit areas of Greek history and culture. Through its transgressions of norms and taboos, comedy makes the contours of these often unspoken rules visible to us. In its rejection of literary decorum, comedy revels in the grittiness of everyday life and explores marginalized identities: of women, the enslaved, foreigners, prostitutes, and so on. And with its ambivalent relation to (people in) power – sometimes subversive, sometimes conservative – comedy forces us to interrogate the changing social structures and political institutions of the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Imperial Greek world. Even as the course draws on these frank, humorous accounts of Ancient Greek life, it also calls into question comedy’s self-image as a form of absolute free speech (“parrhesia”), a core democratic value in both Greek times and our own. What does it mean to speak freely under different kinds of regimes? Does comedy speak truth to power, or does it just reiterate received truths about ethnicity, gender, class, and slavery?

Selections from Homer, Aesop, Archilochus and Hipponax, Aristophanes, Demosthenes and Aeschines, Hegemon and Matro, The Battle of Frogs and Mice, Theocritus, Machon and Herondas, Diogenes Laërtius, the Laughter-Lover, the Palatine Anthology, Julian the Apostate, and – perhaps antiquity’s greatest satirist – Lucian. Three class hours per week.

CLAS 134

Archaeology of Greece

Excavations in Greece continue to uncover a rich variety of material remains that are altering and improving our understanding of ancient Greek life. By tracing the architecture, sculpture and other finds from major sanctuaries, habitations, and burial places, this course will explore the ways in which archaeological evidence illuminates economic, political, philosophical, and religious developments in Greece from the Bronze Age to the Hellenistic Period. Three class hours per week.

CLAS 136

History of Rome

This course examines the political and social systems and struggles that marked Rome's growth from a small city-state to a world empire. Through various sources (Roman works in translation and material evidence) we will focus on the development of Roman government and its transformation into an empire. We will also study several cultural, intellectual, and social aspects, including the impact of Christianity on the Roman Empire.

Three class hours per week.

Limited to 50 students.

CLAS 217 / LJST 217

Thinking Law with Shakespeare and Seneca

Shakespeare’s texts put into play an intricate set of juridical terms and forms. The premise of this course is that we can retrieve from this “putting into play” a unique way of thinking about modern juridical order at the moment of its inception, as well as its roots in Roman law. Through the close reading of four plays by Shakespeare and his influential predecessor, the Roman playwright Seneca, we will trace the composition of some of the most fundamental problems of modern Anglophone jurisprudence (such as person and impersonation, inheritance and usurpation, contract and oath, tyranny and sovereignty, pardon and mercy, matrimony and patrimony, civil war and empire, and marriage and divorce). The aim of this inquiry will not be to apply jurisprudence to Shakespeare and Seneca’s texts. Nor will it be to use their texts to humanize a legal training that otherwise would risk remaining sterile and unfeeling. Nor, finally, will it be either to historicize their texts (limiting them to a particular place and time) or else to universalize those texts

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(treating them as the exemplar for humanity as such). It will be to treat Shakespeare and Seneca's texts as an occasion to rethink the genesis and basis of the ancient Roman and modern Anglophone jurisprudence that we inherit today in a specifically globalized form.

CLAS 219

Posthumanist Perspectives in/on Classical Literature

Demigods. Monsters. Statues transformed into people and people transformed into birds, rivers and trees. Greek and Roman mythology, with its bestial transgressions and divine interventions, constantly roughs up the boundaries of the "human." It challenges our conceptual distinctions between man and animal, animal and environment, living and inanimate. In short, it implicates a viewpoint that we might call posthumanist. And mythological literature is not alone in this. The animal choruses of Athenian comedy, historical narratives of Roman terraformation, Plato's critique of writing and the technology of memory are just some examples of how Greek and Roman literature, despite its antiquity – and maybe even because of its antiquity – addresses a variety of posthumanist concerns, from speciesism and animal ethics, to ecocriticism, to cyborg life. The goal of this course is to become familiar with some foundational works of Greek and Roman literature and art, as well as with some important recurring themes in the still-emerging field of posthumanist studies. Our survey of primary texts will include the epic poetry of Homer, Vergil and Ovid; Attic tragedy and comedy; Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, historiography and pastoral poetry. Supplementary readings will be drawn from posthumanist scholars, such as Haraway and Wolfe, as well as from philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari. We will consider not only how ancient art is illuminated by these theoretical perspectives, but also, conversely, how it furnishes points of reference for thinking about the present.

Three class hours per week.

ARHA 285 / CLAS 285 / EUST 285

Roma Redux: The Eternal City Across Time

From its legendary origins in the eighth century BCE, through its political framing as a republic, to its global dominion as an empire and its subsequent Renaissance revival as the center of a Christian empire, Rome was a seat of unmistakable political and cultural power. Its art and architecture, the literature and oratory of its leaders, its devotion to protective deities, and its styles of governance became the model for countless nations who sought to imitate, adopt and surpass Rome's authority. The continuity and change visible in the rich material composing the city itself – temples, churches, sculpture, painting, fountains, tombs, palaces, baths, streets, walls, fora and piazzas – will be the subject of the class. Meeting twice a week, classes will alternate between examining the philosophy, literature, and historical documents of a period and analyzing selected examples of the art and architecture where the daily life of Romans – from soldiers, citizens and emperors, to women, Jews, and the enslaved – took place. The class will culminate in a trip to the Eternal City for two weeks in January 2024, sponsored by the Office of the Provost.

The class (limited to 18) will live in Rome and make daily excursions to places studied in the course – e.g., the Roman forum, the remains of the imperial palace on the Palatine, the Colosseum, aqueducts, medieval, Renaissance and Baroque churches, the Vatican Palace, St. Peter's, and more. Students will prepare presentations in situ related to the papers they have written earlier in class. Three class hours per week.

Not open to first-year students. Admission with the consent of the instructor.

CLAS 420 / SWAG 420

Queer Antiquities: Global Perspectives

While the gender binary and the concept of homo- and heterosexuality are nineteenth-century European and colonial constructs, the literature and art of ancient Greece and Rome abound with representations of gender and sexuality that defy both ancient and modern norms. At a time when queer and trans identities are facing multiple political threats, it feels ever more urgent to remember that queer people have always existed: both within and outside the confines of the so-called "classical" world. In this course, we will focus on ancient Greek, Roman, Indian, Aztec and Yoruba literature, art and myths and their modern reception in the work of artists such as Audre Lorde, Ocean Vuong, Federico Fellini and Gloria Anzaldúa. We will reflect on the lives of people inhabiting different gender identities, but also of different social classes and racial identities, privileging an intersectional approach to ancient queerness. Students

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will learn how to conduct interdisciplinary work, and reflect on what modern queer authors and theories can bring to the study of antiquity and vice versa. While a basic knowledge of concepts of gender, race, class, sexual orientation and disability as socially constructed categories is expected, as are some critical thinking and writing skills, engagement and curiosity will always be prioritized. We will deepen our analytical and research skills, as well as gain familiarity with crip theory, queer critique of color, Black feminist thought and trans studies. This course will include visits to museums and archives, where students will be asked to individuate the gaps in collecting and curatorial practices. The assignments will revolve around addressing those gaps with a variety of methods: zine-making, original research papers or creative projects in multiple media.

Three class hours per week. Limited to 20 students.

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GREE 111

Introduction to the Greek Language

Offered both fall and spring, this course prepares students in one term to read Plato, Greek tragedy, Homer, and other Greek literary, historical, and philosophical texts in the original and also provides sufficient competence to read New Testament Greek. Three class hours per week.

In the Fall semester, this course is normally followed by GREE 212 and then GREE 215 or 217. In the Spring semester, this course is normally followed by GREE 215 or 217 and then GREE 212 or 318.

GREE 212

Plato's Apology

An introduction to Greek literature through a close reading of the *Apology* and selected other works of Attic prose of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Additional readings in translation. Three class hours per week. Additional tutorial or exam sessions may be scheduled as necessary.

Requisite: GREE 111 or equivalent.

GREE 215

An Introduction to Greek Tragedy

An introduction to Greek tragedy as a literary and ritual form through a close reading of one play. We will read the *Bacchae* of Euripides, with attention to poetic language, dramatic technique, and ritual context. This course aims to establish reading proficiency in Greek, with review of forms and syntax as needed. Three class hours per week.

Requisite: GREE 111 or equivalent.

GREE 217

New Testament

This course offers an introduction to New Testament Greek. We will read selections from the Gospels and Epistles and will discuss the social and philosophical context as well as the content of the texts. Three class hours per week.

Requisite: GREE 111 or equivalent.

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GREE 318

An Introduction to Greek Epic

A reading of selected passages from the *Iliad* with attention to the poem's structure and recurrent themes as well as to the society it reflects. Three class hours per week.

Requisite: GREE 212, 215, 217 or equivalent, or consent of the instructor.

GREE 441

Advanced Readings in Greek Literature I

The authors read in GREE 441 and 442 vary from year to year, but as a general practice are chosen from a list including Homer, choral and lyric poetry, historians, tragedians, and Plato, depending upon the interests and needs of the students. GREE 441 and 442 may be elected any number of times by a student, providing only that the topic is not the same.

Requisite: A minimum of three courses numbered GREE 111 to 318 or consent of the instructor.

GREE 442

Advanced Readings in Greek Literature II

See course description for GREE 441. Course texts for GREE 442 TBD. Three class hours per week. Seminar course.

Requisite: A minimum of three courses numbered GREE 111 to 318 or consent of the instructor.

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LATI 111

An Introduction to Latin Language and Literature

This course prepares students to read classical Latin. No prior knowledge of Latin is required. Three class hours per week.

LATI 202

Intermediate Latin: Introduction to Literature

This course aims at establishing reading proficiency in Latin. Forms and syntax will be reviewed throughout the semester. We will read selections TBA. Three class hours per week.

Requisite: LATI 111 or equivalent.

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LATI 215

Latin Literature: Catullus and the Lyric Spirit

This course will examine Catullus's poetic technique, as well as his place in the literary history of Rome. Extensive reading of Catullus in Latin, together with other lyric poets of Greece and Rome in English. Three class hours per week.

Requisite: LATI 202 or equivalent.

LATI 316

Latin Literature in the Augustan Age

An introduction to the literature and culture of Augustan Rome through a close reading of selections from Vergil, Horace and the Roman love elegy. Three class hours per week.

Requisite: LATI 202, 215 or equivalent.

LATI 441

Advanced Readings in Latin Literature I

The authors read in LATI 441 and 442 vary from year to year. Both 441 and 442 may be repeated for credit, provided that the topic is not the same. Three class hours per week. Seminar course.

Requisite: LATI 215 or 316 or equivalent.

LATI 442

Advanced Readings in Latin Literature II

See course description for LATI 441. Course texts for LATI 442 TBD. Three class hours per week. Seminar course.

Requisite: LATI 215, 316, 441 or equivalent.

CLAS 390 / GREE 390 / LATI 390 and CLAS 490 / GREE 490 / LATI 490

Special Topics

Independent reading course.

Fall and spring semesters.

CLAS 498 / GREE 498 / LATI 498 and CLAS 499 / GREE 499 / LATI 499

Senior Honors

Thesis work.

Fall and spring semesters.