

Classics/WAGS 38: Greek Drama

Rick Griffiths

Earth Sciences 306, 542-5355

FTGRIFFITHS@AMHERST.EDU



Prologue: The Battle of the Sexes

- Sept. 8 Introduction
Sept. 9 Euripides' *Medea* (429 BCE)

One: The Trojan War from Epic to Tragedy

- Sept. 14 Sophocles, *Philoctetes* (409 BCE)
Sept. 16 Homer, *Iliad* (8th or 7th century BCE), Book 1; Knox's intro., pp. 38-45
Sept. 21 *Iliad*, Books 2 and 3; Intro., pp. 30-38
Sept. 23 *Iliad*, Books 6, 9, and 12 (verses 359-381)
Sept. 28 Sophocles, *Ajax* (?440s BCE) (also section at 8:00 PM for the holiday)
Sept. 29 (Tues.) Screening of production of *Ajax* (not online); 4:00 and 7:30 PM, Media Center
Sept. 30 *Iliad*, Books 11 (verses 717-1015), 16, 18, and 19
Oct. 5 *Iliad*, Books 20, 21, and 22
Oct. 7 *Iliad*, Books 23 and 24; Intro., pp. 45-64
Oct. 7 – 10 editorial conferences
Oct. 11: 1st essay (ungraded) due electronically by 12:00 noon

Classics / WAGS 38: Greek Drama

Two: Containing the Furies: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (458 BCE)

Oct. 14 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (458 BCE); Foley intro., pp. vi - xvii

Oct. 19 Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*; Foley intro. pp. xvii - xl

Oct. 21 Sophocles, *Electra* (?413 BCE)

Oct. 26 Aeschylus, *The Furies*

Oct. 28 Euripides, *Electra* (ca. 415 BCE)
View online Michael Cacoyannis (dir.), "Electra" (1961)

Oct. 28 – 31 editorial conferences

Nov. 1: 2nd essay due electronically by 12:00 noon

Three: Oedipus Complexly

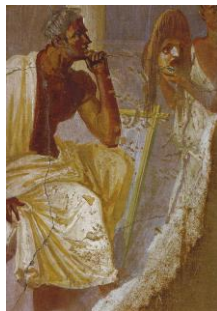
Nov. 2 Sophocles, *Antigone* (?442 BCE)
Edith Hall, "The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy," pp. 93-110 (reserve/online).

Nov. 4 Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (?430-428 BCE)
Edith Hall, "The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy," pp. 110-126
View online Martha Graham, "Night Journey" (1947)

Nov. 9: Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* (401 BCE, produced posthumously)

Nov. 11 Aristotle, *Poetics* (text in course packet)
View online "Oedipus Rex," music by Igor Stravinsky, libretto by Jean Cocteau,
Directed by Julie Taymor (1992)

Nov. 16 Rita Dove, *The Darker Face of the Earth* (1994)



Four: Tragicomedies: Euripides and Aristophanes

- Nov. 18 Euripides, *Hippolytus* (428 BCE)
Nov. 18-20 essay conferences
Nov. 21: 3rd essay due electronically by 5:00 PM
- Nov. 30 Aristophanes, *The Acharnians* (425 BCE); Sommerstein intro., pp. 9-17
- Dec. 2 Aristophanes, *The Clouds* (423 BCE); intro., pp. 17-35
Euripides, *Ion* (?408 BCE)
- Dec. 7 Euripides, *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE)
View online Michael Cacoyannis (dir.), "The Trojan Women" (1971)
- Dec. 9 Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (411 BCE)
Euripides, *Alcestis* (438 BCE)
- Dec. 14 Euripides, *The Bacchae* (pre-406 BCE, produced posthumously)
Dec. 14-18 editorial conferences
Dec. 19: 4th essay due electronically by 5:00 PM

Requirements: Four essays of 1250-1500 words (ca. 5-6 pages), with editorial conferences as the essays are being written. Faithful attendance and productive participation as contributor and listener, such that your essays can go forward from where class discussion leaves off.

Goals and Methods: The course aims to develop active mastery of the central texts of Attic Tragedy and Old Comedy and the capacity to advance understanding of them through analytical prose.

The reading consists of the plays in translation, as well as selections from Homer's *Iliad*. After a preliminary reading of the texts, you are asked to look at the reading notes in the course notebook, which provide background on historical background, Athenian theater production, and current theoretical issues, including the construction and representation of gender roles. We will also view filmed versions of some tragedies. Secondary literature is not required, other than introductions to the various assigned translations and one article (Hall, "Sociology" for Nov. 2 and 4). The reading notes contain references to readings on a range of topics (online and on reserve), as well as to central web sites on Attic drama and on women in antiquity.

The four essays should provide original interpretation that goes beyond class discussion. Assignment sheets with suggested topic areas will be distributed more than week before the deadline, and you should sign up for editorial conferences in the days before the deadline. These conferences work best if the writer sends in advance a whole or partial rough draft. Anonymous examples of writing from past years and from this year will also be distributed. Analysis in the essays may range from straightforward interpretation to theoretical approaches and (with close consultation) creative work on staging.

Academic Honesty: Please review the webpage on Academic Honesty <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/acadhonesty>, including Amherst's Statement on Intellectual Responsibility, and the page on academic honesty on the Classics / WAGS 38 site. The essay assignments do not require or encourage the use of secondary sources, and any sources used (other than the reading notes and class discussions) should be cited. When in doubt, please ask.

Texts: The reading notes are available at the Classics Department office, 15 Grosvenor House.

The following required texts are available at Amherst Bookstore. Please use only these translations:

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, trans. P. Meineck (Hackett) 0-87220-390-5
Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, *The Acharnians*, *The Clouds*, trans. A. Sommerstein (Penguin)
0-14044287-1
Euripides, *Euripides I* (Chicago)* 0-22630780-8
_____, *Euripides III* (Chicago)* 0-22630782-4
_____, *Euripides V* (Chicago)* 0-22630784-0
Homer, *Iliad*, trans. R. Fagles (Penguin) 0-14027536-3
Sophocles, *Sophocles I* (Chicago)* 0-22630792-1
_____, *Sophocles II* (Chicago)*0-22630786-7

*"The Complete Greek Tragedies" (Chicago) are edited by D. Grene and R. Lattimore.

Rita Dove, *The Darker Face of the Earth* (1994) (Story Line Press) 9780934257749 is out-of-print and needs to be ordered online.

Chronology:

525/4? Birth of Aeschylus

496/5? Birth of Sophocles

490 First Persian invasion: Battle of Marathon

486 Comic drama introduced at the City Dionysia

484 Aeschylus' first victory in dramatic contest

c. 480 Birth of Euripides

480 Second Persian invasion: Battles of Artemesium, Thermopylae, Salamis

479 Battle of Plataea

478 Formation of the Delian League (defensive alliance against the Persians)

c. 470 Birth of Socrates

468 Sophocles' first victory in dramatic contest, with *Triptolemus* (lost)

462 Ephialtes' reform of the Areopagus Council
Alliance of Athens with Argos

461 Ephialtes' assassination

458 Aeschylus' *Oresteia* wins first prize

456 Death of Aeschylus

455 Euripides' first entry in dramatic contest, with *Peliades* (lost)

449 Institution of prize for best tragic actor

c. 445 Birth of Aristophanes

442? Sophocles' *Antigone*

441 Euripides' first victory in dramatic competition

431 Euripides' *Medea* wins third prize.

431-404 Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta

430 Plague breaks out in Athens

430-28? Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* wins second prize

429 Death of Pericles

c. 429 Birth of Plato

428 Euripides' *Hippolytus* (revised version) wins first prize

425 Aristophanes' *Acharnians*

423 Aristophanes' *Clouds*

pre-415 Euripides' *Electra*

415–13 Athenian expedition to Sicily

- 415 Euripides' *Trojan Woman* wins second prize.
- c. 413 ?Sophocles' *Electra*
- 411 Overthrow of democracy by oligarchs (Revolution of the 400)
Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*
- 409 Sophocles' *Philoctetes* wins first prize
- 406/5 Death of Euripides
Death of Sophocles
- after-406 Euripides' *Bacchae* wins first prize posthumously

404 Peace between Athens and Sparta; 30 Tyrants rule Athens

- 403 Civil war in Athens; restoration of democracy
- 401 Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (posthumous)
- 399 Death of Socrates
- c. 387 Plato starts Academy
- 384 Birth of Aristotle
- 347 Death of Plato
- 322 Death of Aristotle; *Poetics* ca. 320s.

vic. = first places in the tragic competition

525 B.C.E. 500 475 450 425 400

490 480/79 Persian War 431 ← Pelop. War → 404

?525 ← **Aeschylus** → d. 456
(13 *vic.*) (*Oresteia* 458)

496? ← **Sophocles** → d. 406
(123 plays; 24 *vic* [=96 plays])
Treatise: "On the Chorus"

480s ← **Euripides** → d. 406
(96 plays; 3 *vic.* + 1 *vic.* posthumously for *The Bacchae*)
(1st produced 455) (1st *vic.* 441)

N.b. how often Euripides was produced and how rarely he won, starting with a gap of 14 years between his first production and first victory.

Apocryphal: "I present men as they ought to be, Euripides presents them as they are." – Sophocles, quoted by Aristotle in the *Poetics* (1460b 33ff.

Classics / WAGS 38: Greek Drama

Terms:

- agōn* Debate between two actors (spoken).
- amoibaion* Lyric exchange between actor and chorus (sung).
- episode* Section of play (“scene”) between *stasima* (choral odes)
- eisodos* (or *parodos*) Entryways to the *orchestra*.
- exodos* Departure speech of the chorus (recited).
- kommos* (“Beating”) Ritual lament of actor and chorus (sung, or sung and recited).
- orchēstra* Dancing ground.
- parodos* Entrance speech of the chorus (recited).
- proskēnion* Elevated space in front of *skēnē*.
- protagonist* First actor (sim. *deuteragonist*, second actor, and *tritagonist*, third actor).
- rhēsis* Extended speech by actor (spoken).
- skēnē* Stage building, usually representing a palace.
- stasimon* Choral ode (plural: *stasima*).
- stichomythia* Line-for-line interchange (sim. *distichomythia*, two-line) (spoken).
- strophe* “Turn,” meaning a stanza in lyrics, whose meter and (presumably) choreography would be repeated in the *antistrophe* (i.e., “turn” and “counter-turn”), followed by an *epode* (epilogue). Not noted in all translations.
- theatron* Viewing area for audience.

