

Level: undergraduate upper division  
Focus: history  
System: semester  
Class size: 15-25

# The Classical Period: Theaters of Ancient Greece and Rome

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**Office: TD-W 2516**  
**Office Hours: TBD**

## **Course Intro:**

Welcome to The Classical Period: Theaters of Ancient Greece and Rome! In this course, we will be covering the history and dramatic literature of various performance traditions in the ancient world, starting with the singer-storyteller tradition that gave rise to Homer and ending with the unscripted Roman entertainments that thrived alongside scripted theater. Throughout the course and in a special section at the end, we will also consider the ways in which classical theater has been influential in the development of later theatrical styles in Europe and around the world.

The format of this course is roughly chronological, looking at each performance tradition in terms of its antecedents. Each week of the semester focuses on one time period, theatrical tradition, or playwright, and builds upon knowledge gained in the previous weeks. Most weeks, students will be expected to read two plays and one article (though reading loads are lighter during weeks that papers are due). Some weeks contain no plays, in which case we will be reading several articles. Over the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for writing two papers, taking the midterm and final examinations, and contributing to class discussions every week.

## **Means of Assessment:**

The grade breakdown for this course is as follows:

15% Paper 1  
15% Paper 2  
15% Midterm Exam  
25% Final Exam  
30% Attendance and Participation

The paper policy and attendance and participation rubric are detailed below. Exams will be taken during scheduled class times and consist of a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions.

The formats of the midterm and final exams will not differ, though the final will be longer. These exams are closed-book.

## **Papers:**

Each student will write two papers in this class, one on an aspect of Greek tragedy and the other on the development of comedy from the Old Comedy of Aristophanes through Roman comedy. Since this is an upper-division course, these papers are meant to be exercises in academic writing and should therefore adhere strictly to MLA or Chicago formatting style. While a good paper ought to contain citations from the plays and articles we have read in class, no outside research should be necessary in order to complete these assignments.

Papers should be 5-8 pages in length and will be graded on:

- the inclusion of a clear and original thesis statement
- the presence of clear arguments in support of the thesis statement
- appropriate use of concrete examples drawn from plays and articles
- a logical structure of ideas
- spelling and grammar
- proper use of MLA or Chicago format

**Late Policy:** All papers are to be e-mailed to me by the start of class time on the due date. Any paper that is turned in late will be docked half a letter grade (two steps) per day that it is late.

EX 1: a paper that would have received a B+ but is turned in one day late will receive a B-  
EX 2: a paper that would have received a B but is two days late will receive a C-

This policy may be waived in the case of a real emergency (family or medical), provided that you e-mail me *in advance of the deadline* explaining the situation. Students who would like to request an extension of their papers for other reasons (technological failure, required attendance at a performance/audition/wedding/sporting event near the deadline, etc.) should come see me during office hours to discuss their particular situation and set an alternative deadline.

## **Attendance and Participation:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to class discussions. The attendance policies are as follows:

**Excused absences:** Excused absences will be issued in the case of illness, accident, or extenuating circumstance (ex: a relative's wedding) provided that the absence is cleared with me *by e-mail in advance*. Excused absences *will not be issued retroactively*, nor is an absence considered excused until I e-mail back with my approval. All excuses are not created equal, so be sure to e-mail me well in advance of your absence in order to make sure that your circumstances warrant an excused absence. Excused absences will not count against your grade, but students

will still be responsible for the material covered in class for the purposes of exams (so get a classmate to take notes for you!).

**Unexcused absences:** Any time you miss class without an advance e-mail from me excusing the absence is considered an unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence will lower your final attendance and participation grade by one step (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). As with excused absences, you are still responsible for all information missed while you were absent.

**Tardies:** Being late to class three times will be considered equivalent to one unexcused absence for the purposes of final grade calculation.

**Participation:** All students will begin the semester with an attendance and participation grade of B-/C+. Each day that you contribute to class discussions will add points to this score, and each unexcused absence or set of three tardies will subtract from it. Students who both attend and participate every day will end the semester with A+ attendance and participation grades.

## **Required Reading:**

Aeschylus. *Oresteia*, Peter Meineck, trans. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998.

Aristophanes. *The Frogs*, Jeffrey Henderson, trans. In *Aristophanes: Frogs. Translation with Introduction and Notes. Focus Classical Library*. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2008.

———. *Lysistrata*, Ian Johnston, trans. Arlington: Richer Resources Publications, 2008.

Blondell, Ruby, Mary-Kay Gamel, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, and Bella Zweig, eds. *Women on the Edge: Four Plays By Euripides*. New York and London: Routledge, 1999.

Sutton, Dana F. *Ancient Comedy: The War of the Generations*. New York and Toronto: Twayne Publishers, 1993.

### **Course Reader:**

Aristotle. *The Poetics*, Ingram Bywater, trans. In *Aristotle: Rhetoric and Poetics*. New York: Modern Library, 1964. 221-266.

Beacham, Richard. "Playing Places: The Temporary and the Permanent," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, Marianne McDonald and J. Michael Walton, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 202-26.

———. Selections from *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Braden, Gordon. "Drama," in *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal*, Richard Jenkyns, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. 243-68.

Burian, Peter. "Tragedy Adapted for Stages and Screens: The Renaissance to the Present," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, P. E. Easterling, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 228-83.

- Denard, Hugh. "Lost Theatre and Performance Traditions in Greece and Italy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, Marianne McDonald and J. Michael Walton, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 139-60.
- Euripides. *Cyclops*, Heather McHugh, trans. In *Medea and Other Plays*, Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 426-62.
- . *Orestes*, William Arrowsmith, trans. In *The Complete Greek Tragedies: Euripides IV*, David Greene and Richmond Lattimore, eds. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958. 105-208.
- Fagan, Garrett G. Selections from *The Lure of the Arena: Social Psychology and the Crowd at the Roman Games*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Forrest, George. "Greece: The History of the Archaic Period," in *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*, John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 13-46.
- Goldhill, Simon. "The Language of Tragedy: Rhetoric and Communication," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, P. E. Easterling, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 127-50.
- Griffin, Jasper. Introduction. In *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*, John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 1-8.
- Homer. Selections from *The Iliad*, Alexander Pope, trans. Online: Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6130>. Downloaded 3/17/2013.
- . Selections from *The Odyssey*, Robert Fitzgerald, trans. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1998.
- Jenkyns, Richard. "The Legacy of Rome," in *The Legacy of Rome: A New Appraisal*, Richard Jenkyns, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. 1-35.
- Latacz, Joachim. Selections from *Troy and Homer: Towards a Solution of an Old Mystery*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Macintosh, Fiona. "Tragedy in Performance: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Productions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, P. E. Easterling, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 228-83. 284-323.
- Manuwald, Gesine. "The Evolution of Roman Drama," in *Roman Republican Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 15-40.
- Menander. *The Bad-Tempered Man*, Maurice Balme, trans. In *Menander: The Plays and Fragments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 3-43.
- Plautus. *The Pot of Gold*, E. F. Watling, trans. In *The Pot of Gold and Other Plays*. London: Penguin Books, 1965. 9-49.
- Price, Simon. "The History of the Hellenistic Period," in *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*, John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 364-89.
- Schur, Nathan. "Minoans and Mycenaeans," in *The Relevant History of Mankind*. Portland: The Alpha Press, 1997. 22-24.
- . "Rome," in *The Relevant History of Mankind*. Portland: The Alpha Press, 1997. 55-59.
- Seneca. *Phaedra*, Emily Wilson, trans. In *Six Tragedies by Seneca*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 1-38.
- . *Thyestes*, J. Heywood, trans. In *Seneca: His Tenne Tragedies, Translated into English*, Vol. 1. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964. 53-95.
- Silk, Michael. "Shakespeare and Greek Tragedy: Strange Relationship," in *Shakespeare and the*

- Classics*, Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 241-57.
- Sophocles. *Oedipus the King*. In *Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays*, Robert Fagles, trans. New York: Penguin Books, 1982. 129-251.
- . *Ajax*, John Moore, trans. In *The Complete Greek Tragedies: Sophocles II*, David Greene and Richmond Lattimore, eds. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1957. 1-62.
- Sutton, Dana F. “The Nature and Function of Satyric Drama,” in *The Greek Satyr Play*. Germany: Verlag Anton Hain Meisenheim GmbH, 1980. 134-79.
- Terence. *The Mother-in-Law*, Peter Brown, trans. In *The Comedies of Terence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 53-94.
- Zarifi, Yana. “Chorus and Dance in the Ancient World” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre*, Marianne McDonald and J. Michael Walton, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 227-46.

## **Schedule:**

### Week One:

- Course Intro
- Greek History You Didn't Know You Didn't Know
  - READING:
    - Griffin, introduction to *The Oxford History of Greece*
    - Schur, “Minoans and Mycenaeans”
    - Forrest, “Greece: The History of the Archaic Period”

### Week Two:

- Homer and the Singer Tradition
  - READING:
    - Homer, selections from *The Iliad*
    - Homer, selections from *The Odyssey*
    - Latacz, selections from *Troy and Homer*

### Week Three:

- The City Dionysia—History and Context
  - READING:
    - Blondell, Gamel, Rabinowitz, and Zweig, Parts I, II, and III of the Introduction to *Women on the Edge*
    - Zarifi, “Chorus and Dance in the Ancient World”
    - Goldhill, “The Language of Tragedy”

### Week Four:

- Tragedy (structure of a play)
  - READING:
    - Sophocles, *Oedipus The King*

- Sophocles, *Ajax*
- Aristotle, selections from *The Poetics*

Week Five:

- Trilogies (structure of a festival entry)
  - READING:
    - Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*

Week Six:

- The Satyr Play
  - READING:
    - Euripides, *Cyclops*
    - Sutton, “The Nature and Function of Satyric Drama”
- **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week Seven:

- Breaking the Mold—Euripides
  - READING:
    - Euripides, *Orestes*
    - Euripides, *Medea*
    - Blondell, Gamel, Rabinowitz, and Zweig, Parts IV and V of the Introduction to *Women on the Edge*

Week Eight:

- Old Comedy
  - READING:
    - Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*
    - Aristophanes, *The Frogs*
    - Sutton, Ch. 1 of *Ancient Comedy*

Week Nine:

- New Comedy
  - READING:
    - Menander, *The Bad-Tempered Man*
    - Sutton, Ch. 2 of *Ancient Comedy*
- **PAPER 1 (TRAGEDY) DUE**

Week Ten:

- Theater Outside Athens, the Hellenistic Period, and the Rise of Rome
  - READING:
    - Price, “The History of the Hellenistic Period”
    - Denard, “Lost Theatre and Performance Traditions in Greece and Italy”
    - Beacham, “Playing Places”

Week Eleven:

- Roman Comedy
  - READING:
    - Plautus, *The Pot of Gold*
    - Terence, *The Mother-in-Law*
    - Sutton, Ch. 3 of *Ancient Comedy*

Week Twelve:

- Roman Tragedy
  - READING:
    - Seneca, *Phaedra*
    - Seneca, *Thyestes*
    - Manuwald, “The Evolution of Roman Drama”

Week Thirteen:

- Other Roman Entertainments—Pantomime and Blood Sports
  - READING:
    - Beacham, selections from *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*
    - Fagan, selections from *The Lure of the Arena*
- **PAPER 2 (COMEDY) DUE**

Week Fourteen:

- The Roman Influence—History and Lasting Effects of the Roman Empire
  - READING:
    - Schur, “Rome”
    - Jenkyns, “The Legacy of Rome”
    - Braden, “Drama”

Week Fifteen:

- Course Wrap-Up: The Legacy of Classical Drama—Quick Overview of Classical Revivals Renaissance-Present
  - READING:
    - Silk, “Shakespeare and Greek Tragedy: Strange Relationship”
    - Burian, “Tragedy Adapted for Stages and Screens”
    - Macintosh, “Tragedy in Performance”

**FINAL EXAM**