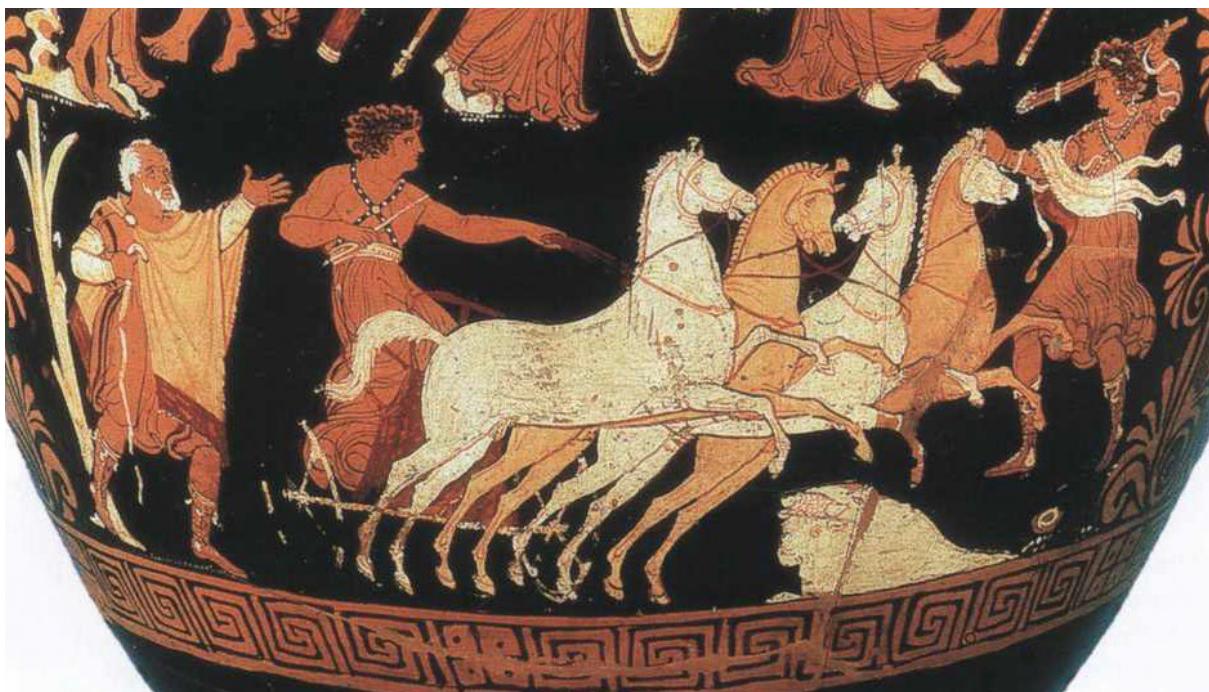


# **LIT 351 Attic Tragedy In Translation**

## **Spring Semester 2023**

**Course Instructor:**

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*Hippolytus rides to his death.*  
Red-figured Apulian crater, ca. 340-320 BC (detail), British Museum

## Course Description

This course is intended to introduce the student to the work of the great tragedians of the fifth century BC (Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles). From the end of the Persian Wars to the battle of Aegospotami, the Athenian state flourished in an unprecedented way that marked the history of the western world. It is in this time frame that tragedy emerged as the culmination of the literary tradition of the eighth-sixth centuries BC and the product of the prosperity of the “golden era” of Athens. Thus, the plays of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles are both a fascinating way into the wider political, social and religious culture of fifth-century Athens and a rich part of, and important tool for, the study of theater in antiquity and nowadays.

Ancient Greek culture was a highly performative one. Life in an ancient Greek city can be viewed as an extension of the theatrical stage: by attending the city-council, debating for or against war, participating in religious festivals, celebrating the birth of a new family member or mourning for those gone, men and women presented their lives as if on a stage. Thus, an entire city becomes a theater.

In a similar way, the plays of the great poets of the period echo the daily life of the Greek people and also (re)create scenes that reach the unbelievable or the divine. We, the modern readers, take the role of the audience but also become involved in this performance every time we visit a site or read and reflect upon the verses of a play.

This course will be the means to bridge the gap between today and the Greek past in its physical and mental context. No previous knowledge is required, and all texts will be studied in translation.

## Course activities

The course consists of lectures, in which the instructor will introduce and comment on various topics; and reading and discussion of the ancient texts, in which the students will contribute their own ideas. The lectures will offer background information, close examination of select texts, and identification of important issues in the plays.

The tragedies in discussion in this course will be analyzed with respect to each poet’s language and style. At the same time, they will be considered in their literary, cultural, intellectual, and historical contexts, and the following questions will be addressed: what was the Attic tragedy; how and why did it emerge; what were the mechanisms of theatrical production in ancient Greece; how did the plays relate to the events of the fifth century; did they reflect social values, and what values were those; what is the impact of ancient tragedy on modern culture; what is its relevance and value in modern theater; why and how those plays influence the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader, and so on.

To answer these questions, we will examine closely a number of plays and discuss them with the aid of modern scholarship. This discussion will give you the opportunity to do teamwork, explore, and compare your own ideas about the text.

Also, as part of our class activities, we will visit and have a class meeting at the Theater of Dionysus, where the City Dionysia festival was celebrated and the great tragedians competed, and the Odeion of Herodes Atticus, which hosted cultural events in the Roman period!

## Learning Objectives

The emphasis of this course is on learning to read independently across the whole range of Attic tragedy texts. It will introduce you to the major features, cultural context, and evolution of Attic tragedy and, thus, equip you with the background information and critical skills you need to be able to engage confidently with Greek literature in translation. At the same time, it will encourage you to

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“feel” the spirit of the play and the ethics of its characters, and will promote awareness of the impact and relevance of Attic tragedy today. On completion of this course, you will be able to develop and improve your critical abilities and research skills in the study of ancient drama. It is very important that you come well prepared to our meetings: read the texts closely, think about the questions raised, and bring your own ideas and questions to class. The more study time put in early on, the less pain and suffering later on. You are encouraged to consult with the instructor on all matters pertaining to the course: difficulties in mastering the texts, complications in proceeding through the materials of the course, and so on. A selection of study material will be available in the course’s moodle pages, which will be updated regularly.

## Texts

In order for students to gain a good understanding of the variety and evolution of Attic tragedy, it is necessary that they read closely a selection of plays from all major tragedians of 5<sup>th</sup> c. Athens. These plays are:

Aeschylus

*The Eumenides*

Sophocles

*Antigone*

*Oedipus the King*

Euripides

*Hippolytus*

*Medea*

*The Bacchae*

As the course proceeds, discussion will be more and more comparative in focus, and for this reason passages from other plays and modern scholarship will be addressed.

## Course Requirements and Exams

Class Attendance:

CYA regards attendance in class as essential. Therefore, it is highly important that you attend class. You are expected to report for classes promptly. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons, which result in absences should be reported immediately in the Student Affairs Office.

Participation:

Your participation and proper conduct are vitally important to your success in this course: they are expected and **graded**. You are expected to have all assignments completed before you come to class. Do not be afraid to ask questions or volunteer to answer questions.

Exams:

Play Essays

There will be six short play essays. Upon completion of each play you will be asked to write a short essay (1 ½ page) on a topic pertaining to the content or context of it.

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## Midterm Exam

This exam will consist of 3 short essays (2 pages each) and cover the material (plays and scholarship) already discussed in class.

**N.B. MAKEUPS WILL BE GIVEN ONLY FOR VALID EXCUSES.**

## Research Paper and Presentation:

Students are expected to write one research paper of about 3000 words (Times New Roman, size 12, double-spaced) excluding bibliography. Students can choose their own topic or select one in discussion with the instructor. Individual titles and bibliography will be agreed after consultation. You are encouraged to discuss research topics with the instructor by **early March** (at the very latest).

The paper will be graded on:

- originality of thought
- critical analysis of an aspect or aspects of a tragedy
- clarity of argument and structure
- variety of evidence and bibliography used

Students are also expected to make an oral presentation of their topic in class. That should be about 15 minutes long, and you should be ready to answer questions and discuss issues pertaining to your topic with the instructor and your colleagues.

Those who wish to turn in rough drafts of their papers for consultation are welcomed to do so by **Friday, May 5**.

The deadline for the submission of the final research paper is **Friday, May 19**.

## Grading and Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

30% Research Paper  
10% Paper Presentation  
25% Midterm Exam  
20% Play Essays  
15% Attendance-Participation

## Grading Scale:

A+ 100-98	B+ 89-87	C+ 79-77	D+ 69-67	F 59-
A 97-93	B 86-83	C 76-73	D 66-63	
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	D- 62-60	

**Please note: in the name of fairness to all students, there will be no extra points awarded, even if you are very close to a higher letter grade.**

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Director of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

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## Class Schedule

Class Week	Day/Date	Assignments	Other Events
1	Jan 30-Feb 5	1. Introduction-From viewer to reader: “Reading” a tragedy on stage 2. Origins and cultural context of the dramatic festivals in Athens	
2	Feb 6-12	3. Theatrical space and staging 4. Visit to the Theater of Dionysus	
3	Feb 13-19	NO CLASS	Field Study: Peloponnese (Feb 14-18)
4	Feb 20-26	5. The development of Attic tragedy in the 5 <sup>th</sup> century. 6. The art of acting	
5	Feb 27-Mar 5	7. Music in Ancient Drama 8. Dance and the Evolution of the chorus	- Clean Monday: Holiday (Mar 7) - Optional Study: Venice, Ravenna (Mar 3-5)
6	Mar 6-12	9. Aristotle’s <i>Poetics</i> and its relevance to 5 <sup>th</sup> c. tragedy 10. Drama, Kingship, and Democratic Sentiments	Reading Day (Mar 10)
7	Mar 13-19	11. Midterm Exam (Mar 14) 12. Divine Will and Self-Determination	Optional Study: Rhodes (Mar 17-19)
8	Mar 20-26	13. Gods and Men: hybris and ethos 14. Act like a man, behave like a woman: representation of women in tragedy	
9	Mar 27-Apr 2	NO CLASS	Field Study: Northern Greece-Thessaloniki (Mar 28-Apr 1)
10	Apr 3-9	- Paper Presentations (Apr 4; 6)	Spring Recess (Apr 7-17)
11	Apr 10-16	NO CLASS	
12	Apr 17-23	15. The portrayal of stereotypes, and rebel women 16. Greek Drama and Roman Space	Optional Study: Crete (Apr 21-23)
13	Apr 24-30	17. Visit to the Herodes’ Odeion 18. The Impact of Attic tragedy on renaissance drama	
14	May 1-7	19. The reception of Attic tragedy in modern drama 20. Echoes of Greek tragedy and myth in cinema	May Day: Holiday (May 1)
15	May 8-14	- Deadline for Submission of Paper Draft (May 5)	- CYA Student Conference (May 8-9) - Reading Day (May 12)

**Deadline for submission of final paper: Friday, May 19**

N.B.: *Class schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and in keeping up to date with current research*

## General Bibliography

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Zyl Smit B. v. (2016), A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama. Chichester, West Sussex

**N.B.**

**The use of cell phones is prohibited during class time. You may use your computers but ONLY for class-related purposes.**

**Food is not allowed in classrooms. Beverages are permitted, but be sure to clean up any mess you make.**