

## LIT 351 | Attic Tragedy In Translation Spring 2025

**Course Instructor: Demetrios Kritsotakis**  
**Email: demetrios.kritsotakis@cyathens.org**

### 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 an important tool for the study of theater in antiquity and nowadays.

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; what is the impact of ancient tragedy on modern culture; why and how those plays influence the 21<sup>st</sup> century reader, and so on. No previous knowledge is required, and all texts will be studied in translation.

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!

### Learning Objectives

This course will primarily teach students to:

- Read independently across the whole range of Attic tragedy texts.
- "Feel" the spirit of a play and the ethics of its characters.
- Engage confidently with Greek literature in translation.
- Be aware of the impact and relevance of Attic tragedy today.
- Develop and improve their critical abilities in the study of literature.
- Recognize the role of the texts in the history of Greece and the literature produced there
- Read and review modern scholarship and show where they stand with respect to it
- Write an academic paper

### 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

*Agamemnon*  
*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.

A selection of study material will be available in the course's moodle page, which will be updated regularly.

### Course Requirements

**Class Contribution** – Class Contribution includes physical and mental presence in the classroom, arriving on time, preparation, and participation in class discussions. Class contribution is one of the most important factors for determining your grade for the semester. You are expected to have all assignments completed (reading, review of modern scholarship, and so on) before you come to class.

It is very important that you come well prepared for our meetings: read the texts closely, think about the questions raised, and bring your own ideas and questions in class. 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. Do not be afraid to ask questions, volunteer to read or answer questions.

**Play Essays** – There will be three in-class play essay exams. Upon completion of a play (or group of plays) you will be asked to write a short essay (2 pages) on a topic pertaining to the content or context of it.

**Midterm Exam** – This exam will consist of 4 short essays (2 pages each) and cover the material (plays and scholarship) already discussed in class.

**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 9**.

The deadline for the submission of the final research paper is **Friday, May 16**.

### Grading and Evaluation

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

Class Contribution 15%

Play Essays 15%

Midterm Exam 30%

Paper Presentation 10%

Research Paper 30%

#### 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.

### CYA Regulations and Accommodations

#### Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential, so attendance at all scheduled meetings is required. All absences are recorded and have consequences that may affect your grade.

**Policy on Assignments and Make-up Work**

I will accept no late assignments or make-up exams except for valid excuses that will be communicated to me in advance. If you are unable to come to class, please let me know beforehand.

**ePolicy on Original Work**

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

**Use of Laptops**

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

**N.B. The use of cell phones is prohibited during class time.**

**Academic Accommodations**

Students are required to submit an official letter from the office at their school that handles academic accommodations (generally the Office of Disability Services), or to have that office send a letter. Students who have submitted such a letter to CYA should also talk to their professors individually to discuss how these accommodations will work in each specific course.

**Upgrade to 400-level course**

Courses can be upgraded to a 400-level. This constitutes usually 25% additional work on the part of the student. The option to upgrade opens the second week of classes. If you are interested in this option, please talk to your professor.

**Class Schedule**

Class Day	Day/Date	Topics/ Reading/ Assignments
	Jan 23-25	Field Study: Delphi and Ancient Olympia
1	Jan 28	Lecture: Introduction Reading: Agamemnon
2	Jan 30	Lecture: From viewer to reader: "Reading" a tragedy on stage Reading: Agamemnon
3	Feb 4	Lecture: Origins and cultural context of the dramatic festivals in Athens Reading: Agamemnon
4	Feb 6	Lecture: Theatrical space and staging Reading: The Eumenides
5	Feb 7	Lecture: The development of Attic tragedy in the 5 <sup>th</sup> century Reading: The Eumenides
6	Feb 11	Lecture: The art of acting Reading: The Eumenides
7	Feb 13	Essay 1 Lecture: Music in Ancient Drama
	Feb 14-16	Optional Field Study: Venice, Ravenna
	Feb 18-21	Field Study: Peloponnese
8	Feb 25	Reading: Oedipus the King
9	Feb 27	Lecture: Dance and the chorus Reading: Oedipus the King
	Mar 3	Clean Monday (National Holiday)
10	Mar 4	Reading: Oedipus the King
11	Mar 6	Lecture: Aristotle's Poetics and its relevance to 5 <sup>th</sup> c. tragedy
12	Mar 11	Midterm Exam
13	Mar 13	Lecture: Drama, Kingship, and Democratic Sentiments Reading: Antigone
	Mar 18-22	Field Study: Northern Greece, Thessaloniki
	Mar 25	Greek Independence Day (National Holiday)
14	Mar 27	Lecture: Divine Will and Self-Determination Reading: Antigone
15	Mar 28	Lecture: Act like a man, behave like a woman: representation of women in tragedy Reading: Antigone

16	Apr 1	<i>Essay 2</i> <i>Reading: Hippolytus</i>
17	Apr 3	<i>Paper Presentations</i> <i>Reading: Hippolytus</i>
	Apr 4-6	Optional Field Study: Rhodes
18	Apr 8	<i>Visit to the Theater of Dionysus</i> <i>Reading: Hippolytus</i>
19	Apr 10	<i>Lecture: The Impact of Attic tragedy on renaissance drama</i> <i>Reading: Medea</i>
	Apr 11-21	Spring Break
20	Apr 22	<i>Lecture: The reception of Attic tragedy in modern drama</i> <i>Reading: Medea</i>
21	Apr 24	<i>Reading: Medea</i>
	Apr 25-27	Optional Field Study: Crete
22	Apr 29	<i>Essay 3</i> <i>Reading: The Bacchae</i>
	May 1	May Day (Labor Day) National Holiday
	May 5-6	Student Conference
23	May 6	<i>Reading: The Bacchae</i>
24	May 8	<i>Lecture: Echoes of Greek tragedy and myth in cinema</i> <i>Reading: The Bacchae</i>
FEW	May 16	<i>Submission of Final Project</i>

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.

### Course Bibliography

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