

THE/LIT 325 | Greek Theater: Ancient and Modern Fall 2026

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Course Description

This course will study and interpret ancient Greek drama both in its original context and as it is adapted and performed around the world today. The course will examine the origins and cultural context of Greek drama, as well as the performative aspects of the plays: theatrical space, stagecraft, music, and dance. It will also focus on key issues that the plays are concerned with, especially the devastation and ethical questions surrounding war; human violence; political ambition; political and social injustices; personal and communal identity; self-sacrifice; human and divine justice; gender conflict; and the roles of women, slaves, and foreigners. In addition to studying the ancient texts, students will explore the relevance of these plays in later times, from the renaissance to today and will examine contemporary adaptations and projects based on these plays, especially ones that focus on war, identity, women, immigrants, and violence.

This is primarily a discussion class. I expect you to come to class having carefully read the assigned reading and having prepared any assigned questions related to the readings. We will spend time close reading key passages of the plays and discussing their performative aspect. The class will also include field trips to the **Theater of Dionysus in Athens**, as well as **trips to contemporary performances of Greek drama**.

Learning Goals

This course will primarily teach students to:

- Analyze the language, structure, and major themes of Greek tragedy
- Think about Greek tragedies as plays and pay attention to their performative aspect
- Explain why Greek tragedy developed in 5th century Athens and how it is related to the cultural and political context in which it emerged
- Identify key values and ideas of the Ancient Greeks and make connections to modern values
- Understand, appreciate, and identify key differences between the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides
- Explore how different media (theater, opera, dance) treat the same story and what their effect is in doing so
- Recognize the value of Greek tragedy and its influence on contemporary culture

Course Requirements and Assessment

CYA 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. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office, via the form available in the Student Portal.

Class Contribution 25% – Class Contribution includes physical and mental presence in the classroom, arriving on time, preparation, participation in class discussions, and posting occasionally on the Moodle forum. Reading assignments are to be completed before each class session. Class contribution is one of the most important factors for determining your grade for the semester. I expect all of you to come prepared, engage in our discussions, ask questions, and voice your opinions in class. If you are extremely uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group of students, you may send your opinions or afterthoughts in writing via email. If you never participate in class and do not send any thoughts by email, your contribution grade will be low.

Midterm 20% – Identification of key terms and figures related to Greek theater; analysis of passages; short essay questions.

Oral Presentations 30% – Two short and one longer oral presentation on modern adaptations of ancient tragedies.

Final Research Paper 30% – Topics and instructions will be given in advance. About 2500 words.

CYA Policies and Regulations

CYA Attendances and Absences policy

Coursework at CYA involves a great deal of experiential learning: classroom discussion, site visits, and the like, which cannot be replicated if the student is absent. Grades reflect a student's performance on assessments, but also acknowledge the degree to which a student has mastered the material through such active learning activities. As a result attendance and punctuality are essential to learning in CYA courses, which rely on in-class and on-site

interaction. If you are unable to come to class, please let me know beforehand. Students **must** make up missed work for any absence (excused or unexcused) and communicate with instructors about requirements. Failure to complete missed work will result in the reduction of minimum one letter grade. For an absence to be excused you must follow the CYA policy for excused absences, contacting either Student Affairs or the Academic Director. Three (3) unexcused absences automatically lowers the final course grade.

Policy on Assignments/Exams and Make-up Work

Details about assignments and exams will be given in advance. I will accept no late assignments or make-up exams unless discussed with me in advance.

AI Policy

I discourage students from using AI on the written assignments submitted for this course. If students do use AI on assignments, students must disclose their AI usage. Failure to disclose how AI has been used, or submission of AI work as one's own, is a violation of academic integrity [see relevant section on student handbook].

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.

Site Visits and Accessibility

This course contains specific physical and spatial elements that are crucial to student learning and which cannot be modified. Students should be aware of these before enrolling in the course. In particular, the course includes field trips to archaeological sites and performances. During these trips students will be required to walk on streets and uneven terrain occasionally without shade or seating.

ePolicy on Original Work

Plagiarism is literary theft. As such, it is a serious offense which will not be tolerated either at your home institution or at CYA. Plagiarism on an examination or in a paper will result in an F for the course. You must cite the author of any and all ideas that you use that is neither common knowledge nor your own idea. If you are in doubt, it is safest to cite the source.

Your work should be original and reflect your own ideas and thoughts. If you are unsure about what counts as original work, please consult your professor and check the Student Handbook.

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.

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.

Required Readings

All Greek tragedies and scholarship that we'll be studying will be available on Moodle.

Fall 2026 Tentative Schedule – THE/LIT 325 –TR

Note: The schedule is subject to change depending on the Fall 2026 productions and their timing.

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
	Sept. 3-5	Field Study Delphi and Ancient Olympia
1	Sept. 8	Introduction to the Course; Historical and Geographical Background

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)
2	Sept. 10	What is Greek Tragedy; Origins of Greek Theater; Myth and Drama Reading: Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> 1-16, Hall (2010), <i>Greek Tragedy: Suffering Under the Sun</i> ; Papathanasopoulou (2023), "Myth and Theater: Greek Tragedy's Engagement with Greek Myth"
3	Sept. 15	The Cult of Dionysus; Theatrical Space and Staging Reading: Cartledge (1997), "'Deep Plays': theatre as process in Greek civic life"; Seaford (2006), <i>Introducing Dionysus</i> ; Wiles (1997), 'The Theatre of Dionysus' *SITE VISIT: THE THEATER OF DIONYSUS - MEET AT THEATER OF DIONYSUS ENTRANCE AT 1.45PM
	Sept. 17-19	Field Study Crete
4	Sept. 22	PERFORMANCE TRIP TO THEATER – DETAILS TBA
5	Sept. 24	Aeschylus' <i>Persians</i> . Greek Victory and Persian Suffering Reading: Taplin (1988), "Battle Narrative and Politics"
6	Sept. 25	Aeschylus' <i>Persians</i> Reading: Hall (1989), "Inventing Persia" in <i>Inventing the Barbarian</i>
7	Sept. TBA	PERFORMANCE TRIP TO THEATER – DETAILS TBA
8	Sept. 29	Aeschylus' <i>Persians</i> Today – Student Oral Presentations
9	Oct. 1	Euripides' <i>Trojan Women</i> – Women: Victims of War Reading: Rabinowitz (2017) and Poe (2020)
10	Oct. 6	Euripides' <i>Trojan Women</i> Reading: Goff (2013)
11	Oct. 7	Euripides' <i>Trojan Women</i> Today National Theater of Greece Production of <i>Trojan Women</i>
	Oct. 8-10	Field Trip – Peloponnese
12	Oct. 13	Aristophanes' <i>Lysistrata</i> – Women: Agents Trying to Stop the War Reading: MacDowell (1995) and Bowie (2009)
13	Oct. 15	Aristophanes' <i>Lysistrata</i> Reading: Foley (1982), "The Female Intruder"
14	Oct. 20	Modern Versions of <i>Lysistrata</i> – Student Oral Presentations
15	Oct. 22	Midterm Exam
	Oct. 23-31	Fall Break
16	Nov. 3	Aeschylus' <i>Agamemnon</i> Recommended: Zeitlin (1978), The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth & Mythmaking in <i>Oresteia</i>
17	Nov. 5	Aeschylus' <i>Libation Bearers</i> Reading: Seaford (2023), 'Aeschylus and Subversion of Ritual'; Nooter (2023), 'Inscribing Justice in Aeschylean Drama'
18	Nov. 10	Aeschylus' <i>Eumenides</i> Reading: McClure (1999), "Women's Speech in the Polis: <i>The Eumenides</i> "
	Nov. 11-14	Field Study Abroad
19	Nov. 17	Sophocles' <i>Electra</i> Reading: Dunn (2012) and Griffiths (2012)
20	Nov. 19	Euripides' <i>Electra</i> Reading: Roisman (2016)
	Nov. 24	No Class – Trips to Performances
	Nov. 26-29	Thanksgiving Break
21	Dec. 1	Greek Tragedy into Opera: Richard Strauss' <i>Electra</i>
22	Dec. 3	Greek Tragedy into Dance: Martha Graham's <i>Clytemnestra</i>
23	Dec. 8	Student Presentations
24	Dec. 10	Student Presentations
FEW	Dec. 17	Final Research Paper Due 1.30pm

Course Bibliography (Required and Supplementary Readings)

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- Buxton, Richard G. A. 2013. *Myths and Tragedies in Their Ancient Greek Contexts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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- Hall, Edith. 1989. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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