

**WRIT 026.301: Critical Writing Seminar in Classical Studies:
The Eternal Warriors**

Tues-Thurs, 3-4:30, Williams 843

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Office hours, tentatively: Tues 4:30-6:30, Thurs 2-3

Course description

As a critical writing seminar, this course provides an introduction to college-level academic writing, and culminates in the production of a full-length research paper. As a freshman seminar, it offers an introduction to the disciplines of Classical Studies and Reception Studies.

Authors and artists have been returning to the myths and stories of Greco-Roman antiquity for thousands of years, revising them to suit new contexts but retaining the core narratives. This class focuses on several modern iterations of a central Greek historical narrative. We will begin by reading Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the story of the 10,000 Greek mercenaries making their escape from hostile territory after defeat at the hands of the Persians. We will turn then to the novel *The Warriors*, which relocates the story to New York City and trades Greek and Persian soldiers for rival gangs. Finally, we will consider the film version of *The Warriors*, which retains many features of the novel on which it is based while nonetheless displaying important innovations of its own. These studies will provide us a frame of reference for research and exercises that will develop critical writing skills.

How this class works

This is not a lecture class where you will be passively soaking up knowledge, but rather a place for discussion, collaboration and debate. We will spend our class time thinking together about how interpretation and argumentation work, and will examine our own writing and the writing of our peers with an eye to figuring out how to make our scholarship as effective as possible.

Informed participation is the key to a productive semester. Read your texts actively and critically, and come to class ready to debate. Not all students participate in the same way, however, and the most important contributions to a discussion are not always those that are made first, or most frequently, or most insistently. Within the bounds of your own personal style, I demand that you take risks and think out loud. Apart from occasional mini-lectures, I will act primarily as a guide and referee to make sure that our discussion stays on track and respectful. Beyond that, you are in charge of the direction of discussion, and the more engaged you are, the more interesting and rewarding the class will be for all of us.

Readings

The readings for this course fall into three groups: the first is the primary texts, the subject of our course; the second is the secondary text, an academic work related to our primary texts; and the third is a selection of writings about reading and writing. The first provides the subject matter for your own writing, the second provides a model for academic writing in the discipline and on the subject, and the third offers instruction on how to write effectively.

The following texts are required, and can be found in the Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th St. at Sansom. If you choose to get your books elsewhere, please be sure to order the same edition by using the ISBN or UPC given below.

- Tim Rood, *The Sea! The Sea!* Duckworth, 2004. 0715635719.
- Xenophon, *The Expedition of Cyrus*. Oxford, 2009. 0199555987.
- Sol Yurick, *The Warriors*. Grove Atlantic, 2003. 0802139922.
- Jane E. Aaron, *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook*. Pearson, 2009.

Also required is this DVD, which is not currently on order at the bookstore, but should be easily available online from Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

- Walter Hill, *The Warriors: Ultimate Director's Cut*. Paramount Pictures, 1979; DVD, 2005. 097360313826.