

**WRIT 026.302: Critical Writing Seminar in Classical Studies:
Violence and Vengeance in Greek Tragedy**
TR 1:30-3:00, Benn 16

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Office hours TBA

Course description

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

Greek tragedy is famous for dwelling on some of the most horrific aspects of human violence: incest, cannibalism, and murder are regular topics. Women's participation in these unspeakable acts was particularly terrifying, as it was a complete rejection of the docility and compliance that were expected of a good wife and mother. In this class, we will explore the women of tragedy and examine the actions they take in the face of the extreme situations in which they find themselves. How can we make sense of these women's choices, and what can these narratives tell us about the world of ancient Athens in which they were produced?

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 about 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 will be available 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 given below.

Helene Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Princeton UP, 2002. 0691094926.

Euripides. *Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus*, trans. Diane Svarlien. Hackett, 2007. 0872208222.

Sophocles. *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles and Bernard Knox. Penguin, 1984. 0140444254.

Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles. *The Electra Plays*, trans. Peter Meineck, Cecilia Luschnig, Paul Woodruff, Justina Gregory. Hackett, 2009. 0872209652.

Aeschylus. *The Oresteia*, trans. Ted Hughes. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. 0374527059.

There is also a required grammar and style book – be sure to get this from the Penn Book Center, as you will need the access code that comes with it:

Aaron, Jane E. *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook*. New York: Longman, 2009.

Anticipated assignments (subject to change):

Outline of the research text

Outline of at least four scholarly articles

Abstract of at least one scholarly article

At least 6 propositions

Skeletal outline, exercise, rhetorical outline and peer review of 6 exercises/essays

Statement of research interest

Skeletal outline, exercise, rhetorical outline and peer review of 2 syntheses

At least 2 drafts of justificatory paper and outline

At least 2 drafts of explanatory paper and outline

Peer reviews of a classmate's justificatory and explanatory essays

2 cover letters

Custom proofreading sheet

Midterm and Final portfolios

Note on Assignment Submissions:

Most assignments are due by 11:59PM on dates listed on the schedule; anything submitted after the deadline will be given a 0. Please bring two hard copies of assignments or your laptop to class in order to facilitate your peers' and professor's reviews. All assignments must be submitted to the Blackboard site via the Assignments tab, where individual assignment links are provided. Please include all previous drafts and outlines when submitting revisions.

Grading Policy:

Final grades are based on:

- Attendance (absences and serial late arrivals count against your final grade);
- Timely submission of all assignments;
- Quality of assignment submissions;

- Quality of work based on portfolio assessment.

Grading breakdown:

Coursework (including Midterm Portfolio): 45%

Final Portfolio: 50%

Participation: 5%

Failure in any category of the final portfolio assessment means a failure on the portfolio and retake of the writing seminar.

Classroom Policies:

Regular attendance is essential. Each unexcused absence reduces your final grade by one increment (i.e. A to A- after one unexcused absence, A- to B+ after two, etc.). I will start and end class exactly on time; I expect you to show me the same courtesy of timeliness. Three late arrivals count as an unexcused absence. Students expecting to miss class for religious holidays should inform me during the first two weeks of class.

Plagiarism will result in disciplinary action and an F for the seminar. The university's policies on plagiarism are easily accessible online; if you're uncertain, look them over before you turn your work in.

Late work will not be accepted; have it in on time or take a 0. Personal computer problems are not acceptable grounds for late assignments. Students experiencing technical problems should use one of the terminals in the library or the College Houses to submit or e-mail assignments to the instructor by the scheduled due date.

Responsible Behavior:

All students in writing seminars are expected to maintain a standard of responsible behavior, including:

- Civility towards colleagues and instructor during class and in all class-related activities;
- Punctual arrival and adequate preparation;
- Use of electronic devices only as allowed by the instructor.

Remember, how you conduct yourself in class will affect your participation grade.