

Fall 2023

HSS-404 (051): Literature Seminar: How Legends Become Myths: A Journey Through Classic Greek Literature

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HSS 404.051 FALL 2023

LIT SEM

HOW LEGENDS BECOME MYTHS: A JOURNEY THROUGH CLASSIC GREEK LITERATURE

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T TH 2:30 - 3:50

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OFFICE HOURS Spring 2023

Mon 11:35- 12:35 Tues 4:00- 4:30 Wed 2:30 – 3:30

and by appointment; contact me to set up an appointment.

HSS 404 Prerequisites: ENGL 102 with a grade of C or higher, and 6 credits at the 300-level History and Humanities GER with a grade of C or higher; 3 credits at the 300-level may be taken concurrently as a co-requisite. Registration requires senior standing.

HSS 404.32 How legends become myths: a journey through classic Greek literature, is a foray into Classic Greek literature of the Classic period, roughly 750 BCE to 300 BCE. We'll read and discuss the Greek literature of the period, and how the heroes went from doers of big deeds to mythic status so that even today their names are still known and their deeds mined by modern day creators. We'll start from the creation myths to the age of heroes, then the Iliad and Odyssey, some Greek poets, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, and some plays. We'll also touch on some of the works of the philosophers that have stood the test of time and still have relevance for us today. We'll also try to get your views in too, so be prepared to speak your view of some of the people we come across, since a course like this opens minds into a world partly familiar to us but in many ways quite different.

Along the way, we will need some historical context, so there will have to be some background into the Greek geographical world of the day, then relying chiefly on Plutarch for biographies of the famous ones both legend and historical, and the history of the period including contrasting Sparta and Athens, the Persian Wars, the Peloponnesian War, and the status of women.

Learning and outcomes

From the readings and by doing some research, you will know many of the famous names of legend, and get the references to and have the original story about the selected Greek authors and their major works. From discussions, you will see the Greek notion that human character doesn't change although circumstances do, and apply the Greek thought where relevant to our situations today.

By the end of the course students should be able through both oral and written communication to: demonstrate critical thinking about the various Greek situations, develop in-depth, focused, researched writing with full documentation of sources; write argument-based essays in response to issues raised in the course, and apply the insights to present day situations.

Course Requirements

Keeping up with the readings

Two short essays

One presentation on your research project, 7-10 minutes

There will be quizzes, a midterm and a final exam on the last day of classes

Participating in discussions

One research paper, at least 9 pages

Schedule

For now, this is the basic schedule. There will be modifications, and more details as we get closer to the date.

1. Background: the Mediterranean world. Greek myths
2. Early poetry. The epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey
3. The epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey
4. The civic literature of Solon, Lycurgus, Hesiod. Some poetry: Sappho, Archilochus
5. Herodotus, the travelogue and the Persian Wars
6. Thucydides, including Pericles Funeral Oration, excerpts from The Peloponnesian War
7. Greek plays: Sophocles, Aeschylus
8. Midterm Euripides
9. Aristophanes
10. The philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others
11. After the Greek Golden Age
12. Greek stories influence over the centuries
13. Presentations
14. Presentations