CLCV 15019: ANCIENT DRAMA, MODERN THEORY

TTH 11-12:20
Stuart Hall 105

This course will travel through the great dramas of ancient Greece, including works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. It will show, furthermore, how the history of contemporary thought has been shaped by reflection on Greek tragedy, starting from the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche, the structuralist theories of Vladimir Propp and Claude Levi-Strauss, the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, and the feminist critiques of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Judith Butler, and Bonnie Honig. Along the way, we will draw insights from adaptations of the ancient plays, including dance (Martha Graham) and film (Pier Paolo Pasolini). As this course will demonstrate, there is hardly an intellectual or artistic movement of the last century and a half that has not taken its cue from Greek drama. All reading will be in English.
Books and Expectations

- The following books – in order of when we will be reading them – are available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore, 5751 S. Woodlawn Avenue, and have also been put on reserve at the Regenstein Library:
  - *Sophocles I: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

- You are free to use different translations of the Greek plays, but (if you do so) please try to find ones that use line numbers, so we can refer to them commonly in discussion and in writing.

- All other readings and films can be found in your Course Reader and on Canvas under “Modules.” Please purchase the Course Reader from Auxiliary Services (Social Sciences, basement).

- **Event:** We will attend a performance of *Oedipus Rex* at the Court Theatre in November. Details TBA.

- **In Class**
  Attendance and participation are critical (20% of grade), since much of the material of the class will be covered in lectures and analyzed in discussion. Reading and other assignments must be completed carefully by class. Unexcused or repeated absences will adversely affect your grade. Absences will be excused only for incapacitating, emergencies, or truly unavoidable conflicts.

- **On Canvas**
  At least once per week, by 10pm of the evening before each class meeting, you are required post a comment or question about a passage from the reading under the “Discussion” on our Canvas webpage (10% of grade), in response to a broadly stated question. There will be no formal requirement to respond directly to other posts, but you are strongly encouraged to take note of and engage with each other's comments.

- **Written Work**
  You will be required to complete three close analyses (15%, 15%, 15% of grade, respectively) this term of approximately 500 words each. These are to be submitted as Word documents uploaded to Canvas, with a title that includes your last name. There will also be one longer assignment (approximately 1000-1200 words) due in week 10, either an interpretative essay or performance-based assignment (25% of grade). Details of these assignments will be distributed during the quarter.

Work handed in after the due date may be penalized for lateness.

- **Academic honesty**
  You must acknowledge other people’s ideas whether you are quoting them directly or paraphrasing them. You should have received a copy of *Doing Honest Work in College*, which provides information about citation and documentation. If you have questions about how or when to cite sources, please consult your instructor, writing intern, or the writing tutors in Harper Library. See the relevant section of the Student Manual for the University’s policies on academic honesty.
• Academic accommodations
If you require any accommodations for this course, as soon as possible please provide me with a copy of your Accommodation Determination Letter (provided to you by the Student Disability Services office). If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the University’s programs or services, you are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please contact the office at 773-702-6000/TTY 773-795-1186 or disabilities@uchicago.edu, or visit the website at disabilities.uchicago.edu. If you have any other concerns about your ability to participate fully in the class or to meet the requirements, please discuss them with me as soon as possible.

• Electronic devices
The use of laptops in class is generally not permitted. Note taking should be done with pen and paper, and readings brought to class in print form. Please, no texting, email, or other electronic distractions in class.

Schedule

*Reading assignments must be completed before the class next to which they are listed.

**Week 1 (Oct. 1 and 3): Tragedy and theory**

Tuesday: Introduction to Greek Tragedy; Aristotle’s *Poetics*

Thursday: Terence Hawkes, “Linguistics and Anthropology”

**Week 2 (Oct. 8 and 10): Sophocles and Aristotle**

Tuesday: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Thursday: Jean-Paul Vernant, “Ambiguity and Reversal: on the Enigmatic Structure of *Oedipus Rex*”

**Week 3 (Oct. 15 and 17): Sophocles, Freud and Myth**

Tuesday: Sigmund Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams*  
Martha Graham, *Night Journey* (film)

Thursday: Vladimir Propp, “Oedipus in the light of folklore”  
Claude Levi-Strauss, from “Structural study of myth”

Friday: first close analysis due at midnight

**Week 4 (Oct. 22 and 24): Aeschylus and Structuralism**

Tuesday: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*
Thursday: Charles Segal, “The raw and the cooked in Greek literature: structure, values, metaphor”

**Week 5 (Oct. 29 and 31): Aeschylus and Feminism**

Tuesday: Aeschylus, *Choephoroi* and *Eumenides*

Thursday: Luce Irigaray, “The bodily encounter with the mother”
Hélène Cixous, “Seduction and Guilt” and from “Sorties: Out and out: attacks/ways out/forays”

Friday: second close analysis due at midnight

**Week 6 (Nov. 5 and 7): Sophocles and Dialectic**

Tuesday: Sophocles, *Antigone*
optional reading: G. W. F. Hegel, from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

Thursday: Jacques Lacan, from *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*

**Week 7 (Nov. 12 and 14): Sophocles and Feminism**

Tuesday: Judith Butler, “Antigone’s Claim,” from *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*
optional reading: Judith Butler, “Unwritten Laws, Aberrant Transmissions” from *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*

Thursday: Bonnie Honig, “Sacrifice, sorority, integrity: Antigone’s conspiracy with Ismene”

Friday: third close analysis due at midnight

**Week 8 (Nov. 19 and 21): Euripides and Feminism**

Tuesday: Euripides, *Medea*

Thursday: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Medea* (film)

**Week 9 (Nov. 26): Euripides and Dissolution**

Tuesday: Euripides, *Bacchae*

**Week 10 (Dec. 3): Nietzsche and Dissolution**

Tuesday: Friedrich Nietzsche, from *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*

Friday: interpretative essay or performance-based assignment due at midnight