

BLHS 102 The Ancient World: Greeks and Romans
Professors McNelis, Reuscher, and Sens (course director)

This course is an introduction to the literature of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Its focus is on exploring the relationship and responsibilities of the individual to authorities, both civic and divine. It pursues these issues through the lens of some of the major genres of Classical literature, including epic, history, tragedy and comedy, and philosophy. The course emphasizes the common interests in all these forms but also takes note of their particular approaches. Students will pay particularly close attention to the ways in which the texts they are reading offer a particular vision of the relationship of human beings to one another and to the gods; in the process, they will be introduced to the ways in which these texts both reflect and respond to the broader cultures of which they are a part.

Office hours: Individual faculty will arrange their own office hours. For issues about the course on the whole, however, Professor Sens (Healy 317; 687-7634) is the primary contact. His ordinary office hours are T 3:00-6:00, but he will also be available immediately before class and by appointment; please call or email to confirm a meeting time.

Requirements: Grades are determined on the basis of the student's performance for all three professors, and will be based on a) written work and b) class participation.

a) Written Work

Students will write a series of short (1-2 pp.) papers, usually one per class. These are designed to help students think critically and independently about the issues discussed in class. These will be graded on a standard scale from A to F. Grades in the B and C range will be common and normal; only truly excellent work will receive the highest grades.

You are not to use outside sources for these papers; doing so will be considered a violation of the University's Honor Code and (if proven) will result in an F for the assignment. Moreover, papers should respect the page limitation spelled out above. We will not read longer papers.

Written work is due at the start of each class in hard copy. **In addition to your hard copy, you must email your paper by attachment to blhs102summer2012@gmail.com (please make sure you use this address, not Sens's professional or personal email for submission of papers; BUT USE sensa@georgetown.edu for ordinary business) by 6:15 on the night the paper is due.** Your time-stamped email will serve as your receipt for turning in your work on time. **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY REASON FROM ANY STUDENT.**

The final writing assignment (2-4 pp.) will be due by 5:00 p.m., August 7 in electronic copy (sent to the email address listed above). Students should write a brief essay in which they discuss the similarities and differences among the various genres they have read.

b) Class Participation

Students are expected to attend every class. We recognize that emergencies may arise. Students must, however, be extremely cautious about missing class, since the second absence will result in failure of the course. The only exception to this rule is medical; for that, we will need documentation from a doctor, and we will consult with SCS administrators about what should be done.

Your presence in the classroom, by itself, amounts to C work (i.e. a “fair” performance). A higher grade is easily obtainable by contributing meaningfully to our discussions. This can mean asking questions as well as answering those posed by faculty and other students. The foundation of your class participation should be a careful, thoughtful reading of the texts. Much of this material will be unfamiliar, even uncomfortably challenging. Each class session is designed to help you understand the assignment and to think about it in new ways. In other words, there will be learning during the class session, and your active participation will be an index of how much you are learning.

Please note: this class, like all classes at Georgetown, expects adherence to the Georgetown Honor Code. For practical purposes, that means that all of your work must be your own. If you draw on someone else’s ideas, you must properly attribute them. Details of what this means will be discussed in class.

Learning Goals and Assessments:

Students will be assessed according to the following benchmarks and goals.

- 1) Students will learn the basic formal features of the ancient genres of epic, history, tragedy, comedy and philosophy, and be able to articulate them in both oral and written form.
- 2) Students will learn to accurately summarize the content of a passage of ancient literature.
- 3) Students will learn to analyze the same passage, precisely distinguishing this analysis from summary.
- 4) Students will learn the basic form and style of academic writing. Students will be able to produce papers that engage closely with specific passages and that are free from lexical and grammatical errors.

If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Required Texts (texts available in the bookstore or online)

Homer, *The Iliad*, tr. R. Lattimore (ISBN 0-226-46940-0)
Herodotus, *The Histories*, tr. Marincola (ISBN 9780140449082)
Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, tr. Meineck (ISBN 978-0872203907)
Livy, *Rise of Rome; Books 1-5*, tr. T. Luce (ISBN 019-282296-9)
Vergil, *The Aeneid*, tr. R. Fitzgerald (ISBN 067-972952-6)
Sophocles, *The Theban Plays*, tr. R. Blondell (ISBN 1-58510-037-4)
Plautus, *Amphitryo* (provided as xerox)
Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, tr. E.J. Kenney (014-043590-5)
Plato, *Five Dialogues*
Introduction to Aristotle

Outline of course meetings (subject to revision)

Class 1 (May 22): Introduction and Homer, *Iliad* (1-12) (Sens)

This session will be particularly important for establishing a broad chronological and geographic overview of the course and for establishing its themes and focuses.

Issues to be discussed include Achilles' position relative to the Greeks; his relation to the gods; Hector and his family and the tension between "epic" expectations and his own familial obligations; "the heroic code;" relationship of East and West.

Class 2 (May 29): Homer, *Iliad* (13-24) (Sens)

This class will focus on how the issues raised in the preceding class play out in the second half of the poem, with particular attention to the culmination of the poem in Book 24.

Class 3 (Jun. 5): Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (Sens)

After a brief overview of ancient drama, the class focuses on the ways in which Aeschylus represents the relationship between gods and men and the working of divine justice over time. In addition, the class raises the question of the relation between house and society (and the correlative relationship between female and male).

Class 4 (June 12): Vergil (1-6) (McNelis)

Students will study the particularly Roman engagement with Homer; issues to be discussed include Aeneas' position relative to Troy, to Rome and the gods. Special attention will be paid to the way the poem locates itself in an ongoing epic tradition.

Class 5 (June 19): Vergil (7-12) (McNelis)

In this class, students will pay particular attention to the ways in which Vergil redeploys the Homeric value system in significant and provocative ways, especially as his poem comes to a close.

Class 6 (June 26): Sophocles and Plautus: *Antigone* and *Amphitryo* (provided Xerox) (McNelis).

Comparison of the role of the principal female figure in two households: one tragic, the other comic. Students consider the role of genre and culture in the representation of Sophocles' *Antigone* and Plautus' *Alcmene*.

Class 7 (July 3): Herodotus, *Histories* Book 1 and Livy Book 1 (Sens)

Students focus on the genre of history by reading the first book of Herodotus, paying particular attention to the way that work represents humans' relationship to the divine world, as well as to questions of epistemology and teleology; the conflict between "East" and "West" (Greeks and non-Greeks) is also considered. Roman developments of the genre in Livy will then be considered.

Class 8 (July 10): Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle (reading to be done in class; no writing)

This class introduces students to the theories of knowledge in Plato and Aristotle, with particular attention to their differences, backgrounds, and afterlife. To the last end, the class will include an overview of their influence on Medieval, Renaissance, and Kantian views of knowledge.

Class 9 (July 17): Plato, *Meno* and *Phaedo*

Students will read select passages of both dialogues (to be assigned). The writing assignment will involve a summary of the content of the assigned passages.

Class 10 (July 24): Aristotle (Reuscher). Read *Physics*, *Posterior Analytics*, and *De Anima* (selections to be assigned).

Class 11 (July 31): Lecture on Aristotle texts in *Ethics* and *Politics* (Reuscher)

Class 12 (August 7) Wrap up (all faculty)

SAMPLE ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS (NB THESE ARE THE ASSIGNMENTS FOR SPRING, 2012; ASSIGNMENTS FOR SUMMER WILL BE DISTRIBUTED ON FIRST DAY OF CLASS; n.b. "class" is the class at which it is due):

Class 2 (Jan. 24): In Book 6, Hector's son does not recognize him in his armor. How does this scene relate to the military action of Books 7 and 8?

Class 3 (Jan. 31): How does the fight over Patroclus' corpse in Book 17 relate to other scenes in the second half of the poem?

Class 4 (Feb. 7): Use specific references from Book 2 to show how the death of Laocoon and his sons comments the relationship of gods and humans in the *Aeneid*.

Class 5 (Feb. 14): How does Juturna's inability to help Turnus reflect the power struggle between male and female gods?

Class 6 (Feb. 21): How does the organization of material in Herodotus and Livy reflect the two authors' differing understanding of the impact of the past on the present?

Class 7 (Feb. 28): Citing specific passages, evaluate the relationship between Clytemnestra's role as mother and her regency of Argos during Agamemnon's absence.

Class 8 (March 13): Compare Creon in the *Antigone* to Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon*, focusing on the way they balance their own view of what is right with the needs of their family.

No paper for Apuleius. Be prepared to contribute to discussion in a lively way.