

Epic Poetry Among the Greeks and Romans
Ori Z Soltes
Tuesdays 6:30-9:30

The purpose of this course is threefold. Our first goal is to enjoy three of the more sublime works in the Western literary canon: the two surviving Greek epic poems that illuminate aspects of the Trojan War—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—and the primary Roman epic poem, the *Aeneid*, that is modeled in large part on a combination of these Greek models.

Our second goal will be to use these three poems as a stepping off point for a consideration of some of the differences between Greek and Roman culture and thought: what sorts of issues, ideas, and qualities distinguished these two worlds from each other and which features were endemic to them both?

Our third goal will be to place the three poems in the larger context of epic (and lyric) poetry in the Western tradition with a brief exploration and discussion of other works that precede the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, follow these poems but precede the *Aeneid* and follow the *Aeneid*—down to our own time.

The primary source for grades will be a pair of 10-12-page papers, one delivered ca October 24 and the other toward the end of the exam period

Sept 5 Intro I: Pre-Greek Epic poetry: the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh

Sept 12 Intro II: The Greek world view through the eyes of Hesiod and his *Theogony* (The Birth of the Gods) and *Works and Days*; Irony, Tragedy, Nobility and the Human Condition

Sept 19 Gods and Men and the Trojan War Cycle: The Anger of Achilles and *Iliad* I-VI

Sept 26 Heroic Glory and (Im)mortality: *Iliad* VII-XVI

Oct 3 Transformation and Tragedy: Toward the Death of Hektor and the Doom of Akhilleus: *Iliad* XVII-XXIV

Oct 10 The Search for Odysseus and the Long Journey Home: *Odyssey* 1-8

Oct 17 Wandering, Death and the Spinning of Tales: *Odyssey* 9-16

Oct 24 Returning Home, Life and the Spinning of Webs: *Odyssey* 17-24

Oct 31 Interlude: Lyric and Epic Greek Poetry and the Trojan War Cycle

Nov 7 Enter Roman *Pietas* and its concomitants: Virgil, Lyric Alternatives and *Aeneid* I-IV

Nov 14 Aeneas as a Roman Odysseus: *Aeneid* V-VII

Nov 21 Aeneas as Roman Achilles: *Aeneid* VIII-XII

Nov 28 Aftermath: the Epic from Dante to Nikos Kazantzakis to Derek Walcott

Academic Standards: MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disability Notice: If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center—Suite 335, Leavey Center (arc@georgetown.edu) –for further information. This office is 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.