

BLHS 102 The Ancient World: Greeks and Romans

Professors McNelis (course director) and Sens

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 McNelis (Healy 321; 687-7634) is the primary contact. His ordinary office hours will be MW 12-1, but he will also be available at other times; 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. It is important that you participate actively and vigorously for all three professors.

1. a) Written Work (60%)

Students will write a series of short (1-2 pp.) [papers](#), a total of eight for the semester. 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. Do not, however, worry if your initial grades are low, since we are looking for significant improvement from the beginning to the end of the class.

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 blhs102papers@gmail.com by 6:00 on the night the paper is due; DO NOT SEND YOUR PAPERS TO MY OTHER PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL ADDRESS.** 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.** If you cannot be in class, you may submit your paper online before the start of class. Your absence will be recorded as such, but your paper will count as long as it arrives before the start time.

The final writing assignment (6-8 pp.) will be due on the first day of exam period and will involve a brief essay in which students consider the similarities and differences among the various genres they have read.

1. b) Class Participation (40%)

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 (75%, 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 THAT THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS OF CLASS REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL OF READING. SUBSEQUENT READING LOADS ARE LIGHTER, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU BEGIN TO READ THE ILIAD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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.

Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations, or you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu.

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) (xerox also available)

Plautus, *Amphitryo* (provided as xerox)

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, tr. E.J. Kenney (014-043590-5)

Outline of course meetings (subject to revision)

Class 1: Introduction

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

Class 2: [Hesiod, *Works and Days* and *Theogony*](#)

Class 3: Homer, *Iliad* (1-12)

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 4: Homer, *Iliad* (13-24)

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 5: Vergil (1-6)

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 6: Vergil (7-12)

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 7: Herodotus, *Histories* Book 1 and Livy Book 1

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: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*

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 9: Sophocles *Antigone*; and Plautus *Amphitryo*

A continuation of the study of drama.

Class 10: Presocratics and Aristophanes, *Clouds* (pdf).

Class 11: Philosophy. Read Plato, *Apology* (last two pages [here](#)) and *Phaedo*

This class introduces students in a focused way to the philosophy of Plato, emphasizing the place of his philosophy in an ongoing tradition while acknowledging his unique contribution.

Class 12: Aristotle and Hellenistic Philosophy

Read Aristotle, [selections](#); Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus* (available here: <http://classics.mit.edu/Epicurus/menoec.html>); Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, book 1.

This class introduces the philosophy of Aristotle and looks at how his philosophy differs both from Plato's and from that of his Hellenistic peers and successors.

Class 13: Apuleius: Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (*The Golden Ass*)

This class will introduce a new genre, the novel. Students will consider the way Apuleius represents the place of religion in Roman society, with special focus on his treatment of the problematic relationship between worship and morality.

Class 14: Wrap Up