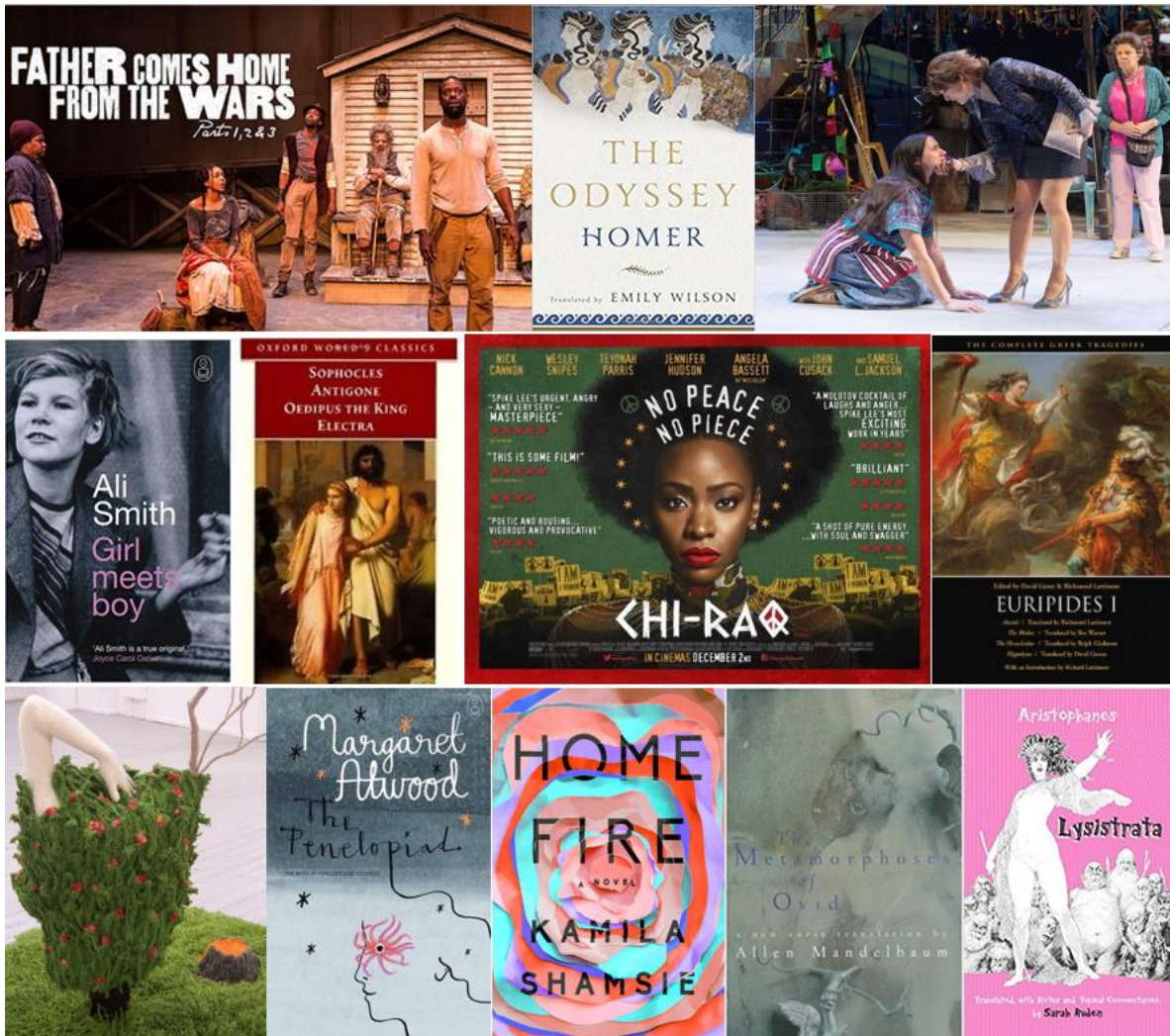


WHAT'S OLD IS NEW:
CLASSICS AND MODERN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS (WRIT 130-01)



Professor Jessica Seidman, Classical Studies
Fall 2018, M/Th. 4:10-5:20
Founders Hall 227

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Course Description

Perhaps it seems improbable that the literature of the ancient Greeks and Romans would have much relevance to important social issues in our diverse society today. In recent years, however, many of these ancient materials have been adapted to help activists examine and advocate for modern causes. We will start by thinking about reception: How have ancient texts been received by later cultures and groups, and can a reception be “good” or “bad”? What is the difference between reception, adaptation, and appropriation?

Then, focusing primarily on works by women and people of color, we will explore recent receptions of classical texts that address racial justice, feminism, and immigration. Although the course is divided into three units, many of the works that we will discuss are inherently intersectional; we will return to earlier texts over the course of the semester. We will consider a variety of questions, including the following: to what extent are these social issues present in the ancient materials and how has the modern adaptor adjusted them for contemporary resonance? Why use the ancient materials at all? How do the modern materials both appropriate and resist the ancient? Finally, what are the advantages and disadvantages to this appropriation of “the classics” as a vehicle for social change?

Texts

Alfaro, Luis. *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*. Unpublished; to be purchased at the start of the semester.

Aristophanes. *The Lysistrata*. Translated by Sarah Ruden. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003. ISBN: 978-0872206038

Atwood, Margaret. *The Penelopiad*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005. ISBN: 978-1841957982

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Translated by Emily Wilson. New York: Norton, 2018. ISBN: 978-0393356250

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *Father Comes Home from the Wars, Parts 1, 2, & 3*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-55936-500-0.

Shamsie, Kamila. *Home Fire*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-4088-8679-3

Smith, Ali. *Girl Meets Boy: The Myth of Iphis*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2007. ISBN: 978-1847671868

Additional materials on Sakai

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and Preparedness:** This class will be *highly* dependent on student participation and discussion. Thus, in preparation for class, it is critical that you

- a) come to class on time
- b) READ THE TEXTS THAT WE ARE DISCUSSING THAT DAY
- c) consider the discussion questions posted on Sakai, and
- d) bring at least one question of your own and one passage that you would like to discuss.

The Writing Program Absence Policy is as follows:

All sections of first-year writing require each student's regular participation not only as a writer but also as reader, editor, and critic of her classmates' work. Regular attendance is therefore expected and required. Any student who is absent more than four times (the equivalent of two weeks of class) will be asked to withdraw from the course. This generous policy should allow for all absences that may be necessary due to illness, religious observations, or family obligations, and therefore it doesn't distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If you anticipate missing several classes due to any of these reasons, please notify your instructor as soon as possible.

2. Participation: I'll say it again: this class will be *highly* dependent on student participation and discussion. Participation can take many forms. Ideally, you should contribute at least one comment or question to the full class discussion every meeting. But participation also includes contributing a comment to the course blog, engaging with your group during small group discussions, volunteering to have your paragraph workshopped, etc.

3. Assignments: There will be four papers over the course of this semester:

- one brief response paper (2pp., due 9/20)
- two critical analysis papers (4-5pp., due 10/22 and 11/12)
- one research paper (8pp., draft due 12/6)

Leading up to each of these papers, there will be a variety of smaller writing assignments and workshops designed to improve your writing style, significant claims (theses), introductions, arguments, and conclusions, as well as teach you how to do research and how to incorporate that research into your writing. There will also be some shorter writing assignments, including blog posts.

You will be permitted **one 24-hour extension** to be used on any one of the four papers due this semester. You can take this extension for any reason – you don't have to explain to me why. Once you use the extension, however, you will not receive another *for any reason*.

Grading and the Honor Code

This course is designated “no letter grades given;” you will receive either “credit” (CR) or “no credit” (NCR). Additionally, if you are a first-year student, this course is “shadow-graded,” so you will only see “pass” (P) or “no pass” (NP) on your transcript, and, like all of your classes this semester, it will not count toward your GPA.

Nevertheless, it might be helpful for you to know what letter grade you *would have received* on a paper, if the course were using letter grades. You should always feel free to ask me, if you’re curious.

In order to receive credit for the course, you must submit all four major written assignments on time (with one 24-hour extension allowed; see above) and receive a passing grade on all of them. You also must meet the requirements for satisfactory participation over the course of the semester.

You should adhere to the honor code in the submission of all work. You can find more information about the honor code and procedures here:

<http://www.wellesley.edu/studentlife/aboutus/honor>. Even if you’re not quite sure what you think of the honor code, I think we can all agree that taking someone else’s work and pretending it’s your own (plagiarism) isn’t right. The two most common reasons that students cheat or plagiarize are 1) they’re super stressed out and worried they’re going to fail if they don’t, and 2) they don’t realize that they’re plagiarizing. The solution to both of these problems is **come talk to me!** If you’re stressed out, we can come up with a plan together. And if you’re quoting/paraphrasing/summarizing and you’re not sure whether you need to cite a source, just ask! There are never any repercussions for asking ahead of time. In short, cheating and plagiarism are avoidable; help me help you avoid them!

Student Services

Peer writing tutors are available for ALL students, no matter your level or experience; it is very much to your advantage to work with them. Tutoring is also available for English language learners through the English Language Resource Center (ELRC). You can make an appointment with a writing tutor and/or an ELL tutor here:

<https://wellesley.mywconline.com/>.

Syllabus

N.B.: assignments are due on the dates listed below

Thursday 9/6 – Introduction to Classics, reception, and the course

Material: Beyoncé and Jay-Z, “APES**T – THE CARTERS”

What is Reception?

In this “mini-unit” we will briefly explore what scholars mean by “reception.” We will discuss whether “receiving” is the appropriate metaphor, whether a reception can be “good” or “bad,” how the reception can affect the original, and the difference between “reception” and “appropriation.”

Monday 9/10 – Can Reception be “Good” or “Bad?”

Reading:

- Selections from Tacitus’ *Germania* (on Sakai)
- Katie Fleming, “The Use and Abuse of Antiquity: The Politics and Morality of Appropriation” (on Sakai)
- Rebecca Futo Kennedy, “Blood and Soil from Antiquity to Charlottesville: A Short Primer” (<https://rfkclassics.blogspot.com/2017/08/blood-and-soil-from-antiquity-to.html>)

Classics and Contemporary Issues of Race (7 classes)

This unit will focus on receptions of classical literature by people of color who are interested in questions of racial justice/injustice. We will consider the ways that the modern authors have adapted the ancient texts/stories, why they might have chosen to use the classical materials, and what effect the reception has on our reading of the original.

Thursday 9/13

Reading: Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*

Monday 9/17

Movie: *Chi-Raq*, written and directed by Spike Lee

Thursday 9/20

RESPONSE PAPER DUE (2pp)

Writing Day: Significant Claims and Introductions

Monday 9/24

Reading: *Odyssey* 1-6 (101 pages)

Thursday 9/27

Reading: *Odyssey* 7-12 (107 pages)

Monday 10/1

Reading: Suzan-Lori Parks, *Father Comes Home from the Wars* (Parts 1-3)

Thursday 10/4

Reading: *Odyssey* 13-18 (107 pages)

FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 8-9

Classics and Feminism (7 classes)

This unit will focus on the representation of women's voices in ancient and modern works, including the ways that modern works have responded to the ancient silencing of women, gender stereotyping, and lesbian/trans issues.

Thursday 10/11

Reading:

- *Odyssey* 19-24 (101 pages)
- Ovid, *Heroides* 1: Penelope to Ulysses (on Sakai)

Monday 10/15

Reading: Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad* pp. xiii-98

Thursday 10/18

Reading: Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad* pp. 99-196

Monday 10/22

PAPER 1 DUE (4pp)

Writing Day: Argument

Thursday 10/25

Reading: Selections from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (on Sakai)

Images: Kate Just's *Knitted Sculpture 2006-2008*: <http://www.katejust.com/knitted-sculptures-2006-2008/>

Monday 10/29

Reading:

- Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9: "Iphis and Ianthe" (on Sakai)
- Ali Smith, *Girl Meets Boy*, pp. 3-77

Thursday 11/1

Reading: Ali Smith, *Girl Meets Boy*, pp. 81-161

Classics and Immigration (8 classes)

In this unit, we will consider the ways that ancient and modern works frame questions of citizen identity, the tension between familial and civic loyalties, and the recent invocations of “the fall of Rome” in anti-immigrant discourse.

Monday 11/5

Reading: Euripides, *Medea*

Thursday 11/8

Reading: Luis Alfaro, *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*

Monday 11/12

PAPER 2 DUE (5pp)

Writing Day: Incorporating Secondary Sources/Library Day

Thursday 11/15

Reading: Sophocles, *Antigone*

Monday 11/19

Reading: Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, pp. 3-86

THANKSGIVING BREAK: NOVEMBER 21-23

Monday 11/26

Reading: Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, pp. 87-210

Thursday 11/29

Reading: Kamila Shamsie, *Home Fire*, pp. 213-260

Monday 12/3

Reading:

- Dan-el Padilla Peralta, “Barbarians Inside the Gate, Part I: Fears of Immigration in Ancient Rome and Today” (<https://eidolon.pub/barbarians-inside-the-gate-part-i-c175057b340f>)
- Dan-el Padilla Peralta, “Barbarians Inside the Gate Part II: Immigrant Labor and Its Discontents” (<https://eidolon.pub/barbarians-inside-the-gate-part-ii-c22c5becd228>)

Thursday 12/6

PAPER 3 DRAFT DUE; in class workshop

Monday 12/10

Classicists and Modern Social Justice Movements

- “Homer for Veterans”
<https://www.apnews.com/4f8ddc128a464e8eb6cc350b6993edb8>
- “Theater of War” <http://theaterofwar.com/projects/theater-of-war/overview>
- The Aequora Project <https://eidolon.pub/aequora-8accc39de16c>
- other social justice initiatives in Classics:
<https://classicsocialjustice.wordpress.com/home/>

FINAL PAPER DUE: TBA