
Ancient Comedy and its Influence

CLAS 0400 [CRN: 24674]

Spring 2014
MWF 11:00-11:50am

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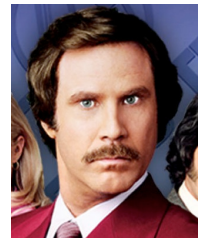
Overview

In this course, we will study the origins and developments of comedy in ancient Greece (early iambic poetry, Aristophanes, Menander), its later offshoots in Rome (Plautus, Terence), England (Shakespeare), and the continued influence these ancient forms have on comedy today. Secondary readings include ancient and modern thoughts on humor and laughter, and writings on the historical contexts in which these plays were produced.



Goals

- Develop a deeper appreciation for popular comedy
- Learn the origins and development of this central literary genre
- Improve clarity and confidence in writing
- Think critically about texts (e.g. how many ways can we “read” a line?)



Evaluation

- Class Participation (be present at all classes, be ready to discuss the assignment, and add thoughtfully to the conversation; absences require a doctor's note) (30%)
- Short essay (5 pgs.; 15%) and Final term essay (10 pgs.; 25%)
- Midterm exam (10%) and Final Exam (20%)

Required Books

- Aristophanes *Lysistrata and Other Plays* (trans. Sommerstein) Penguin
- Aristophanes *Frogs and Other Plays* (trans. Sommerstein) Penguin
- Aristophanes *The Birds and Other Plays* (trans. Sommerstein) Penguin
- Menander *The Grouch, etc...* (Slavitt & Bowie) UPenn Press
- Plautus *Four Plays* (trans. Erich Segal) OUP
- Plautus: the Comedies I & IV (Slavitt & Bowie) UPenn Press
- Terence: the Comedies (trans. Brown) Oxford World Classics
- Shakespeare *The Comedy of Errors* (Charles Whitworth, ed.)
- Shakespeare *Much Ado About Nothing*

Milestones

2/14/14

First Paper Due

4/4/14

Final Paper Topic Due

5/2/14

Final Paper Due

Week 1: Origins of Comedy

Wed. 1/22: Introduction: Why study comedy?

Fri. 1/24: Comedy before “Comedy”?

- Read “Archaic Iambic” Handout
- Watch *South Park: Ginger Cow** (Season 17, Episode 6) and write down as many features of the comic genre you can find there (<http://www.southparkstudios.com/full-episodes/s17e06-ginger-cow>)
- * **Warning:** this is highly offensive material, but there is nothing here that you won’t find in Aristophanes, so prepare yourself to think critically about both the positive and negative responses that comedy provokes in you.

Week 2: Aristophanes I: Political Comedy

Mon. 1/27: *Acharnians*

Wed. 1/29: *Acharnians*

Fri. 1/31: *Knights*

Week 3 Aristophanes II: Fantasy

Mon. 2/3: *Birds*

Wed. 2/5: *Birds*

Fri. 2/7: *Peace*

Week 4 Aristophanes III: Women

Mon. 2/10: *Lysistrata*

Wed. 2/12: *Lysistrata*

Fri. 2/14: *The Assemblywomen*

- ***Short Essay Due Today***

Week 5: Aristophanes IV: Tragedy and Paratragedy

Mon. 2/17: No Class, President’s Day

Wed. 2/19: *Women at the Thesmophoria*

Fri. 2/21: *Women at the Thesmophoria*

Week 6: Menander and “New” Comedy

Mon. 2/24: *The Girl from Samos*

Wed. 2/26: *The Girl from Samos*

Fri. 2/28: *The Grouch*

Week 7: Plautus I

Mon. 3/3 *Menaechmi* (Segal)

Wed. 3/5 *Menaechmi* (Segal)

Fri. 3/7 *Pseudolus* (Beacham)

Week 8: Plautus II

Mon. 3/10 *Pseudolus* (trans. Beacham)

Wed. 3/12 *Miles Gloriosus* (trans. Segal)

Fri. 3/14 *Miles Gloriosus* (trans. Segal)

Week 9: Plautus III

Mon. 3/17 *Casina* (trans. Beacham)

Wed. 3/19 *Casina* (trans. Beacham)

Fri. 3/21: Midterm Exam

Week 10: Spring Break (3/22-30)

Week 11: Terence I

Mon. 3/31 *Andria*

Wed. 4/2 *Andria*

Fri. 4/4 *Eunuch*

*** By today, please send me your final paper topics by email***

Week 12 Terence II

Mon. 4/7: *Eunuch*

Wed. 4/9 *Adelphoe*

Fri. 4/11 *Adelphoe*

Week 13: Shakespeare I

Mon. 4/14: *Much Ado about Nothing*

Wed. 4/16: *Much Ado about Nothing*

Fri. 4/18: *Much Ado about Nothing*

Week 14: Shakespeare

Mon. 4/21: *Comedy of Errors*

Wed. 4/23: *Comedy of Errors* (Last Class)

Week 15

Reading Period: Fri. 4/25- Tues. 5/6

Final Paper Due Friday May 2

Final Exam: TBA