Molly Ierulli

COLT-1410S

Classical Tragedy

MWF 1:00-1:50 Rock 412

Office Hours: Wed 12-1, Marston Hall B6, and by appointment

**Course description:**

This course will survey ancient tragedy, both Greek and Roman, in order to develop a familiarity with what tragedy means to the ancient world and to learn about the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome through one of their most important genres. As Aristotle points out, tragedy is not a description but a mimesis, an imitation of life, and much can be learned of ancient lives, religion, gender, and culture from tragedy. When we have surveyed Greek and Roman tragedy we will read plays by Shakespeare and Racine, two great playwrights who took ancient literature and society as the ground of some of their greatest tragedies. Finally, we will conclude with O'Neill's reimagining of the *Oresteia,* *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

**Course goals:**

To survey the history of tragic drama, with emphasis on Greek and Roman times and themes.

To learn about Greek and Roman culture through their own depictions of their important myths.

To follow classical culture and tragedy into the Renaissance and beyond.

**Course objectives**:

Students will study the development of the tragic play, from the simple two-character Aeschylean drama and its development by Sophocles and Euripides, through Rome, the Renaissance, and seventeenth-century neoclassicism. We will reflect on both developments in dramaturgy and the complexity necessitated by moving from three short plays to a single, longer format. Students will gain an appreciation and a deeper understanding of the importance of Greece and Rome in the Western imagination, and will feel comfortable exploring how myth and history work together to keep classical culture relevant in the 21st century.

**Course requirements and grading policy:**

 2 papers: 1st paper 4-6pp., 20%; 2nd paper 7-9 pp., 25%

Midterm exam, 15%; final exam 25%

Class attendance and participation 15%

**Texts**:

Aeschylus, Vol. I&II, Chicago

Sophocles, Vol. I&II, Chicago

Euripides, Vol. V, Chicago

Seneca, *Six Tragedies*

Shakespeare (either individual texts or a volume of complete works)

Racine, *Andromache* and *Phaedra* in *Four French Plays*

O'Neill, *Mourning Becomes Electra*

**Course calendar**

Jan 22 Introduction

 24 *Agamemnon*

 27 *The Libation Bearers*

 29 *The Eumenides*

 31 *Suppliants*

Feb 3 *Seven against Thebes*

 5 *Prometheus Bound*

 7 *Persians*

 10 *Oedipus the King*

 12 *Oedipus the King*

 14 *Oedipus at Colonus*

 17 Holiday

 19 *Antigone*

 21 *Ajax*; **1st short paper due**

 24 *Women of Trachis*

 26 *Electra*

 28 *Philoctetes*

Mar 3 *Rhesus*

 5 *Bacchae*

 7 *Iphigeneia in Aulis*

 10 **Midterm Exam**

 12 Seneca, *Trojan Women*

 14 Seneca, *Phaedra*

 17 Seneca, *Medea*

 19 Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* Acts 1-2

 21 - 30 **Spring Break**

 31 *Titus Andronicus* Acts 3-5

Apr 2 Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* Acts 1-3

 4  *Coriolanus* Acts 4-5

 7 Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* Acts 1-2

 9 *Julius Caesar* Acts 3-5; **2nd paper due**

 11 Film of *Julius Caesar*

 14 Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* Acts 1-3

 16 *Antony and Cleopatra* Acts 4-5

 18 Racine, *Andromache*

 21 Racine, *Phaedra*

 23 O'Neill, *Homecoming*

 25 *The Hunted*

 28 Last class - *The Haunted*