
The Myth of the Seven

CLAS 0950 [CRN: 15891] WRIT

From Aeschylus to Kurosawa

Fall 2014
MWF 11:00-11:50am

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Overview

What is a story? Does it have a life of its own? In this class, we will focus on a single story and study its progression from epic times to Classical Greece, to the Roman empire and medieval period, to the Renaissance and Hollywood. Why do certain stories survive? How do different ages think through a story and what do they need from these stories? We will read authors like Aeschylus, Euripides, Statius, and Racine, consider depictions in the visual arts, and watch film versions like the cowboy classic "The Magnificent Seven" and Kurosawa's "Seven Samurai." All texts in translation.

Goals

- Develop a deeper knowledge of ancient literature and its traditions
- Appreciate historical milestones via a traveling story
- Gain an ease and confidence in writing (we will write a lot)
- Think critically about texts (e.g. how many ways can we "read" a line?)

Evaluation

- Class Participation (be present at all classes and be ready to discuss the assignment; absences require a doctor's note; 35% of grade)
- Weekly Journal Entries (15% of grade)
- Online Image Research ID's (15% of grade)
- Final 10 pg. research paper (~1750-2500 words) which will go through a process of revision (35% of grade = 15% first draft, 20% final draft)

Required Books

- Statius, *Thebaid* (Jane Joyce, trans.) Cornell U. Press
- Aeschylus I *Seven Against Thebes* (Greene/Lattimore) U. Chicago Press
- Sophocles I *Antigone, etc.* (Greene/Lattimore) U. Chicago
- Euripides IV + V (Greene/Lattimore) U. Chicago
- Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale* (Spearing) Cambridge U. Press
- Racine, *The Fratricides* (Argent) Penn State Press



Milestones

9/12/14

First Journal Assignment Due

10/24/14

Final Paper Topic Due

12/11/14

Final Paper Due

Week 1: The Myth in Hollywood

Wed. 9/3: Introduction

Fri. 9/5: *The Magnificent Seven*

- What elements of this movie *feel* “mythical”? How do we define this feeling?

PART ONE: THE STORY

Week 2: Statius I

Mon. 9/8: *Thebaid* 1-3

Wed. 9/10: *Thebaid* 1-3

Fri. 9/12: *Thebaid* 1-3

- Journal Assignment #1 Due

Week 3: Statius II

Mon. 9/15: *Thebaid* 4-6

Wed. 9/17: *Thebaid* 4-6

- Image Assignment #1 Due

Fri. 9/19: *Thebaid* 4-6

- Journal Assignment #2 Due

Week 4: Statius III

Mon. 9/22: *Thebaid* 7-9

Wed. 9/24: *Thebaid* 7-9

- Image Assignment #2 Due

Fri. 9/26: *Thebaid* 7-9

- Journal Assignment #3 Due

Week 5: Statius IV

Mon. 9/29: *Thebaid* 10-12

Wed. 10/1: *Thebaid* 10-12

- Image Assignment #3 Due

Fri. 10/3: *Thebaid* 10-12

- Journal Assignment #4 Due

PART TWO: THE STORY IN HISTORY

Week 6: Epic Beginnings

Mon. 10/6: How does a story begin?

- Fragments from the Theban Epics
- Near Eastern Handout

Wed. 10/8: The Seven Fragments of the *Iliad*

- Handout Thebes in the *Iliad*

Fri. 10/10: Oral Tradition

- Handout on Oral Tradition

Week 7: The Back-Story

Mon. 10/13: Fall Weekend Holiday (= a.k.a. celebrating the Seventh Week)

Wed. 10/15: *Bacchae*

Fri. 10/15: *Bacchae*

- Journal Assignment #5 Due

Week 8: The Back-Story / After-Story

Mon. 10/20: *Oedipus Tyrannus*

Wed. 10/22: *Oedipus Tyrannus* / *Antigone*

- Image Assignment #5 Due

Fri. 10/24: *Antigone*

*** By today at the latest I need to know your final paper topic and your plans: email me or drop by office hours to discuss your developing argument ***

Week 9: The After-Story

Mon. 10/27: *Oedipus at Colonus*

Wed. 10/29: *Oedipus at Colonus*

- Image Assignment #6 Due

Fri. 10/31: The Epigone (handout)

Week 10: The Seven on Stage

Mon. 11/3: Aeschylus *Seven*

Wed. 11/5: Euripides *Phoenician Women*

Fri. 11/7: Euripides *Phoenician Women*

- Journal Assignment #6 Due

Week 11: Medieval Period

Mon. 11/10: The Seven Liberal Arts in Late Antiquity

- Fulgentius Handout

Wed. 11/12: *Roman de Thebes* (Selections: Handout)

Fri. 11/14: *Roman de Thebes* (Selections: Handout)

- Journal Assignment #7 Due

Week 12: Chaucer

Mon. 11/17: Chaucer: *Knight's Tale*

- Translation will be provided in handout

Wed. 11/19: Chaucer: *Knight's Tale*

- Image Assignment #7 Due

Fri. 11/21: Chaucer: *Knight's Tale*

- Journal Assignment #8 Due

Week 13: Racine

Mon. 11/24: Racine: *Fratricides*

- Read Racine's *Fratricides*

Wed. 11/26: *Thanksgiving: No Class*

- ***Final Paper (First Draft) Due***

Fri. 11/28: *Thanksgiving: No Class*

Week 14: Kurosawa

Mon. 12/1: Kurosawa, *Seven Samurai*

Wed. 12/3: Kurosawa, *Seven Samurai*

Fri. 12/5: Final Discussion: How/when does the story of a story end?

Week 15: Reading Period

Reading Period: Sun. 12/7- Thurs. 12/11

Final Paper (Final Draft) Due Thursday 12/11