

## TH 320 Classical Repertory

T/TH 11:15-12:30  
Hills House 423

## Christopher Baker

Assistant Professor  
crbake1@gmail.com  
Office Hours: Tues 1-2  
FAC 110

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### OVERVIEW

What do the plays of fifth-century Athens and the Roman Republic have to offer us in the twenty-first century? How might contemporary theater artists produce these works?

This course will trace the development of the theatre and drama of ancient Greece and Rome. We will begin with theories of origin and then discuss the cultural, political and religious circumstances in which dramatic texts were performed. We will take a close look at nine of the plays. We will also look at ways these plays are performed, revised and adapted today.

The class will consist of lectures, discussions, and in-class presentations. You will be asked to read and discuss plays, analyze them in written assignments and participate in group projects. We will be investigating the works in many ways, including performance. While no one in the class is required or expected to have any acting ability, everyone will be required to participate in on-your-feet scene work.

### REQUIRED READING

The following texts are available in hard copy:

**The Oresteia**, Aeschylus, Peter Meineck (trans.). Hackett Pub 1998. 978-0872203907

**Lysistrata**, Aristophanes, Nicholas Rudall (trans). Ivan Dee, 1991 978-0-929587-57-8

**Five Comedies: Plautus and Terence**, trans. by Deena Berg and Douglass Parker.  
Hackett Pub, 1999. 978-0872203624

The following are available as e-books from the UMass Library:

**Electra**, Sophocles in *The Electra Plays* [electronic resource] / Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles ; translated with notes by Peter Meineck, Cecelia Eaton Luschnig, and Paul Woodruff ; introduction by Justina Gregory. FC E-Resources / E Book / PA3643.A2 E44 2009

**Orestes**, Euripides in *The Orestes plays* / Euripides ; translated, with introduction and notes, by Cecelia Eaton Luschnig. FC E-Resources / E-Book / PA3975 .A2 2013

**Electra**, Adrienne Kennedy in *The Adrienne Kennedy reader* [electronic resource] / Adrienne Kennedy ; introduction by Werner Sollors

The following is available on-line

**Orestes 2.0** by Chuck Mee at <http://www.charlesmee.org/orestes.shtml>

The following will be on Moodle:

**Poetics**, Aristotle

**Thyestes, Seneca** (trans. Caryl Churchill)

You also need to have read **Oedipus** by Sophocles. If you have not read it for three years, find a recent translation and read it.

Students should also have a copy of the **Penguin Handbook, Second Custom Edition for University of Massachusetts Amherst**. (ISBN 978-0-558-33612-7)

## JUNIOR YEAR WRITING

This is a Junior Year Writing class, with certain goals for the development of your writing skills. The class will reinforce basic writing skills including the ability to compose coherent sentences and logically developed paragraphs. You will be asked to draft, revise, and edit your writing as well as give useful feedback to others. You will be expected to proofread all work for grammatical errors and to cite secondary sources correctly.

Over the course of this class, it is hoped you will gain competency in more advanced writing skills. You should be able to think and write analytically and interpretatively, rather than simply restating information. Your work should follow a logical line of development, using details and examples to argue or explain a thesis. Finally, you should be able to write with the authority needed to accomplish a particular purpose with a particular audience.

## WRITING/PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

This class includes 7 writing assignments. More details will be given in the individual writing prompts. The length, tone and purpose of each assignment are different. What is important in each is your ability to communicate your interpretations, reflections and analyses in writing. Though some of these assignments are short, all rules of academic writing apply

1. Reflection on images and impressions of Greek theatre. Drawing on your experience with ancient Greek Theater in other classes (theater, classics, etc.) and popular media, this paper will serve as jumping off point for our discussions. (2-3 pages)
2. Analysis of choices made for the Staging the *Oresteia* assignment below. (1 page)
3. A production concept of one of the plays from the *Oresteia*. **This will be peer-reviewed in class.** The edited paper will be turned in to the instructor. (5 pages)
4. Analysis of a contemporary adaptation by either Charles Mee or Adrienne Kennedy. (3 pages.)
5. An essay outlining examples of the influence of Roman Comedy in modern theater, film or television. (3 pages)
6. Analysis of choices made for the Staging *Thyestes* assignment below. (1 page)
7. An expanded version of assignment 3, 4 or 5 to be approved by instructor. **The first draft will be reviewed by the instructor before final revisions.** (9-10 pages)

## PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

This class includes 2 class presentation assignments. Details will be given in the individual presentation prompts. The goal of these projects is to use staging and performance to understand and communicate the action and significant events of the plays.

1. Staging the *Oresteia* scene work. You will be asked to develop a 10-minute version of one of the plays in small groups and present to the class.
2. Staging *Thyestes* scene work. You will be asked to develop a 10-minute version of *Thyestes* in small groups and present to the class.

## GRADES

Your grade will be based on 1100 points and will consist of the following elements:

Attendance	125 (each class is worth 5 points)
Peer review	50
Assignment 1 paper	100
Assignment 2 <i>Oresteia</i>	25
Assignment 3 production concept	150
Assignment 4 contemporary version	100
Assignment 5 Roman Comedy	100
Assignment 6 <i>Thyestes</i>	100
Assignment 7 long paper	250
Presentation 1 <i>Oresteia</i>	75
Presentation 2 <i>Thyestes</i>	100

## GRADING SCALE

A	1023	B+	957	C+	847	D+	737
A-	990	B	913	C	803	D	693
		B-	880	C-	770	D-	660

## ATTENDANCE

Understanding of class material is related closely to attendance. I take attendance at the beginning of each class and **I don't go back to fill in the people who came late**. Sleeping in class does not count as attending. I will ask you to leave. Make sure you are present for the day we peer review. Your work as a reviewer is worth 50 points.

## PLAGIARISM

The UMass Amherst Academic Regulations (p. 7) and Code of Student Conduct (p. 28) define plagiarism as: "Knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting without citation, in whole or in part, pre-written term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials."

The Writing Program has prepared a more-detailed explanation of plagiarism:  
<http://www.umass.edu/writingprogram/geninfo/plagiarism.html>

The Code of Student Conduct ([http://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/)) states: "The integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research. Academic honesty is therefore required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty" (p. 28)." The Code also outlines the process by which student rights are protected in academic honesty cases, which are handled through the Ombuds Office.

Check out <http://www.umass.edu/academichonesty/> (especially "How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?--Quick Tips")

## THE WRITING CENTER

[www.umass.edu/writingcenter](http://www.umass.edu/writingcenter)

Contact: [writingcenter@acad.umass.edu](mailto:writingcenter@acad.umass.edu) or by phone at 577.1293.

I will often recommend that students use The Writing Center. This is a great resource, especially if you are receiving lower grades on your papers than you expected, or if you are having difficulty expressing your thoughts in writing. The Writing Center offers free tutoring. Tutors work with writers to brainstorm, structure a piece of writing, learn strategies for copyediting, and more. All student writers—whether you love writing, struggle with writing, are mystified by writing, or all of the above—are welcome. The website lists the Center's hours and appointment policies. Be sure to bring your assignment, your draft (a print copy or an electronic copy), and any relevant materials. The Center is located on the lower level of the W.E.B. DuBois Library.

## COMPUTERS AND YOUR SMARTPHONE

Laptops or other computer devices are not allowed in class. As there is no evidence that these devices aid learning or comprehension in any way, I ask you not to use them except as needed during group work. As theatre people, we must honor live, unmitigated interaction. Looking at a screen is rude to the person talking (and to the person sitting behind you ) and encourages you to listen rather than interact . This may seem old fashioned, but theatre is a pretty old-fashioned art form. The same goes for your phone.

## ADVICE

Do not wait until you are having a big problem to talk to me. Talk to me when it is still a little problem.

Do not miss turning in an assignment and then talk to me about why you couldn't get it in on time. Talk to me before you miss the deadline.

Do not fall behind hoping you'll catch up or that there will be a chance for extra credit. You probably won't, and there will not be. If you really don't know what's going on, come see me during office hours or make an appointment.

**SCHEDULE**

Subject to change.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>
Jan 21	Introduction	Begin reading <i>The Oresteia</i>
23	Origins: Myth and religion	
28	Origins: ritual, storytelling, dance	
30	Aeschylus' <i>Agamemnon</i>	<i>Agamemnon</i> , <u>Assignment #1 due</u>
Feb 4	Aeschylus' <i>Libation Bearers &amp; Eumenides</i>	<i>Libation Bearers &amp; Eumenides</i>
6	Staging the <i>Oresteia</i>	<u>Assignment #2</u>
11	Staging the <i>Oresteia</i>	
13	Fifth century Athens/theatres	
18	NO CLASS. MONDAY SCHEDULE FOLLOWED.	
20	Aristotle and <i>The Poetics</i>	<i>The Poetics</i>
25	Peer review	<u>Assignment #3 FIRST DRAFT due for class.</u>
27	Sophocles' <i>Electra</i>	<i>Electra</i>
Mar 4	<i>Electra</i>	<u>Assignment #3 FINAL due.</u>
6	Euripides' <i>Orestes</i>	<i>Orestes</i>
11	<i>Orestes</i>	
13	Tragedy 2.0	Kennedy's <i>Electra</i> , Mee's <i>Orestes 2.0</i>
<b>BREAK</b>		
25	Comedy	<i>Lysistrata</i>
27	Aristophanes' <i>Lysistrata</i>	<u>Assignment #4 due</u>
Apr 1	Greek to Rome	
3	Roman Theatre	
8	Plautus' <i>Menaechmi</i>	<i>Menaechmi (Double Bind)</i>
10	Terrence's <i>Adelphoe</i>	<i>Adelphoe (The Brothers)</i>
15	Seneca's <i>Thyestes</i>	<i>Thyestes</i>
17	TBA/staging Roman play rehearsal	<u>Assignment #5 due</u> <u>Assignment #6</u>
22	Staging <i>Thyestes</i>	
24	Staging <i>Thyestes</i>	<u>Assignment #7 FIRST DRAFT due</u>
29	Roman wrap-up	
May 9		<u>Assignment #7 FINAL due</u>