

Homer: Politics, War and Life

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Course description

Imagine getting inside the mind of Homer, one of the greatest poets that ever lived, and see the world through his imagination. Imagine reading the Iliad and the Odyssey and discover what seems to be permanent in the human condition about Politics, War and Life. These poems were composed almost 3000 years ago but continue to speak to us today. They have also formed the basis of Western culture. Our objectives in this course are to understand Homer's Iliad and Odyssey as works of literature and how these two epic poems influenced Western society. We are also particularly interested in the political and military dimensions of Homer's poetry.

Course requirements

Attendance

Unexcused absences will lower your Participation grade.

Participation:

This is seminar in Literature, Politics and War. Your participation is welcome and necessary.

Written Assignments

You will complete four forms of written assignments during the term.

Reading List:

Seminar 1: Introduction

Seminar 2:

- (i) The Iliad - Book I - The Rage of Achilles
- (ii) The Iliad - Book II – The Gathering of Armies

Seminar 3:

- (i) The Iliad - Book III – Menelaus and Paris fight for Helen
- (ii) The Iliad - Book IV - The truce erupts in war

Seminar 4:

- (i) The Iliad - Book V – Diomedes's *Aristeia*
- (ii) The Iliad - Book VI - Hector returns to Troy

Seminar 5:

- (i) The Iliad - Book VII - Ajax duels with Hector
- (ii) The Iliad - Book VIII - The tide of battle turns

Seminar 6:

- (i) The Iliad - Book IX - Embassy to Achilles
- (ii) The Iliad - Book X - Raiding through the night

Seminar 7:

- (i) The Iliad - Book XI - Agamemnon's finest hour
- (ii) The Iliad - Book XII - The Trojans storm the rampart

Seminar 8:

- (i) The Iliad - Book XV - The Achaean armies at bay
- (ii) The Iliad - Book XVI - Patroclus fights and dies

Seminar 9:

- (i) The Iliad - Book XVII – Fighting for Patroclus' body
- (ii) The Iliad - Book XVIII – The shield of Achilles

Seminar 10:

- (i) The Iliad - Book XIX- The champion arms for battle
- (ii) The Iliad - Book XX - Achilles fights the river Scamander

Seminar 11:

- (i) The Iliad - Book XXII - The death of Hector
- (ii) The Iliad - Book XXIII – Patroclus' Funeral Games

Seminar 12:

The Iliad – Book XXIV – King Priam pleads with Achilles

Seminar 13:

A conversation about Homer's *Iliad*

Seminar 14:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book I – The sorrow of Telemachus
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book II - Telemachus confronts the suitors

Seminar 15:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book III – Telemachus in Pylos
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book IV - Telemachus visits Menelaus and Helen in Sparta

Seminar 16:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book V - Castaway
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book VI - Nausicaa and the Phaeacians
- (iii) The Odyssey - Book VII – Odysseus, Arete and King Alcinous

Seminar 17:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book VIII - Who is this Stranger?
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book IX - Odysseus recounts his odyssey: Poliphemus

Seminar 18:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book XI - Odysseus and Circe
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book XII - Odysseus in Hades

Seminar 19:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book XIII - Three Perils
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book XIV – Odysseus returns to Ithaka

Seminar 20:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book XIV - Odysseus and Eumaeus
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book XV - Telemachus returns home

Seminar 21:

- The Odyssey - Book XVI – Father and Son
- The Odyssey - Book XVII - Stranger in his own home

Seminar 22:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book XVIII - The Beggar-King of Ithaca
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book XIX - Penelope and Odysseus speak

Seminar 23:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book XX - Portents Gather
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book XXI - Odysseus strings his bow

Seminar 24:

- (i) The Odyssey - Book XXII – Slaughter of the Suitors
- (ii) The Odyssey - Book XXIII – Penelope at last

Seminar 25:

- The Odyssey - Book XXIV – Peace in Ithaka?

Seminar 26:

Conclusion – A conversation about Homer.

Bibliography:

This is a course for European students. You can use any translations of Homer's poems in English and/or in your national language.

Frederico Lourenço, Homero, *A Ilíada* (tradução), (Lisboa: Quetzal)

Frederico Lourenço, Homero, *A Odisseia* (tradução), (Lisboa: Quetzal)

Robert Fagles, Homer, *The Iliad* (translation)

Robert Fagles, Homer, *The Odyssey* (translation)

Caroline Alexander, *The Iliad* (translation)

Emily Wilson, *The Odyssey* (translation)

Barbara Graziosi, *Homer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Barry Strauss, *The Trojan War: A New History* (London: Hutchinson, 2007)