CLST 300 LEVEL

Greek Drama: Tragedy & Comedy in Athens in the 5th century BCE

Spring 2017

Dates / contact hours: 300 minutes per week for 7 weeks (3 meetings per week preferred)
Academic Credit: 1 course
Areas of Knowledge: CCI suggested
Modes of Inquiry: ALP and CZ suggested
Course format: lectures, classroom discussions, scene-readings, performances; possibly a field trip (for example, to see a Kun Opera performance)

Instructor’s Information

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Prerequisite(s), if applicable

No prerequisites

Course Description

This course will be directed to introducing the history of two art forms that stand at the beginning of Western drama and have had a profound influence on thought, literature, and the arts ever since.

I envision close readings of two significant plays, related by their interest in governance and the status of women in Greek society but otherwise very different: Sophocles’ Antigone and Aristophanes’ Lysistrata. In addition, students will gain understanding, from lectures and discussions, as well as performance videos and in-class scene reading, about the theater as an Athenian institution in its political, religious, and social aspects, performance practice (ancient and modern), the influence of tragedy and comedy on Greek culture more broadly, and its reception in later centuries.
Course Goals / Objectives

This course is designed to introduce ancient Greek drama and specifically the Athenian theater of the fifth century BCE, taking two of the best known and most interesting of the surviving plays, Sophocles’ tragedy Antigone and Aristophanes’ comedy Lysistrata, as primary examples. The chief learning objectives include:

- understanding the civic institution of the theater and theatrical festivals as central features of Athenian culture and identity;
- understanding the formal characteristics of the dramas and their performance;
- understanding the specific political, social, and literary contexts in which Greek drama develops;
- understanding the significance of the fifth century Athenian theater for the development of subsequent drama in the Western tradition.

The two plays chosen, for all their differences, are united by at least two general concerns, the discussion of which will be a crucial part of class discussion and student reflection:

- how to recognize and achieve good governance and resolve civic and political crises; and
- what should be the role of women in public affairs.

Additional course goals will include the development and exercise of skills appropriate to the humanities, such as:

- techniques of close reading and textual analysis, including the ability to formulate and defend arguments on the basis of textual evidence;
- ability to distinguish between our own cultural assumptions and what we can deduce about the cultural assumptions of the culture in which the texts arose.

And, since this is a course about theater, an important goal of the course will be to engage every student in considering the performative aspects of the texts we are reading. This will be accomplished by asking students:

- to consider how, given the resources of the Athenian theater, the plays might have been staged in their original productions;
- to comment on various performance styles as illustrated in videos assigned or shown in class;
- to participate in scene readings and other performance exercises.

Required Text(s)/Resources

Antigone and Lysistrata (see below).

Recommended Text(s)/Resources

The specific translations for the two plays have not yet been chosen but will be identified in time to allow textbooks to be purchased, if that is necessary. It is likely, however, that all required materials may be
made available through Sakai. In any case, an additional series of resources (books, scholarly articles, videos) will be recommended for the DKU Library. The professor will work closely with Duke and Duke Kunshan University library staff to identify appropriate materials. For example, the collected works of Aristophanes and Sophocles would be appropriate for the library, even though students would not be reading more than one play from each author.

**Additional Materials (optional)**

None anticipated

**Course Requirements / Key Evidences**

There will be six weekly quizzes; a paper (either an analysis of a play other than *Antigone* or *Lysistrata* or a comparison of Greek drama with another traditional dramatic form with which the student is familiar); and group performances presented on the final days of class.

**Technology Considerations, if applicable**

Assignments, readings, and videos will be posted on SAKAI. Video clips of performances will also be shown in class.

**Assessment Information / Grading Procedures**

6 weekly quizzes each 10% = 60%

Written paper 20%

Group performance 20%

Grading guidelines (rubrics) will be provided for all assignments. Particular attention will be paid to the concept of close reading and also the expectations for the performances. The detailed and sustained analysis of text passages is a special skill and requires guidance and practice. The emphasis in the readings will not be on quantity of material but on the care taken and insight received through the readings. No acting experience is necessary for the performance part of the course. Quiet students are as likely to do well as more extroverted students. Intellectual engagement and effort are the important criteria in this regard.

**Diversity and Intercultural Learning (see Principles of DKU Liberal Arts Education)**

This course will foster intercultural learning experiences through the readings and video materials, the interactive classroom discussions, and the group performances of scenes from Greek (or other) dramas. The instructor has considerable experience teaching abroad (mostly in Italy and Greece) and is looking forward to working with the range of students at Duke Kunshan University. All aspects of the experience,
from classroom discussions to group presentations to field trips, will be accomplished with attention to intercultural sensitivity and awareness of global cultural diversity.

**Course Policies and Guidelines**

- **Course Policies**
  Instructors’ expectations for all assignments and activities will be made as explicitly as possible, given the likelihood of a wide range of background conventions and habits among the students. The Duke Kunshan University Community Standard will be discussed and adhered to.

- **Academic Integrity**
  Each student is bound by the academic honesty standard of the Duke Kunshan University. Its Community Standard states: “Duke Kunshan University is a community composed of individuals of diverse cultures and backgrounds. We are dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Members of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity.” Violations of the DKU academic honesty standard will not be tolerated. Cheating, lying, falsification, or plagiarism in any practice will be considered as an inexcusable behavior and will result in zero points for the activity.

- **Attendance**
  Students are responsible for all the information presented in class. As indicated above, class attendance and participation are important components of the grade.

- **Make-up work**
  Students are allowed to make up work only if missed as a result of illness or other unanticipated circumstances warranting a medical excuse, consistent with DKU policy. You must notify the instructor in advance if you will miss an exam or project deadline. Documentation from a health care provider is required upon your return to class. Project extensions requested for medical reasons must be negotiated at the time of illness.

- **Appropriate or inappropriate use of cell phone, laptop, or other technology during class**
  Students are allowed to use their laptops, iPads, and smart phones to access course-related web materials during class.

**Tentative Course Outline or Schedule**

Week-by-week outline:

*Week one*
1. Introduction of the subject
2. The wellsprings of drama in the culture of archaic Greece
3. The foundations of Athenian Theater

*Week two*
1. Athenian theater and the life of the community: where, when, how plays were put on
2. The theater festival as state occasion and competition: an institution of the democracy?
3. Performance: the rules of the game

Week three
1. Introducing Antigone
2. Plot and character development in Antigone (including first scene-reading assignment)
3. Diagnosing the conflicts: law, gender, individual will, social constraint

Week four
1. The role of Fate: ‘overdetermination’ in Antigone and Sophocles’ Oedipus plays
2. The Chorus
3. Tragedy beyond Greece: Antigone yesterday and today

Week five
1. Introducing Lyistrata
2. Comic (vs. tragic) plotting and theatrical conventions
3. Heroism in the feminine

Week six
1. Sex and family values in Lysistrata
2. Politics and statecraft
3. Revolution or entertainment?

Week seven
1. The comic tradition beyond 5th century Greece
2. and 3. Class performances and final discussion

Bibliography (optional)

9 February 2016 version for Robisheaux committee