

Transgression in Ancient Greek Society and Culture

MW5 (3:55-5:15pm) D/C HSB 106

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Violence. Obscenity. Gender roles. Punishment. What constituted a transgression in any of these realms was defined very differently by the ancient Greeks than it is by us. This course invites students to examine violations of cultural norm in ancient Greek practical, civic, religious, and intellectual life, through close critical analysis of their myths, literature, laws, and rituals.



Early 4th century Lycian sarcophagus
(Archaeological Museum, Istanbul)

Course description and learning goals

- to provide the undergraduate student (both classicist and non-classicist) with a better understanding of ancient Greek culture through an exploration of its implicitly and explicitly established norms, and what was conceived to be a transgression of these norms.

Method

- to apply an interdisciplinary approach to the artistic, documentary and literary evidence at our disposal, bringing into play modern theory and comparative anthropology.

Corpus

- The corpus of texts and iconographic material covered in this class ranges from the archaic Greek period to the end of the Hellenistic period, covering roughly the 1,000 years BCE, thus providing students with an overview of the broader cultural, historic and social framework and trends within which the conceptions of boundary and transgression evolved.
- Topics range from the religious to the sexual, and from the individual and bodily to the civic and institutional.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

- Regular attendance, homework submission, and active in-class participation: 30%
- Prepared, informed contributions to class discussion based on close readings of assignments – included in the 30% above
- Brief (ca. 15 minute) quizzes : 20%
- Midterm examination (1 class period, Oct. 20): 20%
- Final examination: 30%

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 5:15-6:15pm and by appointment. Location: RAB 004.

***Important*:** please contact me via e-mail **at least 24 hours in advance** if you plan to come to (regular) office hours, so as to avoid overlap with other students and spare yourselves long waits.

Required Texts - Available at RU bookstore or on the web at Amazon.

1. Aeschylus I: *Oresteia: Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, The Eumenides*, trans. D. Grene et al. University of Chicago Press.
2. Euripides II (vol.4): Four Tragedies. *The Cyclops and Heracles, Iphigeneia in Tauris, Helen*, trans. R. Lattimore et al. University of Chicago Press.
3. Euripides IV (vol.6): Four Tragedies. *Rhesus, The Suppliant Women, Orestes, Iphigeneia in Aulis*, trans. R. Lattimore et al. University of Chicago Press.
4. Euripides V (vol.7): Three Tragedies. *Electra, The Phoenician Women, The Bacchae*, trans. R. Lattimore et al. University of Chicago Press.
5. Sophocles I: Three Tragedies. *Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone*, trans. D. Grene et al. University of Chicago Press.
6. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata and Other Plays*, trans. A. Sommerstein. Penguin Classics.
7. Aristophanes, *Frogs and Other Plays*, trans. S. Dutta. Penguin Classics.
8. Aristophanes, *The Birds and Other Plays*, trans. A. Sommerstein et al. Penguin Classics.
9. Plato, *Symposium*. trans. C. Gill. Penguin Classics.

Additional readings (Herodotus, attic orators, etc.) will be posted on the course Sakai, and/or on reserve at Alexander Library.

On reserve, purchase recommended:

10. Euripides, University of Chicago Press, vols. 1-5.
11. Herodotus, *The Histories. A New Translation by Robin Waterfield*. Oxford World's Classics.
12. Homer, *Iliad*, trans. S. Lombardo. Hackett.

On reserve, for reference:

13. Boardman, J., Griffin, J. and Murray, O. (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Classical World*. Oxford University Press.

Secondary sources (articles, chapters, etc.) will be posted on Sakai; you will be notified by e-mail whtn this is the case.

Course website:

- you will receive an invitation to the **Sakai course website** soon after our first class, on which you will find the course syllabus and various links. Login with your RU netID username and password. Our Sakai website will be the primary way in which I will communicate with you outside of class. Throughout the term, resources and announcements will be posted to this site. You will receive notification by e-mail each time a new item is posted, **but you are responsible for checking the website (the "Announcements" and "Resources" sections in**

particular) very regularly, particularly if your email address tends to be unreliable and assign Sakai messages to "Spam." Go to our site to find anything you may have missed or lost: syllabus, reading assignment, etc.

- For all course-related e-mail, please use your Rutgers e-mail account. You are responsible for any information I send to that address. Check it frequently.
- As soon as possible, exchange contact information with another student or students in the class. Use this in the event that you have to miss a class, to find out what you missed and get the notes. Please let me know in advance if you must miss a class for religious or medical reasons, and bring a note from the doctor or dean's office.

Make sure you are aware of the University's regulations concerning academic dishonesty and plagiarism. You are responsible for adhering to these guidelines: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

SYLLABUS (Subject to change)

Week 1: (half-week)

Wed. Spt. 1: First meeting. Introduction to the course and its goals: theoretical framework and basics of structural anthropology.

Reading: Get a headstart on the reading for the next two weeks: see hefty reading for next Monday, Spt. 13th. You have ten days; start now.

Week 2:

Mon. Spt. 6: LABOR DAY. NO CLASS.

Wednesday Spt. 8: Blood and Pollution. Readings: Aeschylus, *Oresteia: Agamemnon; Libation Bearers; Eumenides*. Defining "miasma."

Week 3:

Monday Spt. 13: Purifications. Scape-goats. Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Euripides, *Orestes*.

Wednesday Spt. 15: Human sacrifice and community violence: myth, ritual and anthropology. Euripides, *Taurian Iphigeneia; Iphigeneia at Aulis*.

Week 4:

Monday Spt. 20: Institutionalizing and containing transgression: female initiation rites of passage.

Initiation, marriage, and death. Case study: the Arkteia at Brauron. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Spt. 22: Male initiation: rites of passage, frontiers and liminality. Ephebeia.

Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Week 5:

Monday Spt. 27: Nudity, from athletics to art. Men vs. women. Gods vs. mortals. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Spt. 29: Sexuality: homosexuality. Pederasty and initiation. Sanctioned behaviors. Plato, *Symposium*; Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*. Excerpts from Sappho, Archilochus, Anacreon, Theognis, and Hipponax: see readings index of Hubbard:

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/ancienthomosexuality/readindex.php>

Also see excellent inventory of images at:

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/ancienthomosexuality/index.php>

Week 6:

Monday Oct. 4: Sexuality: rape and other transgressive sexual behaviors in myth and art.

Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Oct. 6: Monstrosity: drunkenness, bestiality, and other monstrous behaviors. Vase-painting, sculpture, and myth. Centaurs, Satyrs. Pasiphae. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Week 7:

Monday Oct. 11: Bodily vs. social transgression: rape, prostitution and adultery in the polis. Demosthenes: Apollodorus' *Against Neaira*. Lysias, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*.

Wednesday Oct. 13: Gender subversion: Women as men. The Amazons in myth and art. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, *Ecclesiazusae*. Optional, recommended reading: Euripides, *Medea* (translation available online on Perseus).

Week 8:

Monday Oct. 18: Gender subversion: Men as Women. Theater and gender-bending: Dionysos. Ritual cross-dressing. Euripides, *Bacchae*.

Wednesday Oct. 20: MIDTERM EXAMINATION: see outline of what to review under course Sakai "Announcement."

Week 9:

Monday Oct. 25: Bodily transgression: hermaphrodites and other gender benders. Plato, *Symposium*. Hermaphroditic statues. The myth of Tiresias. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Oct. 27: Comedy: obscene language. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. Ritual *aischrologia*.

Week 10:

Monday Nov. 1: Comedy: Obscene Bodies. The comic body in Greek drama and art. Phalloi and Phallogogy. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Nov. 3: Divine burlesque: mocking the gods. Homer, *Iliad* V, XX, XXI. Distorted divine ideals in vase-painting. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Week 11:

Monday Nov. 8: Emulating the Divine. Magic, Witchcraft, trickery and punishment. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Nov. 10: Spatial Transgression: The Living and the Dead. Mortal visits to the Underworld. Ghosts. Keeping the dead at peace. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Week 12:

Monday Nov. 15: Moral Transgression: Hybris. Selections from Herodotus and Lysias. Recommended additional reading: Aeschylus, *Persians*. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Wednesday Nov. 17: Violence within: justice? Torture, murder, and other extreme instances of violence in the polis. Aristophanes, *Frogs*. Athenian laws regarding violence and murder. Lysias 3: Against Simon. Lysias 4: On a premeditated Wounding. Lysias XII: Against Eratosthenes. Demosthenes 54: Against Conon. Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates*. Readings will be posted on course Sakai.

Week 13:

Monday Nov. 22: Violence without: the polis at war. The ethics of war and the war crime: murder vs. conquest. The fall of Troy in myth and art. Selections from Thucydides. Euripides, *Trojan Women* (available online on Perseus, and on reserve at Alexander).

Wednesday Nov. 24: THANKSGIVING RECESS - NO CLASS

Week 14:

Monday Nov. 29: Beyond the boundaries of Hellenic culture: barbarians. Selections from Herodotus: Persians, Egyptians, Scythians. Aeschylus, *Persians*. Recommended additional reading: Euripides, *Medea* (online translation by D. Kovacs available on Perseus).

Wednesday Dec. 1: Beyond the boundaries of Hellenic culture: barbarians, continued. And begin: mental transgression (see Dec.6).

Week 15:

Monday Dec. 6: Mental Transgression: Greek notions of madness. Sophocles, *Ajax*. Euripides, *Heracles*.

Wednesday Dec.8: Conclusions.

Time allowing: **Religious and Political transgression: the mutilation of the herms.** Lysias, *Against Andocides*. Schedules allowing: visit to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Week 16:

Monday Dec. 13: In-class review for final examination.

FINAL EXAMINATION:

The final exam will occur during exam period at the time scheduled by the registrar's office.
We will confirm date, time and place early in the semester.