GREEK DRAMA

Independent Research Projects 2017-18

You may select **ONE** of the topics listed below (A, B, or C) to work upon during **either** Autumn **or** Spring Term, as allocated.

Spend some time over the coming summer vacation thinking about which topic you might like to choose. I shall need to know your choices at the start of the Autumn Term for those of you allocated to do the project in first term, and at the end of the Autumn Term for those of you allocated to do it in Spring Term.

**Why do we have Second Year Projects?**

* These projects are designed to help you to develop your general research skills, particularly to prepare you for your dissertation in third year, but research skills are also very important for your future career prospects, as they are important ‘transferable’ employability skills.
* I have chosen topics that can be offered in either term. Some involve some element of ‘reception’ of the classical world by later culture, and they embrace a wide range of media/genres, so you can pick one that fits maybe a wider interest or hobby.
* You should use these projects to ‘think outside the box’. They are designed deliberately to encourage your creativity (yes, you do have it!): they should not just be thought of as ‘longer coursework essays’.
* As they are designed to develop your research skills, we do not hand you a bibliography. We shall give you a starting point, but a key part of the task is that you need to find your material yourself. Along the way, however, as you find it, you can always check it with us, if you are unsure about its quality.

**Research Training**

* During the last few weeks of the Summer Term of your first year you will be recommended to attend one of a series of training workshops run by our liaison with the College Library, Debbie Philips. These will show you how to access certain research materials that you will need for your projects and for your coursework generally.
* Debbie is also available to offer support on accessing resources at any time *via* email (e.g. *via* the link on the course Moodle page, far right), or at deborah.philips@rhul.ac.uk.

**Delivery of supervision**

* **Those doing the project in Autumn Term**: at the start of the Autumn Term I shall hold a group meeting to discuss general advice and to receive your chosen topic areas. Then I usually hold an individual meeting roughly half-way through term, to check on your progress, with a final group meeting during the second half of term.
* **Those doing the project in Spring Term**: you will have a group meeting with me at the end of the Autumn Term, with another group meeting at the start of Spring term, then an individual meeting roughly half-way through term, with a final group meeting during the second half of term.
* During your research you may consult me by email or after class.
* I shall ask you to send me plans for your projects a couple of weeks into your term, and I shall offer you feedback on these. However we are not allowed to read a full draft.

**Submission deadline**: to be confirmed, but usually one of the first few days of the first week of the following term.

You should submit TWO paper copies to the Classics Department Office

and one electronic copy (of your text only) *via* Moodle.

If you have to submit any extra media item (e.g. a memory stick), one will suffice.

**Wordcount**: total 4000-5000 words (inc. footnotes, but not bibliography). This is also the total wordcount for the two parts combined of the Adaptation

(see below).

**A. Stagecraft Analysis**

Write an analysis of the stagecraft of any play of Sophocles (except *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, or *Electra*), Euripides (except *Hippolytus*, *Electra,* or *Helen*), or Aristophanes (except *Wasps, Birds, Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae, Frogs* or *Assemblywomen*), using the model of the chapter-by-chapter discussions in Oliver Taplin’s *Greek Tragedy in Action* (1978).

You don’t have to use the format of margin-numbered paragraphs (though you can), and you can vary the headings to suit the needs of the particular play. You’ll probably find it helpful to make working notes in the form of a line-numbered commentary, and then to organise the material for the essay under the appropriate headings. But your discussion itself should take the form of a discursive analysis rather than a series of commentary notes.

**Introduction**

As in Taplin’s “Introduction to nine plays” chapter, this should set out what you see as the principal problems or questions in the interpretation of this play, which your analysis will then go on to address. It should reflect not only your views but the current state of critical reception of this play, based on a study of the recent secondary literature.

**Exits and entrances**

This will probably be the largest section. You don’t have to discuss (though you may want to make your own list of) every single line where a character enters or leaves, but you should try to note all cases where the timing or location of an exit or entrance is significant for the play’s themes, the relationships between characters, etc. What does this entrance or exit add to the effect of the play? Do you see any patterns of exit/entrance use?

**Actions and gestures**

Here you should note and discuss any indications in the text of significant stage actions or movements, and how they connect to the issues of the play.

**Objects and tokens**

Discuss the significant use made of particular props: what meaning is invested in them, and how their use in the play develops this.

**Tableaux, noises, and silences**

This will probably be a miscellaneous chapter, whose scope and importance will vary depending on the play. But be alert in particular for significant visual groupings or poses, and for moments of significant silence or non- communication.

**Mirror scenes**

Visual echoes between different scenes of the play, presenting the audience with parallels for ironic or otherwise pointed effect.

**Scenic sequence**

Significant juxtapositions or contrasts between scenes; emotionally or thematically important transitions.

**Conclusion**

Here you should summarise:

* how your analysis has shed light on the questions raised in the introduction
* any implications that have struck you for the study of other plays
* strengths and limitations, if any, of the “stagecraft” approach.

**B. Critical Bibliography**

Prepare a critical bibliography of the modern secondary literature on any one play not studied in the course. The essay should take the form of a discursive literature survey, identifying threads and themes in modern reception of the play, with critical summaries of the argument of contributions you feel to be particularly significant or influential.

It should take the form of a continuous discursive essay, not an itemised bibliography or a chronological survey, though you’ll probably find a broadly chronological arrangement of material useful within particular sections. You may also include any relevant web resources. You don’t need to discuss every single last work, and you can confine yourself to work in English. You should, however, aim to be comprehensive in at least the listing of:

* journal articles in English *other than* discussions of specialised problems, such as short notes in journals on individual lines, or textual-critical discussions of what should be printed in editions of the Greek
* chapters or sections on the play in question in English-language books available in the College, Senate House, or Institute of Classical Studies libraries.

In addition to the course bibliography, you’ll find the following resources helpful:

* *L’Année philologique* and the *Database of Classical Bibliography*
* TOCS-IN (http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/amphoras/tocs.html)
* *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/archive.html)

The following framework is suggested:

**Introduction**

Here you should set out what you see as the main threads in the critical reception of your play: the main areas of contention, what modern critics have tended to see as the principal problems or questions, and how (if at all) you see the agenda as having developed over the time-period.

**Body discussion**

You’ll probably want to subdivide this into topic sections, which may be thematic (e.g. “the role of the gods”, “the chorus”, “the ending”), methodological (“socio-political readings”, “theatrical approaches”, etc.), and/or focussed around particularly significant works and their legacy (“Vernant’s contribution”, “Seaford and ritual”, etc.). You may find it useful to round up miscellaneous items that don’t fit elsewhere in a section with a heading like “Individual problems”.

Your discussion should be not merely a synopsis, but a critical evaluation of the strengths, limitations, and importance of the items discussed, and their place in the larger context of interpretative debate on this play.

**Conclusion**

Give your own personal summary of

* how you feel the interpretation of this play has advanced since c. 1970
* any wider implications for the interpretation of tragedy or comedy in general
* the questions still to be addressed or resolved.

**Bibliography**

This should be a comprehensive listing of all relevant works known to you, including all works in English since 1970, and works you consider significant or influential from before that date. It should use asterisks or similar to indicate which works you have read yourself, with cross-references to pages of your essay where each work is mentioned.

**C. Adaptation**

Produce an adaptation, or a blueprint for an adaptation, of a Greek tragedy or comedy *in a medium other than theatre*, and discuss how the process of adaptation has thrown light on the source. You may choose a surviving play (including those studied on the course), or a lost or fragmentary play; the only constraint is that it should at least be attested and something of the storyline known.

You’re free to make use of later sources for the myth – an invaluable reference work here is Timothy J. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (1993) – but should make clear in your accompanying discussion how and where this material has been used.

The adaptation should take the form of any medium, ancient or modern, other than theatre. This may, for example, include narrative prose fiction, epistolary or journal writing; poetry; graphic fiction; short film; film or television screenplay or storyboard; radio or comics script; music score or recording; interactive media, including games. You may use the exercise to develop new skills rather than building on existing ones, and will be given credit for this provided that you document it appropriately. If appropriate, you may focus on one particular section of the play; and you may additionally produce and compare two or three shorter adaptations of the same material in different media.

**Submission**

You will submit two items:

1. The adaptation itself, which should be c. 3000–4000 words or equivalent – “equivalent” here covering cases where the medium chosen has a lot of visual, musical, or technical content, and meaning in effect that if there’s any doubt you should discuss it with me. Where possible, the submission should be in some copiable medium – i.e. if you do a puppet show I need a DVD or memory stick recording of it. If you are in any doubt, ask me.
2. An accompanying essay of c. 1000–2000 words, giving an account of:
   * ancient and modern sources used (with bibliography, not included in word count)
   * your overall evaluation of the success (or otherwise) of the project
   * what you have learned about the ancient material, and how the skills acquired or developed have contributed
   * challenges in the adaptation and how they have been met.

**Note: the two parts together should not exceed 5000 words.**

**Assessment**

For this option you will be assessed on:

* knowledge and understanding shown or acquired of Greek drama, its context, and its reception
* insight demonstrated into the chosen Greek play
* quality of thought and analysis, and clarity of purpose & explanation
* project planning, design, and management, including the appropriateness of the chosen form as an instrument of understanding
* effectiveness of the adaptation in its own right and achievement of initial aims.

**Good luck!**

RGH 5/2017