**Assignment, Week Five**

Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*

Read the play. I have made the play available in a pdf posted here on Beachboard.

* **Answer the first set of questions (A) succinctly. Provide a succinct summary of the play (B). Answer the response question (Interpretation C) thoughtfully, critically and make reference to the text.** You can reference particular lines using the line designations in the pdf, for example, lines 10-19. Proper reference can simply be made this way, --as Philoctetes says, “No one comes to this island of his own free will. There’s no harbor here. Nowhere to come and do any trade. No roof to spend the night” (lines 300-309). (Note the placement of punctuation and reference.) The reason the line numbers are not more accurate than that is that the line numbers reflect those of the ancient Greek text, and of course, the translated lines don’t quite match up in numbers. **Be sure to look at the Rubric attached in Dropbox so that you know how points are being given. You can copy this page to use, but please do not include the instructions or the questions, just include the question numbers, e.g. A. 1.; A. 2. etc. (Important for not getting dinged on Turnitin.)**

**Some facts you should be aware of in reading the play:**

* The heroic code for Homeric heroes is that they fight to win fame (*kleos*)and honor (*timē*) (pronounce tee-may) You should consider this when you evaluate the characters and their motivations.
* The gods, especially Zeus, were thought to protect suppliants and the oath.

1. **Background questions. Answers are revealed bit by bit throughout the play.**
2. Who are the main characters? Name and describe each briefly, including the outstanding features of their character. Keep track of what motivates each character.
3. What is the setting (time, place, circumstances)? Give a brief description.
4. Why was Philoctetes left behind on the island?
5. Why have Odysseus and Neoptolemos come to Lemnos?
6. Why must Neoptolemos lie/trick Philoctetes?
7. How are the gods a factor in the conflicts or considerations of the play. Just list.
8. **Write a succinct synopsis of the play in your own words. (Do not copy and paste from an online synopsis.)**
9. **Interpretive Response. Choose one of these questions. Write a response of at least 300 words.**
10. Consider how the play presents moral conflicts for a Homeric age that values fame, honor, bravery in battle fought even to the death, but also avoiding personal shame, on the one hand, but also heroizes a character such as Odysseus in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus only made it home because of his ability to trick others with the clever use of words. What are the moral conflicts for Philoctetes? What are the moral conflicts for Neoptolemos, and how do these conflicts get resolved? (There is not necessarily a ‘right’ answer for this question; just examine the moral dilemmas of Philoctetes and Neoptolemos, indicating key passages, and then consider the ending of the play and explore/suggest why the final choices of these characters are made.
11. Consider that Philoctetes is someone who suffers from a disability in the ancient world. How does Sophocles present the perspective of Philoctetes’ fellow warriors toward his disability (e.g. why they left him on Lemnos; Neoptolemos’ response to him; the chorus’ response to him). Discuss what their treatment of him implies about social acceptance/understanding of someone with a disability. Then contrast that perspective with the character of Philoctetes. Is he more than his disability? With what issues/personal conflicts does the treatment he receives from others, along with his own suffering, cause him to struggle?