

Homer's *Odyssey*

LIT81A
Fall 2019
MWF 4:00 PM - 5:05 PM
Humanities Lecture Hall

Instructor:

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Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30, W 1:30-2:30, F 2:30-3:30

Homer's *Odyssey* is the epic tale of a wet, salty man who abandons his family, then comes back two decades later and murders dozens of houseguests. The appeal of such a story isn't obvious, yet the *Odyssey* still attracts readers some 2700 years after its composition. A profound influence on the culture of ancient Greece and Rome, the *Odyssey* still shapes our self-understanding as perhaps no other work of poetry has done.

Homer's *Odyssey* is a big poem, and an old one. These facts pose some special problems of interpretation: how can we analyze a text so alien in form and cultural background in a way that makes it useful to us without flattening out those features that make it unique? We'll approach this problem in a way that should better equip you to interpret texts from any unfamiliar culture, not just Ancient Greece.

We'll also address interpretive problems particular to the *Odyssey*: who composed it? Who wrote it down? Is Homer real, or just an illusion? How closely does the poem reflect actual history or a historical setting? Does the text present a unitary narrative, or a series of fun episodes strung together? And what can the *Odyssey* tell us about the communities of readers who, from the eighth century BCE to the present day, have read, reproduced and translated it?

Required Texts:

Homer, E. Wilson trans. *The Odyssey*. (available at the Literary Guillotine)

The remainder of the required readings for this course will be made available on Canvas and provided to you in hard copy at least a week in advance. Optional readings will be made available on canvas

The Rules

1. Your attendance of discussion sections is mandatory. Every section you miss will lower your participation grade, and more than three missed sections may result in a failing grade for the course. You must attend the section in which you're enrolled.
2. Starting in the third week of the quarter, your TAs will be taking attendance in lecture. You may miss two lectures without penalty; further missed lectures will lower your participation grade, and more than six missed lectures may result in a failing grade for the course.
3. When in lecture, you may use laptops or tablets **ONLY** to take notes or to view readings on Canvas. You may not, headphones, ear buds, VR headsets, augmented reality glasses, or holographic projectors. If I or my teaching assistants see that this policy is being rampantly violated, phones and laptops will be banned from the lecture hall.

Grading and Course Objectives

- Lectures will model techniques of textual analysis that you'll need to learn by the end of the quarter; discussion section will give you a chance to practice these techniques in a non-judgmental environment. Participation and attendance in discussion section and lecture will contribute 200 points to your final grade.
- You'll be expected to acquire a familiarity with the plot and characters of the *Odyssey*, as well as with relevant historical background discussed in lecture. Online quizzes, posted each Friday and due before class begins each Monday, will contribute 200 points to your final grade.
- Beginning the second week of the quarter, you'll be writing between fifteen and thirty lines of autobiographical epic poetry. These will be graded on completion. Beginning the fourth week of the quarter, we'll be asking you to share and discuss your work with other students. Your completion of this work will contribute 100 points to your final grade.
- You'll be practicing techniques of textual interpretation in three written assignments, due over the course of the quarter, which will contribute 100, 150 and 200 points to your final grade, respectively.
- I offer abundant opportunities for extra credit. If you feel like you're headed for a worse grade than you'd like, check the extra credit folder on Canvas.

The percentage and points breakdowns of your grade are as follows:

Participation and Attendance (lecture)	15%	200	
Rolling Midterm	20%	200	
Your Epic Life	10%	100	
Question Time		10%	100
Writing Assignment 1	10%	100	
Writing Assignment 2	15%	150	
Writing Assignment 3	20%	200	
	100%		1000 pts

Academic integrity:

All work submitted for this course must be your own. Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will be dealt with in accordance with university policy. For more information, please see the University policy on academic integrity for undergraduate students at http://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_integrity.

Accessibility accommodation:

UCSC's Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides resources and support for students with documented disabilities. Any student who thinks s/he is in need of accommodation, based on the impact of a disability, should contact me privately to submit their Accommodation Authorization and discuss specific needs, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. Please contact the Disability Resource Center at 831-459-2089 in room 125 Hahn Student Services or by e-mail at drc@ucsc.edu to coordinate those accommodations.

Mental health resources:

UCSC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides a wide range of short-term and long-term mental health services. Counseling services are confidential and free of charge to all UCSC students. For more information, contact CAPS at 831-459-2628 or visit <http://caps.ucsc.edu/>.

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed by the date on which they're listed.

Week 1: Why This Course?

M 9/27 Introductory lecture. What is a Homer?

Week 2: The Sad Boy-King of Ithaca

M 9/30 Read: Odyssey, bk. 1.

W 10/2 Read: Odyssey, bk. 2.

F 10/4 Read: Lord and Parry, *The Singer of Tales* (selections).

Week 3: Remembering the War

M 10/7 Read: Odyssey, bk. 3.

W 10/9 [REDACTED]

F 10/11 Read: Odyssey, bk. 4.

Week 4: The Saltiest Sailor

M 10/14 Read: Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (selections). **Question 1 Due**

W 10/16 Odyssey, bk. 5.

F 10/18 Odyssey, bk. 6. **Writing Assignment 1 Due**

Week 5: Dangerous Dinners

M 10/21 Read: Odyssey, bk. 7.

W 10/23 Read: Odyssey, bk. 8.

F 10/25 Read: Odyssey, bk. 9.

Week 6: Odysseus as Poet

M 10/28 [REDACTED]
W 10/30 Read: Odyssey, bk. 10.
F 11/1 Read: Odyssey, bk. 11.

Week 7: Secret Agent Man

M 11/4 Read: Odyssey, bk. 12.
W 11/6 Read: Odyssey, bk. 13.
F 11/8 Read: Odyssey, bk. 14. **Question 2 due. Writing Assignment 2 due.**

Week 8: Odysseus' Scars

M 11/11 No class.
W 11/13 Read: Odyssey, bk. 15.
F 11/15 Read: Odyssey, bk. 16.

Week 9: The Waiting Game

M 11/18 Read: Odyssey, bk. 17.
W 11/20 Read: Odyssey, bk. 18.
F 11/22 Read: Odyssey, bk. 19.

Week 10: Real Monsters

M 11/25 Read: Odyssey, bk. 20.
W 11/27 Read: Odyssey, bk. 21.
F 11/29 No class.

Week 11: Endings?

M 12/2 Read: Odyssey, bk. 22.
W 12/4 Read: Odyssey, bk. 23.
F 12/6 Read: Odyssey, bk. 24. *Telegony* fragments. **Question 3 due. Writing Assignment 3 due.**