

Fate and Virtue

HUM 2100, Quest University

Fall 2013, Block 1	James Kruck
Monday to Friday, 1:00 – 4:00 pm	james.kruck@questu.ca
Academic 1, Rm. 303	

Course Description

Two hundred years ago the English poet Percy Shelley declared that “We are all Greeks” in recognition that much of what constituted his world was founded on Greek principles and ideas. This course examines Greek thought about fate and virtue, or, more generally, what Greeks thought constituted proper behaviour. The themes of fate and virtue are widespread among the genres of Greek literature, and in this course we will consider examples from epic poetry, philosophy, and history. Some of the topics that we will experience in the readings are how Achilles, the hero of the *Iliad*, maneuvers in his world among the warrior-kings and gods in a competition for glory and honour, how Socrates disrupted the Athenian world and yet was received in history as a foundational figure for Western philosophy, how Aristotle recognized proper actions, and how, in the world presented by Thucydides, might can make right.

The readings will answer the question “How did the Greeks think that they should live”, but will also cause us to question our own lives and how we fit into our society around us. Starting with the Romans, every literate culture that has come into contact with these texts has recognized the universality in them. These works serve a dual purpose: they are indicators of Greek life, but they also provide a sense of familiarity that can help the reader answer their own questions about the world around them. This course will thus depend on the reactions of the students to these readings. Every text speaks to its reader in a different way, and each student will develop their own relationship with these authors. Students will hone their ability to speak, write, and argue about literature.

Required Course Texts

- Homer. *Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998).
- Plato. *Five Dialogues* (2d edn.), trans. GMA Grube (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* (2d edn.), trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999).
- Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides*, ed. Robert Strassler (Free Press, 1998).

Course Objectives

Students will develop their skills in analyzing a text and identifying themes, and will practice and display these skills in both written assignments and classroom discussion.

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Discuss intelligently the role of both fate and virtue Greek epic poetry, philosophy and history.
- Understand what constituted proper action in a world subject to fate.
- Recognize similarities and differences between themselves and the Ancient Greeks in their understanding of the world around them.
- Appreciate the impact that these works had on Western society.

Students will progress their skills in the University Learning Outcomes of:

- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- International Perspectives
- Research
- Ethics

Assignments and Evaluation

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|--------------------|---------------|
| • Essays (2) | 40% (2 x 20%) |
| • Portfolio | 20% |
| • Participation | 20% |
| • Reaction reading | 20% |

Essays: You will complete two essays during the Block. Note that you will be marked on writing style in your presentation of your argument, and you must be consistent in your citation. Essays must be typewritten. We will discuss further how to best format your paper and organize your arguments in class. If you have any questions about how to approach your paper, please let me know as soon as possible.

Portfolio: Your portfolio will consist of 5 short essays that address a particular question that arises in our readings. These portfolios are due on the penultimate day of class.

Participation: Your participation is essential to your success in this class and you will have ample opportunity to earn your grade in class. Your voice can influence the shape and quality of the discussion for the day. In order to ensure your success, please ensure that you arrive to each class prepared to voice your thoughts.

Reaction projects: For each author I will present you with a short passage from another ancient source that should make you question something about one of our primary authors (Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Thucydides). You will then compose a short response to this new information in class. Each reaction will be worked on in groups, but submitted individually.

You will receive a letter grade for all of your work. We will discuss my expectations for each assignment further in class.

Class Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to change

Date	Reading	Assignment Due
Sept. 2 nd	Introduction to course; Book 1 of the <i>Iliad</i>	
Sept. 3 rd	<i>Iliad</i> Bk. 2 – 8	
Sept. 4 th	<i>Iliad</i> Bk. 9 – 14	
Sept. 5 th	<i>Iliad</i> Bk. 15 – 20	
Sept. 6 th	<i>Iliad</i> Bk. 21 – 24	Reaction Reading
Sept. 9 th	Introduction to Socrates and Plato; the <i>Euthyphro</i>	First Essay Due
Sept. 10 th	<i>Apology</i>	
Sept. 11 th	<i>Meno</i>	
Sept. 12 th	<i>Phaedo</i>	
Sept. 13 th	<i>Phaedo</i>	Reaction Reading
Sept. 16 th	Introduction to Aristotle; <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I – II	
Sept. 17 th	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> III – IV	
Sept. 18 th	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> V – VI	
Sept. 19 th	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VII – VIII	Reaction Reading
Sept. 20 th	Introduction to Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War; <i>Peloponnesian War</i> I, II.1 – 46	Second Essay Due
Sept. 23 rd	<i>Peloponnesian War</i> II.47-65, III.1-86, IV.1-41	
Sept. 24 th	<i>Peloponnesian War</i> IV.42-135, V.1-26, V.84-116, VI.1-32	Portfolio Due, Reaction Reading
Sept. 25 th	<i>Peloponnesian War</i> VI.33-105, VII, VIII.1-18	

Course Policies

- Your attendance is a critical component of this course. In addition, you must come to class prepared to discuss the topic of that day's session. You must inform me in advance of an unavoidable absence. Unexcused absence from more than two classes will result in a failing grade. If you are unwell, please communicate with me.
- All assignments must be submitted in order to earn a passing grade. Late assignments will be penalized if they are not accompanied by an acceptable reason for lateness. Again, proper communication will be the key to any extensions.
- Laptops may be used in class, but please do not allow them to become a distraction, or I may have to restrict their use.
- Ensure that you have familiarized yourself with the Quest Honour Principle (see *Academic Calender*). You are required to produce your own work and properly cite all that is not yours.
- Please note that food is forbidden in the Academic Building. Drinks are fine.
- I encourage you to contact me should any question arise. When contacting me, please do so by email. The best times for a quick reply are between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M.