

HUMS304/PLSC315: WOMEN IN GREEK POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Course Information

Time/Place: TTH 1:00-2:15 pm
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description and Objectives

In the classical polis, women were silent and absent, confined to the household and excluded from political life. Yet women remain loud and present in Greek political thought. What are we to make of Euripides' Medea, who screams that she would stand in the first line of battle three times rather than give birth once? The incorporation of women into Greek political thought raises fundamental questions—about hierarchy, rule, and justice; courage, war, and mourning; friendship, marriage, and motherhood; the household and the polis, inclusion and exclusion; and the emotions, the virtues, and the well-ordered soul. To clarify these questions, we will read texts by Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Euripides, Plato, and Thucydides.

Grappling with these political thinkers will demand and strengthen habits of careful reading and writing. In addition, the framework of this course will push us to consider the rhetorical and political dimensions of Attic drama and philosophy. For example, do the comedies of Aristophanes interrogate Athenian civic ideology or reinforce the status quo? More importantly, examining the place of women in Greek political thought has the potential to illuminate central questions of political philosophy. By the end of this course, students should be able to articulate and respond to these questions through precise textual analysis of our chosen thinkers. Finally, through our engagement with the untimely and alien political thought of the past, we may hope to gain critical distance on our own political horizons and beliefs.

Required Texts

Please purchase personal copies of the following texts. Powell's, Bookshop, Abe Books, and Book Depository are good options. All other readings will be posted to the course's Canvas site.

- 1) Aeschylus. *The Complete Aeschylus, Volume 1: The Oresteia*. Edited by Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

- 2) Aristophanes. *Three Plays by Aristophanes: Staging Women*. Translated by Jeffrey Henderson. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- 3) Euripides. *The Complete Euripides, Volume 1: Trojan Women and Other Plays*. Edited by Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- 4) Euripides. *The Complete Euripides, Volume 4: Bacchae and Other Plays*. Edited by Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- 5) Euripides. *The Complete Euripides, Volume 5: Medea and Other Plays*. Edited by Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- 6) Plato. *Symposium*. Translated by Seth Benardete. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Course Expectations and Practices

By far the most important expectation and requirement for this course is that you read the assigned texts carefully and prior to class. You should expect to read for at least two hours, and perhaps for much longer, in preparation for each session. Read and read again! Take notes! In this course, the only way out is through—that is, through the text with pen in hand. You should also strive to attend every session. There are no excused absences except in the event of a documented illness or emergency. Most importantly, during class, please try to discuss the texts and to engage with your classmates in a spirit of questioning, openness, and friendship. This seminar hinges on your conversation. Because we will conduct seminars over Zoom, your full attention and participation are more important than ever. Students who read carefully and participate enthusiastically will have every chance of success. For my part, I promise to be flexible, open, and attentive, especially during these strange, awful times. Please don't hesitate to talk to me about anything related to the course. You can email or call me (914-522-1657). I want to help you as much as I can.

Marking Scheme

1) Paper 1 (~1,500 words due 2/28 by 11:59 pm)	20 %
2) Paper 2 (~1,500 words due 3/28 by 11:59 pm)	20 %
3) Paper 3 (~1,500 words due 4/25 by 11:59 pm)	20 %
4) Take-Home Final Exam (due during exam period)	20 %
5) Attendance and Participation	20 %

Essays and Assessment Criteria

Each essay that you write for this course should satisfy the following criteria:

- 1) The essay clearly and directly responds to the prompt.
- 2) The essay contains a thesis-driven argument and a coherent structure (rather than a mere summary of one or more texts, a list of facts, or an absence of structure).
- 3) The essay displays careful engagement with the course materials through its analysis of textual evidence and key concepts.
- 4) The essay eschews basic errors and achieves a polished writing style.

The third criterion is the most important: your essay should display your careful and sustained engagement with the course materials. Even so, “A” essays will satisfy each criterion listed above by exhibiting mastery of both the course content and the elements of the academic essay. “B” essays will fall short of mastery while attaining competence. “C” essays will satisfy these criteria to a minimal extent. “D” essays will not meet these criteria, though they will show some effort toward the composition of a solid paper. “F” essays will suggest an unacceptable lack of effort on this assignment and in the course. Essays should be written in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, and they should adhere to an accepted style of citation (e.g., Chicago).

With each essay assignment, I will include a pre-draft assignment that will allow you to involve me in your writing process. Pre-drafts are optional, non-graded writing assignments designed to sharpen your academic writing.

Participation and Presentations

Participation in class discussion is essential to this course. While participation should be consistent and energetic, it will be graded, ultimately, on the basis of its judiciousness and quality. As a part of your participation in the course, you will be asked to give one brief presentation of a striking passage or theme during a Thursday session. Each presentation should be based on about 200 words of written analysis that aims to elicit conversation. We will arrange a presentation schedule during the first week of the course.

Extensions and Lateness

No extensions will be permitted in the absence of official documentation of a serious illness or an emergency submitted to me prior to the deadline. Late papers will be penalized one quarter letter grade for each day late. To be clear, a late paper that would have received an A- will receive a B+ if it is one day late, a B if it is two days late, and so on. Should you need an extension, please talk to me as soon as possible.

Honor System and Academic Integrity

I am serious about promoting academic integrity in this course; any kind of unauthorized assistance will not be tolerated. Please consult the definition of academic integrity in the Yale University Student Handbook.

Accessibility and Religious Observance

I am committed to accessible and inclusive learning. Students in need of accommodation should contact me as soon as possible.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
UNIT 1: POWERLESS WOMEN? WAR, SEX, AND DEATH
WEEK 1, CLASS 1 (2/2): Introduction and Euripides, <i>Trojan Women</i>
WEEK 1, CLASS 2 (2/4): Euripides, <i>Trojan Women</i>
WEEK 2, CLASS 1 (2/9): Euripides, <i>Trojan Women</i> ; selections from Thucydides, <i>History</i> (Pericles' Funeral Oration and the Melian Dialogue)
WEEK 2, CLASS 2 (2/11): Aristophanes, <i>Lysistrata</i>
WEEK 3, CLASS 1 (2/16): Aristophanes, <i>Lysistrata</i>
WEEK 3, CLASS 2 (2/18): Aristophanes, <i>Lysistrata</i>
WEEK 4, CLASS 1 (2/23): Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
WEEK 4, CLASS 2 (2/25): Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
PAPER 1 DUE SUNDAY 2/28 VIA EMAIL BY 11:59 PM
WEEK 5, CLASS 1 (3/2): Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
WEEK 5, CLASS 2 (3/4): Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
UNIT 2: HOUSEHOLD AND POLIS
WEEK 6, CLASS 1 (3/9): BREAK DAY; NO CLASS

WEEK 6, CLASS 2 (3/11): Aristophanes, <i>Assemblywomen</i>
WEEK 7, CLASS 1 (3/16): Aristophanes, <i>Assemblywomen</i>
WEEK 7, CLASS 2 (3/18): Plato, <i>Republic</i> 5
WEEK 8, CLASS 1 (3/23): Plato, <i>Republic</i> 5
WEEK 8, CLASS 2 (3/25): Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> 1-2 (selections)
PAPER 2 DUE SUNDAY 3/28 VIA EMAIL BY 11:59 PM
WEEK 9, CLASS 1 (3/30): Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> 8-9 (selections)
WEEK 9, CLASS 2 (4/1): Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i>
WEEK 10, CLASS 1 (4/6): Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i>
WEEK 10, CLASS 2 (4/8): BREAK DAY; NO CLASS
WEEK 11, CLASS 1 (4/13): Aristophanes, <i>Women of Thesmophoria</i>
WEEK 11, CLASS 2 (4/15): Aristophanes, <i>Women of Thesmophoria</i>
UNIT 3: POWERFUL WOMEN AND THE QUESTION OF JUSTICE
WEEK 12, CLASS 1 (4/20): Aeschylus, <i>Oresteia</i>
WEEK 12, CLASS 2 (4/22): Aeschylus, <i>Oresteia</i>
PAPER 3 DUE SUNDAY 4/25 VIA EMAIL BY 11:59 PM
WEEK 13, CLASS 1 (4/27): Aeschylus, <i>Oresteia</i>
WEEK 13, CLASS 2 (4/29): Aeschylus, <i>Oresteia</i>
WEEK 14, CLASS 1 (5/4): Euripides, <i>Medea</i>
WEEK 14, CLASS 2 (5/7): Euripides, <i>Medea</i>
TAKE-HOME FINAL DURING THE EXAM PERIOD