CB22x: The Ancient Greek Hero
HarvardX, Spring 2013

Professor: Gregory Nagy, Francis Jones Professor of Classical Greek Literature, Professor of Comparative Literature, and Director of Harvard University’s Center for Hellenic Studies.

Board of Readers: The teaching staff for this course is led by the Chair of the Board of Readers, Dr. Leonard Muellner, Professor of Classical Studies at Brandeis University and Director of IT and Publications at Harvard University’s Center for Hellenic Studies, and the Vice Chair of the Board of Readers, Dr. Kevin McGrath, Associate in Sanskrit and Indian Studies at Harvard University. The course’s Readers and Editors are listed on the CB22x “About” page.

A Basic Statement About Requirements For This Course.

There are no prerequisites for the course. No special competence in any skill or in any language is required. The only requirement is academic honesty. If you enroll in our course, we expect you to agree to the academic honesty guidelines as found on the course website. Collaboration is encouraged in our course, and if you collaborate honestly, there is nothing for you to worry about. Plagiarism is different from collaboration: to plagiarize is to take credit only for yourself and to hide the credit that others deserve. Plagiarism is hostile to a sense of academic community, and it is antithetical to the moral code of this course and to the moral code of any academic community. There must be a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Our moral code is, simply, to learn together as a community.
**A Basic Statement About the Ideals of this Course.**

What does it mean, to be human? This course takes a close look at the human condition, as viewed through the lens of classical Greek civilization; the basic organizing principle is an objective study of a model of humanity, the Hero.

By the time the course comes to an end, students will have learned that there are different definitions of the “hero” in different historical times and places. In the end, though, the one true “hero” of this course will be the logos or “word” of logical reasoning, as activated by Socratic dialogue. The logos of dialogue in this course will require careful thinking, realized in close reading and reflective writing. The “last word” about this logos comes from Plato’s memories of words spoken in dialogue by Socrates during the last days of his life, which will be read towards the very end of the course. Such a “last word,” shaped by a deep understanding of the concept of the hero in all its varieties throughout the history of Greek civilization, will become the “latest word” for students who earnestly engage in dialogue, by way of writing as well as reading, with heroic expressions of the human condition. This course is driven by a sequence of dialogues that lead to such an engagement, guiding the attentive reader through many of the major works of the ancient Greek Classics.

**What Will We Read?**

We will be reading, in English translation, some of the basic works of classical Greek literature. Concepts of the hero dominate two of the core forms of this literature: epic and tragedy. In this course, there are two epics to be read, which are the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and seven tragedies, which are Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* trilogy, Sophocles’ two Oedipus dramas, and Euripides’ *Hippolytus* and *The Bacchic Women*. Also included in the course readings are selections from the dialogue *On Heroes* by an
eminent thinker in the “second sophistic” movement, Philostratus (early 3rd century C.E.).

These classical works are linked to two historical realities in the ancient Greek world: (1) heroes were worshipped in cult, and (2) the focal point of this worship was the veneration of the hero’s body at the site of his or her tomb.

Concepts of the anti-hero, on the other hand, assert themselves in alternative forms of Greek literature. In the readings of this course, such forms include two dialogues of Plato, the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* (both centering on the last days of Socrates).

In these readings, anti-heroic models emerge. One of these is the “word” of Socratic dialogue, which figures as a radical alternative to the venerated body of the cult hero. Also, for the sake of comparing the ancient sense of “hero” with reinterpretations in the post-ancient era, other alternatives to the classical hero will be explored, centering on the short story “Don Juan,” by the German “romantic” author E. T. A. Hoffmann.

**Required Reading:**

All required texts can be accessed for free on the course website.

1) *Sourcebook of Ancient Greek Texts in English Translation.* Unless otherwise indicated, all assigned readings will come from this text, which is referred to within the course and in this syllabus as the *Sourcebook.* The Sourcebook contains: Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Proclus’ summaries of the Epic Cycle; Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days*; selections from Theognis of Megara; Alcman’s *Partheneion* (“The Maidens’ Song”); the poems of Sappho; Pindar’s *Pythian 8*; Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* Trilogy (*Agamemnon*, *Libation-Bearers*, and *Eumenides*); Sophocles’ *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Oedipus Tyrannos* (“Oedipus Rex”); Euripides’ *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae*; selections
from Herodotus’ *Histories*; Plato’s *Apology* and *Phaedo*; selections from Pausanias and Philostratus’ *On Heroes*, and selected explanatory articles and introductions.

2) **The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours**, by Gregory Nagy. This e-book, referred to within the course and in this syllabus as *h24h*, contains 24 chapters. Each chapter is called an “Hour,” because each one of the “Hours” is keyed to each one of the 24 dialogues that make up this course. The book is designed to provide you with close readings and analysis of some of the most important parts of the relevant primary sources found in the Sourcebook. These “Hours” take the place of formal “lectures” in this course, and the close readings in these “Hours” are meant to be part of the “homework” that prepares you for each class session.

**Recommended Reading:**

For further background on and interpretation of the required reading, two books by Professor Nagy are available on the website of Harvard’s Center for Hellenic Studies: *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* and *Pindar’s Homer*. These books supply background for some, but hardly all, of the topics to be presented in the course.

The following works are in the Sourcebook but are not required except for those sections addressed in *h24h*: the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* and *Hymn to Aphrodite*; Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*; Euripides’ *Herakles*; selections from Aristotle; and Sophocles’ *Antigone*.

**Important Dates:**

Course Start Date: March 13, 2013

Course End Date: June 26, 2013
Course Schedule:

As noted above, rather than being structured week-by-week, this course is broken up into 24 “hours,” each of which is comprised of one video dialogue, and which track with the 24 chapters of h24h.

Listed below is the reading to be completed for each hour of the course. The first dialogue will introduce the *Iliad* and the first “Hour” of *h24h*. Beginning with the second dialogue, you should complete that dialogue’s assigned reading and the corresponding “Hour” in *h24h*. Unless otherwise specified, all readings can be found in the Ancient Greek Hero Sourcebook, available on the course website. For an explanation of fast reading, slow reading, and close reading, please see “Advice from Professor Nagy,” which is available in the main menu and under the “Course Handouts” tab on the CB22x website.

Hour 1 (= Hour 0 plus Hour 1)

- Read in the Introduction to the book and the Introduction to Homeric poetry in *h24h*.
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 0 Texts A through H (= 8 passages); also Hour 1 Texts A through C (= 3 passages), concentrating on Text C
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scroll I

Hour 2

- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 2 Texts A through E (= 5 passages), concentrating on Text E
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scrolls III, VI, and IX

Hour 3

- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 3 Texts A through F (= 6 passages), concentrating on Text D

Hour 4
- Slow reading in h24h: Hour 4 Texts A through J (= 10 passages), concentrating on Text G
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scrolls XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI (1-135, 227-390)

**Hour 5**
- Slow reading in h24h: Hour 5 Texts A through M (= 13 passages), concentrating on Texts A and B; these readings include Sappho’s Song 1 (Text F), Song 16 (Text H), and Song 31 (Text E)
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scrolls XXII, XXIII, XXIV

**Hour 6**
- Slow reading in h24h: Hour 6 Texts A through G (= 7 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scrolls I (repeat), II, III (repeat), IV, V, VI (repeat), VII, VIII

**Hour 7**
- Slow reading in h24h: Hour 7 Texts A through G (= 7 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scrolls IX (repeat), X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI (repeat)

**Hour 8**
- Slow reading in h24h: Hour 8 Texts A through N (= 14 passages), concentrating on Text A; these readings include selections from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Texts C and G)
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Iliad* scrolls XVII, XVIII (repeat), XIX, XX (repeat), XXI, XXII (repeat), XXIII (repeat), XXIV (repeat)

**Hour 9**
- Slow reading in h24h: Hour 9 Texts A through J (= 10 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Odyssey* scrolls i-viii.

**Hour 10**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 10 Texts A through E (= 5 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Odyssey* scrolls ix-xvi

**Hour 11**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 11 Texts A through R (= 18 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: *Odyssey* scrolls xvii-xxiv

**Hour 12**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 12 Texts A through M (= 13 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: Hesiod *Theogony* lines 1–115; *Works & Days* lines 1–286

**Hour 13**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 13 Texts A through L (= 12 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: Herodotus *Histories* Scroll 1.1–91 and Scroll 7

**Hour 14**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 14 Texts A through Q (= 19 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: Philostratus *Hērōikos*

**Hour 15**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 15 Texts A through M (= 13 passages), concentrating on Text A
- Fast reading in Sourcebook: Herodotus *Histories* Scrolls 8-9

**Hour 16**
- Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 16 Texts A through G (= 7 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Aeschylus *Agamemnon*

**Hour 17**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 17 Texts A through H (= 8 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Aeschylus *Libation-Bearers* and *Eumenides*

**Hour 18**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 18 Texts A through K (11 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus*

**Hour 19**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 19 Texts A through H (= 8 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus*

**Hour 20**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 20 Texts A through L (12 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Euripides *Hippolytus*

**Hour 21**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 21 Texts A through I (= 9 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Euripides *Bacchae*

**Hour 22**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 22 Texts A1-A6, B, C, D (= 9 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Plato *Apology of Socrates*

**Hour 23**
• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 23 Texts A through H (= 8 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: Plato *Phaedo*

**Hour 24**

• Slow reading in *h24h*: Hour 24 Texts A through J (≈ 10 passages), concentrating on Text A
• Fast reading in Sourcebook: none

**Components of Assessment and Evaluation:**

Students will be evaluated on assessment performance and participation. Assessments will be conducted each “hour” of the course. These will consist of quizzes on the reading (names, places, who is speaking to whom, etc.), as well as the application of principles and concepts central to the course.

Because this course deals chiefly with concepts, rather than names, dates, or other terms that require rote memorization, the hourly quizzes are designed to be a review of the material covered in the preceding Hour of the course. They are intended to be progress checks rather than stumbling blocks, and thus they should not be difficult any student who has done the required reading and carefully viewed the dialogue video. Additionally, the interactive and conceptual nature of the course means that *quality* of participation, not *quantity*, will matter most for each student’s experience and evaluation alike. More detail on assessment, evaluation, and certificate requirements will be provided soon.