CLAS 151A Greece, Rome, Myth, and the Movies
Course Syllabus: Readings and Films (Draft of 8-11-15)
Brandeis University, Fall 2015
Class Meets: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 - 3:20 p.m., Block N
Classroom Location: TBA
Instructor: Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, Chair and Co-Director of Graduate Studies
Department of Classical Studies, MS 092
Office: Mandel Humanities Center, room 213
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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. and by appointment in my office, Mandel Center for the Humanities 213.

Course Assistants: Chelsea Linehan (chelseamlinehan@gmail.com) and Rebecca Loewenstein-Harting (rebetama@brandeis.edu), graduate candidates for an MA in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies
Office Hours: TBA, and by appointment, Rabb 359

Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for papers or exams, etc.).

This course satisfies distribution requirement for the School of Humanities (HUM) and is cross-listed with FTIM (Film, Television, and Interactive Media).
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Required Texts:
7. Other texts to be posted in LATTE.

Course Description and Learning Goals:
CLAS 151A, Greece Rome, Myth, and the Movies, is an experiential learning course. The cultures and mythologies of ancient Greece and Rome have been an important staple of cinema since its earliest beginnings. Films that are set in antiquity or reflect its mythical or literary themes express the
fascination the classical world has always exerted on the popular imagination.

In conjunction with a careful exploration of character, plot structure, and mythic and historic themes in several seminal classical texts (the Homeric *Odyssey*, Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and Petronius’ fragmented Roman novel, the *Satyricon*, as well as a sample of Athenian and Roman tragedy and comedy), we demonstrate the strong connections between antiquity and our own society as revealed in an array of modern cinematic experiments. We also learn to appreciate how the ancient material is transformed for our own cultural needs.

Students have ample opportunity in the course to learn how to analyze ancient texts and modern film and to appreciate their meanings and messages. We accomplish this learning goal through active writing (in class and out of class), through opportunities to rewrite assignments and to share results of improved drafts with each other, and with oral communication. In addition to intensive oral discussions about the films and texts in class, students will themselves make formal classroom presentations of their own (with film clips that they select themselves) in the course of the semester.

The themes of classical mythology (life, death, love, war, peace, loss, longing, change, fear, happiness, and much more) are relevant to the future life experiences of the students, including their academic, personal, or even professional choices. For a final project in the course, students may opt to make a short film based on an ancient myth to demonstrate modern issue of concern in their lives, instead of writing a final paper.

Course Requirements with (Approximate) Grade Determinations:
1. regular attendance in class (and you should be awake and alert), participation in class discussions, readings completed, and films viewed on schedule 10%
2. two papers (analyses of texts and/or films)—one (only one) may be rewritten for a new grade 40%
3. prospectus for final paper or short film project 20%
4. final paper (film/textual analysis) 7-8 pages or short film 30%

Total: 100%

NB: Any graduate students in the class will have extra assignments to complete. Be sure you identify yourselves to your professor ASAP.

**Academic Honesty (last, but hardly least!):**
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Brandeis Univ. policy on academic honesty is contained in your *Student Handbook* in section 5 under “Rights and Responsibilities.” Instances of cheating, plagiarism, or other alleged dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. The adjudication process is also outlined in your *Handbook*. Potential consequences of academic dishonesty include (in addition to an “E” on the assignment in question) failure in the course, disciplinary probation, and suspension from the University. A record of any offense will remain in a student’s disciplinary file in the Office of Student Affairs throughout his or her career at Brandeis. Please know that I take this
code very seriously. If you have any questions about expectations, please ask.

Lecture topics for the entire semester are listed below by date, along with due dates for assignments, special events, and some special lectures (although these will also be announced as they develop during the term). Assigned and recommended readings are included.

Please contact me or either of the CAs if you have questions about the readings or films. All required films are posted in LATTE. Below, an * signals a date when a written assignment is due.

Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Films (may be subject to slight changes, as this is an ambitious program of readings and films):

AUGUST:

Thursday, August 27
Introduction to the course, its goals, and to the World’s Oldest Literature, its Context, and Purpose. Understanding the Greek gods and their mythology. Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.
Reading: Buy books and start reading Hesiod’s *Theogony* for next week.

SEPTEMBER:

Tuesday, September 1
The Muses and the Birth of the gods
The Homeric Singers of Tales: An Introduction
Reading: All of Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Lombardo trans.)

Thursday, September 3
Please start reading the Homeric *Odyssey*, scroll 1, and view Andrei Konchalovsky’s “The Odyssey” (made for TV), pt. 1 (1997)

Tuesday, September 8
Narrative Strategy in the Homeric *Odyssey*
Reading: *Odyssey*, scrolls 2-4.
Film Selections from: Andrei Konchalovsky’s “The Odyssey” (made for TV), pt. 1 (1997) (Please view this film before class.)

Thursday, September 10 No class (Brandeis Monday)
A New Kind of “Hero”? Odysseus versus Achilles
Reading: *Odyssey*, scrolls 5-6.
Film Selection from: Andrei Konchalovsky’s “The Odyssey” (made for TV), pt. 2 (1997) (Please view this film before class on Thursday, Sept. 17.)

Tuesday, September 15 No class (Rosh Hashanah)
Reading: *Odyssey*, scrolls 7-8
Thursday, September 17
Our Heroes versus Those of the Ancient Greeks
Reading: Odyssey, review, scrolls 5-8
Review scene selections of Andrei Konchalovsky’s “The Odyssey” (made for TV), pts. 1&2 (1997), as they relate to scrolls 1-8.

Tuesday, September 22, Erev Yom Kippur, but class in session
Reading: Odyssey, scrolls 9-10 and view the film, Joel and Ethan Coen’s “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” (2000).

Thursday, September 24
Drama, Thrills, and Chills for us and for the Greeks
Reading: Odyssey, scrolls 11-12

Tuesday, September 29 No Class (Brandeis Monday)
But please keep reading (carefully) Odyssey, scrolls 13-16.

OCTOBER:
Thursday, October 1
Film Selections from: Joel and Ethan Coen’s “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” (2000) for discussion in class. (You should have already viewed the entire film for Sept. 22, 24, and 29.)

Tuesday, October 6
Heroes and Tricksters: Odysseus and Everett and Odysseus and Verbal
Reading: Odyssey, scrolls 17-18.
Film Selections from: Bryan Singer’s “The Usual Suspects” (1995) (Please view this film before class, which you will need to view for Paper #1.)

*Thursday, October 8
Katabasis, “Going to Hell and Returning,” in Fact and Fiction
Reading: Odyssey, review scrolls 10-12, and read scrolls 19-20.
Film Selections from: John Schlesinger’s “Midnight Cowboy” (1969) (Please view this film before class.)

Tuesday, October 13
Odyssey’s Legacy in Hollywood Westerns
Reading: Odyssey, scrolls 21-22.
Discussion of Paper #1
Film Selections from: Tom Gries’ “100 Rifles” (1969); or Richard Brook’s “The Professionals” (1966). (Only view these films before class if you have time. We shall discuss one or two scenes in class.)

Thursday, October 15
Odysseus’ Katabasis Reshaped for the Modern Thriller
Reading: be sure you have finished *Odyssey*, scrolls 23-24.
Film Selections from: Dwight Little’s “Murder at 1600” (1997) or Clint Eastwood’s “Absolute Power” (1997). (Only view these films before class if you have time.)

**Tuesday, October 20**
Odysseus’ *Katabasis* Reshaped for Science Fiction
The Homeric *Iliad* and the theme of *Katabasis*
Reading: *Iliad* scrolls 1, 3, 6 (LATTE)
Film Selections from: Robert Longo’s “Johnny Mnemonic” (1995) (Please view this film before class.).

**Thursday, October 22**
The *Iliad* and the Hollywood War Movie or War memorials
Reading: *Iliad* scrolls 9, 16, 22, end of scroll 24
Film Selections from: Oliver Stone’s “Platoon” (1986) or Francis Ford Coppola’s “Apocalypse Now” (1979) (Only view these films before class if you have time.)

**Tuesday, October 27**
Woody Allen, “Greek” Tragedy and Comedy; “Athenian” Tragedy’s True Nature
Reading: Aeschylus, *The Oresteia* (trans. by Robert Fagles)—please read *Agamemnon*, first play of the trilogy, before class.
Film Selections from: Woody Allen’s “Mighty Aphrodite” (1995). (Please view the whole film before class.

**Thursday, October 29**
Murder and Mayhem on Stage (or not)
Reading: Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers* and Euripides’ *Electra* (LATTE)
Class Film: Alfred Hitchcock’s “Dial M for Murder” (1954). (Please read the play and view this film before class.)

**NOVEMBER**
**Tuesday, November 3**
Going to the World of the Dead for Love; So, “Where are the gods?”
Reading: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Bk. 1, The Creation, The Four Ages, Apollo and Daphne, Jove and Io; Bk. 2, Story of Phaethon, Europa; Bk. 3, Story of Actaeon, Story of Pentheus and Bacchus; Bk. 4, Pyramus and Thisbe; Story of Perseus; Bk. 5, Story of Niobe, Story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela; Bk. 8, Story of Daedalus and Icarus, The Calydonian Boar, The Brand of Meleager; Bk. 10, Story of Orpheus and Eurydice; Bk. 11, Death of Orpheus.
Film Selections from: Marcel Camus’ “Orfeu Negro” (“Black Orpheus,” in Portuguese with subtitles, 1959). (Please view this film before class for a close discussion of Camus’ transformation of the story.)

*Thursday, November 5*
I would follow you anywhere...
Reading: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, review Bk. 10, Story of Orpheus and Eurydice; Bk. 11, Death of Orpheus.

Paper #2 due: Analysis of “Orfeu Negro” (1959) in relation to themes in classical mythology. If time, we’ll view in class one or two scenes from Woody Allen’s “Deconstructing Harry” (1997).

Tuesday, November 10

Mythic Cynicism/ Mythic Humor

Reading: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Bk. 13, The Argument between Ajax and Ulysses, After the Fall, The Sacrifice of Polyxena, The Discovery of Polydorus; The Pilgrimage of Aeneas; The Story of Galatea; The Song of Polyphemus; Bk. 14, Achaemenides Tells His Story; The Deification of Aeneas; Bk. 15, The Deification of Caesar; The Epilogue.

Thursday, November 12

The World of Rome and the Cost of Empire

Reading: Vergil’s *Aeneid*, scrolls 1-3.

Film Selections from: George Lucas’ “Star Wars” Trilogy V. The Empire Strikes Back (1980). (Please view this film before class.)

Tuesday, November 17

Aeneas as a New Roman Hero

Reading: Vergil’s *Aeneid*, scrolls 4-6.

Film Selections from: George Lucas’ “Star Wars” Trilogy VI. The Return of the Jedi (1983). (Please view this film before class, only if you have time.)

*Thursday, November 19*

Film Sense in the *Aeneid* and its contributions to the creation of the “generic hero” of the west.

Reading: Vergil’s *Aeneid*, scrolls 7-9.

Film Selections from: Ridley Scott’s “Gladiator” (2000). (Please view this film before class.)

Prospectus due for final papers.

Rewrites of Paper #1 or #2 due (katabasis and “Midnight Cowboy”)

Tuesday, November 24

Art and Propaganda in the *Aeneid*

Reading: Vergil’s *Aeneid*, scrolls 10-12.

In class, we may look at scenes from Desmond Davis’ “Clash of the Titans” and Review Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Bk. 4, Story of Perseus, in preparation.

Wed., Thurs., and Fri., November 25, 26, and 27, no classes (Thanksgiving)

DECEMBER

Tuesday, December 1

Review of *Aeneid*, 7-12
Thursday, December 3
The Anti-Hero and X-Rated Sexuality: Roman Deviant Sexualities
Reading: Petronius’ Satyricon (Dinner Party of Trimalchio)
Film Selections from: Federico Fellini’s “Satyricon” (1969) (You do not need to view this whole film, as we shall view relevant parts in class.)

*Tuesday, December 8, last class
Sexualizing the American Superhero over Time:
Heterosexual Love, Faith, and Redemption
Film Selections from: Bryan Singer’s “Superman Returns” (2006); and, if time, Terry Jones’ “Life of Brian” (1979).
Final Papers Due; Course Wrap-up:
The Ancient World on Screen--the Greek and Roman worlds have long served as useful sites for investigating love and sexuality, male bonding, female sexual aggression, sex and religion, and sex and class.