Arts and Cultures across Antiquity

Course Number
ACA-UF 9101 F04

Brightspace course site  https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home/206934

Fall 2022

Please contact florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on: 28 August, 2022

Lecturer Contact Information
Eric Nicholson

Units earned
4

Course Details
● Meeting time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00 to 4:15 pm

● All times are Central European Time (CET). Please note that in Europe, Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday, October 30th 2022 and clocks will be set one hour earlier.

● Location: Villa Sassetti, Aula Montughi.

● COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Florence community, we are closely following CDC and local guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being are our top priority.

Course Description
Prerequisite: An open mind, and a willingness to study, speak, and learn with others

Through close reading, viewing, and discussion, we will explore major literary, architectural, and visual works of the ancient Mediterranean and Asiatic worlds. With emphasis on theatre and oral performance, we will
study the genres of epic, lyric, tragic, and comic poetry: a special aim will be to relate these forms to their social and cultural contexts, as well as to other artistic practices and later literary traditions. Thus our approach will be a comparative one, as we examine, for example, Judaic vs. Mesopotamian accounts of a universal flood, divinely powerful women in Indian as well as Homeric epic, and the rendition of myths and rituals in Greek vase-painting vis a` vis their portrayal in Athenian drama.

The course will also focus on the artistic representation of basic social and individual questions. With the aim of articulating our own inquiry and dialogues, we will consider how ancient texts and art works depict and interrogate subjects such as the individual’s relations with the community; human selfhood and mortality; love, gender, and sexuality; conflicts between civilization and nature; and a recurring, urgent concern of these cultures: humanity’s relationship with the divine and supernatural.

In the last third of the semester, we will turn our attention to not only the achievements of the vast ancient Chinese (Han) and Roman empires, but also the impact of Buddhism and Christianity on their respective cultural worlds. Again, a special concern will be to make informed comparisons and contrasts between the Asiatic and European traditions, and through this study, to focus and deepen our understanding of a richly creative process of transcultural exchange.

A SPECIAL OBJECTIVE will be to make informed connections between the ECOLOGICAL concerns and anxieties of these ancient cultures and today's global preoccupations with a fragile environment, in a time of climate change, embattled resources, and endangered species.

In practical terms, the course aims to develop your critical, analytic, and interpretive skills through attentive reading of texts and viewing of art works, combined with open, engaged, and interactive discussion. The course’s Florentine home location gives us the advantage of being able to refer many of these works and traditions to exceptional sites, among them the ancient theatre of Fiesole and the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Firenze.

In addition, this section of Cultural Foundations gives you the chance to learn and interpret course material through the theatrical adaptation and performance of poetry, dramatic scenes, and monologues.

One specific goal of this approach is the following: if the works we are studying are now defined as “classics” and “masterpieces,” what exact qualities might earn them these distinctions?

By its conclusion, the course will ideally provide you with a strong foundation for future studies in the Humanities, not only through familiarization—and perhaps re-orientation—with fundamental works of classic art and literature, but also through direct learning and application of specific methods of inquiry, assimilation, and analysis.
Course Objectives

Students can expect that at the completion of this course they will
• Have improved their ability to think critically, engage in complex reasoning and express their thoughts clearly through their written work

• Have improved their understanding of the methodologies of literary, art historical, and cultural studies

• Have mastered a basic understanding of how to research questions in literary, art historical, and cultural studies

• Recognize major works of the ancient Mediterranean and Asiatic worlds, and understand why they are significant for literary, artistic, and cultural studies and activities in a global context

Assessment Component

Attendance and Participation: 20%
Written Assignments (ungraded but required, discussion-oriented journal assignments, plus three graded take-home essays): 25%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Oral Presentation: 15%
Final Exam: 20%
Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**NB: Commitment**: A student’s commitment will be evaluated based on active participation, involvement and contribution in the course either remote or in-person.

This may include, but is not limited to, presence at synchronous class sessions, timely submission of predetermined course assignments to the instructor, collaboration with peers in group course work both during class time or independently outside of class time, individual oral or written contributions to synchronous course time through the chat function, in person discussion, or in individual office hours with the instructor. In an asynchronous format this academic engagement may take the form of written contributions to course forums, adding comments to posted work on Voice Thread or Google Drive shared docs.

Assessment Expectations:
● **Grade A:** The student’s work demonstrates an understanding of the subject that goes beyond assigned course readings. The student writes essays/exam questions that are an original synthesis of source materials, demonstrating the ability to evaluate source material critically. Written arguments are clear, well-organized and well-presented; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student has distinguished her/his/their self throughout the course of the semester for her/his/their contributions to class discussion.

● **Grade B:** The student’s work shows a clear understanding of assigned readings and materials covered in class. The student writes clear, well-organized and well-presented essays/exam questions; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student is prepared in class and asks relevant questions.

● **Grade C:** The student’s work shows a basic understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. However, written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student’s work is generally in need of improvement.

● **Grade D:** The student’s work shows occasional understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work is deficient in one of more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student does not participate in class discussion and has not frequented the instructor’s office hours.

● **Grade F:** The student’s work does not demonstrate understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work are either insufficient or are not submitted. The student appears unprepared in class and has not frequented the instructor’s office hours.

**Grading Guidelines**

- A = 94-100
- A minus = 90-93
- B plus = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B minus = 80-83
- C plus = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C minus = 70-73
- D plus = 67-69
- D = 65-66
- F = below 65

**Grading Policy:**
Please refer to Assessment Expectations and the policy on late submission of work.

**Academic Accommodations:**
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see the Moses Center for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

**Attendance Policy**
Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. Since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction on the participation component of the final grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academics team by e-mail florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance or emergencies. For two or more consecutive days of absences due to health reasons, a doctor's note must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academics team.

*Please note that remote attendance will only be considered by the Office of Academic Support if for health reasons you are unable to attend class in person after two consecutive days of absence.*

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed by getting notes from a classmate or meeting with your faculty member during office hours.

Exams, tests and quizzes, oral presentations, and/or important deadlines that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation.

For a detailed explanation of the global attendance policy, see the NYU Florence Attendance Policy Flowchart.
The Global Attendance Policy is posted in the Academic Policies tab in Brightspace, on the NYU Florence Student Portal website, and is posted around campus.

After you have read and reviewed the policies, if there is anything that still needs further clarification or raises a question, please reach out to florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu.

**Final exams**
Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

**Late Submission of Work**
Please refer to Academic Policies in Brightspace.

**Required Text(s)**

All readings are available online on the NYU Brightspace course site. Hard copies of some textbooks are available for consultation and semester-long loans in the Villa Ulivi Library. Please email florence.library@nyu.edu to reserve a copy. To request scans from books on reserve please fill out the Ulivi Library Book Scan Form.

**Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)**
Texts that students are not required to purchase are in NYU-FL Library or available online

**Class Assignments and Topics (Course Calendar):**

**Session 1 - Thurs. 1 Sept.**
Introduction: what is “art,” or “Art”? What makes a “classic” a “classic”? Creation myths; Masks, ritual, and performance from around the world

**Session 2 - Tues. 6 Sept.**
Creation Myths and Cultural Beginnings, continued (excerpts from “The Book of the Hopi,” et al.; The Bible, Book of Genesis, chapters 1-4, all in our NYU Classes course site); selected texts and images from The Liberal Studies (LS) Global Image Gallery,
on Paleolithic and Prehistoric art, plus excerpt from *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, “Art Before History” (“Prehistory,” in the Resources section of our NYU Classes course site)

**First journal assignment due**

**Session 3 - Thurs. 8 Sept.**
Building Cities, Writing on Clay Tablets, Praising and Questioning the Hero in Ancient Mesopotamian Civilizations: *Gardner’s Art,* “Mesopotamia,” plus selected images from The LS Global Image Gallery; *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* Tablets I-V (pp. 1-47)

**Session 4 -- Tues. 13 Sept.**
The *Epic of Gilgamesh,* Tablets VI-XII (pp. 47-100); *Book of Genesis,* chapters 6-9

**Second journal assignment due**

**Session 5 - Thurs. 15 Sept.**
The Ongoing Quest for Eternity: *Book of Genesis,* chapters 17-22, 30-33; *Gardner’s Art,* “Egypt,” plus images from The LS Global Image Gallery, with students' comparative presentations on Mesopotamian and Egyptian art

**Session 6 - Tues. 20 Sept.**
Life’s a Trip: Homer, *The Odyssey,* Books 1-5

**Third journal assignment due**

**Session 7 – Thurs. 22 Sept.**
The *Odyssey,* Books 6-10

**Friday 23 Sept.: PLEASE NOTE! Special required field trip to the Ancient Roman Theatre of Fiesole (9 am to 12 noon)**

**Session 8 - Tues. 27 Sept.**
The *Odyssey,* Books 11-17; Group interpretation exercise on Books XII and XIII of *The Odyssey*

**PLEASE NOTE!: No class meeting on Thurs. 29 Sept. (Professor away at a professional conference) – make-up class meeting to be confirmed (see below)**

**Session 9 - Tues. 4 Oct.**
The *Odyssey,* Books 18-23; special, ungraded IN-CLASS Vote/Quiz on *The Odyssey*
Session 10 - Thurs. 6 Oct.
Finish The Odyssey (Book 24); On to India and the Epic of Everything in the World: introducing The Mahabharata (excerpts, on our NYU Classes course site); selected texts and images from the LS Global Image Gallery, on ancient Indian art and culture

FIRST 4-5 PAGE ESSAY DUE

Session 11 - Tues. 11 Oct.
Classic Indian culture, continued: finish excerpts from The Mahabharata (in the NYU Classes course site); short, ungraded in-class quiz on the Mahabharata excerpts; Introducing Classical Greek Tragedy, with focus on Women, Asia, and the Status of Immigrants: start Euripides, Medea

Session 12 - Wed. 12 Oct. (probable date: exact time and place to be determined)

PLEASE NOTE: SPECIAL MAKE-UP CLASS MEETING

A divinely powerful non-Greek woman vs. the Greek patriarchal state: Euripides, Medea; supplementary essay on Athenian theatre and society

Session 13 - Thurs. 13 Oct.
Finish Euripides, Medea: viewing and listening to related video and audio clips, plus group staging exercise

Session 14 - Tues. 18 Oct.
Ancient Greek Art, part I: Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, “Ancient Greece”, plus selected texts and images from The LS Global Image Gallery with students' comparative presentations

Session 15 - Thurs. 20 Oct.
Ancient Greek Art, Part II, with particular focus on theatre and performance: Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, “Ancient Greece,” continued
* IN-PERSON SITE VISIT, during the class meeting time, to the MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO, Florence (details to follow)

Session 16 - Tues. 25 Oct.
Ancient Greek Art, Part III: Gardner’s Art, “Ancient Greece,” plus selected texts and images from the LS Global Image Gallery, with Midterm Preparation

Session 17 - Thurs. 27 Oct. through Sat. 29 Oct.

• MIDTERM EXAM
• PLEASE NOTE! No class meeting on Tues. 1 Nov.: ITALIAN NATIONAL HOLIDAY

Session 18 - Thurs. 3 Nov.
Women on Top for the Cause of Peace, or How to Stage a Sex Strike, Make People Laugh, and Enact Social and Political Justice, from Ancient Greece to Modern Africa and America: start Aristophanes, Lysistrata

Session 19 - Tues. 8 Nov.
Finish Lysistrata, with in-class viewing of scenes from the film Chi-Raq (2017), directed by Spike Lee.
Fourth journal assignment due

Session 21 -- Thurs. 10 Nov.
Classic Sanskrit drama of India, featuring another strong, sensual, and dynamic female hero: start Kalidasa, Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection, Acts 1-3

Session 22 -- Tues. 15 Nov.
Finish Kalidasa, Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection, Acts 4-7 (recommended reading: chapter on Classic Indian Theatre); Group staging exercise; Ancient Songs of Love and Desire: selected lyric poems of Kalidasa, and excerpts from The Bible, "The Song of Solomon"

Session 23 -- Thurs. 17 Nov.
The Art of Great Empires: Imperial Roman Art and Ancient Chinese Art; Stokstad, “Hellenistic and Roman Art,” plus selected texts and image from The LS Global Image Gallery

Session 24 - Tues. 22 Nov.
Ancient Songs of Love and Desire, continued: selected lyric poetry by Sappho and Catullus, plus the Constant Changes of Love and of the World: start Ovid (and Ted Hughes), Tales from Ovid (selections, to be specified in class)

Session 25 -- Thurs. 24 Nov.
Tales from Ovid, continued, with Students’ Group Presentations

Session 26 - Tues. 29 Nov.
Tales from Ovid, continued, with Students' Group Presentations
*** 2-PAGE “VIEWING ESSAY/EKPHRASIS” DUE

Session 27 -- Thurs. 1 Dec.

Tales from Ovid, concluded, with Students’ Group Presentations

Session 28 - Tues. 6 Dec.

Classical fantasy, satire, and proto-Science Fiction: Lucian, “A True Story,” with Students’ Group Presentation

Session 29 - Mon. 12 Dec. NOTE SPECIAL MONDAY MAKE-UP DAY MEETING

Christianity and the Roman Empire: The Gospel according to St. Matthew (excerpts); Jewish and Early Christian art (excerpts from Gardner’s Art, “Late Antiquity,” and from The World Between Empires);

Review for the final exam

*SECOND 4-5 PAGE ESSAY DUE

Session 30 - Thurs. 15 Dec. through Sat. 17 Dec.

FINAL EXAM

Suggested Co-Curricular Activities
Suggested optional co-curricular activities will be announced in class and/or via email by the professor throughout the semester.

Your Lecturer

Eric Nicholson (Ph.D., Yale University, 1991) teaches literature and theatre courses at NYU Florence, and Syracuse University Florence. An active member of the international research collaborative Theater Without Borders, with Robert Henke he has co-edited Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater (2008), and Transnational Mobilities in Early Modern Theater (2014). He has recently contributed the chapter on “Commedia dell’Arte in early modern English drama” to The Routledge Research Companion to Anglo-Italian Renaissance Literature and Culture (2019), and co-translated and co-edited Lovers’ Debates for the Stage, by Isabella Andreini (ITER Press: The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe Series, 2022). At NYU Florence, he has directed plays by Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Leonora Bernardi, Molière, and others, and in 2018 he co-directed and played Theseus/The Fool in a bilingual theatre workshop, with a final public performance, on Oedipus at Colonus/King
Lear in Verona, Italy. Eric is very much looking forward to teaching Arts and Cultures Across Antiquity this semester.

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism**

As the University's policy on "Academic Integrity for Students at NYU" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offenses against academic integrity.

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

- [NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)
- [NYU Library Guides](#)

**Inclusivity Policies and Priorities**

NYU’s Office of Global Programs and NYU’s global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

**Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays**

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer and Office of Academic Support in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up
examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays.

Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)
Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website.

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the Personalizing Zoom Display Names website.

Moses Accommodations Statement
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosecsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Florence.

Bias Response
The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:

- Online using the Web Form (link)
- Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
Phone: 212-998-2277

Local Telephone: 055 5007277