

LT237 The Odyssey

Seminar Leader: Dr. David Hayes
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Course times: MW 2:00-3:30
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will read Homer's *Odyssey* slowly and discuss it together over the course of the semester. As the opening of the epic poem announces, it is the story of an exceptionally versatile man—or, in Emily Wilson's translation, a "complicated man"—striving to "win his soul" by coming home again. Coming home again, as we will see, involves much more than physically getting back to a place, difficult though that proves to be; it involves reestablishing the many relationships that make a home what it is. Because some of the difficulty in coming home again emerges from the experience of war (and has even been identified as combat trauma or PTSD), students are encouraged (but not required) to read Homer's *Iliad* as preparation.

Requirements

Texts: Homer, *The Odyssey*, vols. I and II, trans. A.T. Murray, Loeb Classical Library.
Revised by George Dimock.

ISBN-13: 978-0674995611

ISBN-13: 978-0674995628

Note on the translation. Students are required to use the Loeb Classical Library edition of the *Odyssey* in two volumes, translated originally in 1919 by A.T. Murray and revised in 1995 by George Dimock. Murray's scrupulous fidelity makes this an excellent choice for academic work.

The library should have enough copies of this edition to lend. If not, please order this edition as soon as possible! It can take some time to acquire. If you cannot get the revised (1995) edition, the original (1919) will also work, although you may find its archaizing style a little more challenging to read.

You must always have a *printed* copy of the text in this translation with you for class. I strongly recommend owning your own copies so that you can underline passages and write freely in the margins.

Use of Electronics

The use of electronic devices of any kind during class time is only allowed for disability accommodation. Research clearly shows that the presence of laptops hurts the academic performance of the user – and also of whoever else can see the screen. These devices undermine the effort to create and sustain a common conversation.

Handies/Smartphones

In order to facilitate an environment that is constructive for seminar discussion, please do not enter the classroom until you have put your smartphone completely away in a bag or backpack. **Please do not sit at the seminar table with your phone out, even before class has begun.** Please also make sure that your ringer is turned off for class.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

The use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software is strictly prohibited in assignments for this course. Note that section 14.3.1.4 of the Student Handbook specifies that the submission of work from AI platforms is considered cheating.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the

equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) will not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

For each absence over two, I will deduct from the final grade according to the following ascending scale: -.05, -.05, -.1, -.1, -.15, -.15.

I will excuse absences with a doctor's note or a bureaucratic appointment confirmation (excused absences still count against the 30% rule). Every other absence is simply counted as an absence. There is no need to send me any email messages if you will be absent.

Assessment

Since this is a discussion class, you should come to class not only having done the reading, but also having taken time to think about what you have read. Do not wait for the seminar to begin your thinking. The brevity of the reading assignments means that a high standard will be set for mastery of the facts, such as the names and identities of characters and the details of the plot.

Read slowly and with your imagination. Homer does not spell out what he means. Rather, he often conveys them through images. Some of his techniques are even cinematic, e.g., close-ups, long shots, juxtapositions, and significant cutting from scene to scene. The meaning is often in the selection of details. Try to see in your mind's eye what Homer is showing. When you get good at this, you will also be able to see what he is *not* showing.

I will evaluate class participation according to the following criteria:

- 1) Ready to discuss the reading from the beginning of the class
- 2) Manifestly prepared for each and every class
- 3) Capacity to connect the discussion in the current class with the discussion in previous classes
- 4) Capacity to converse with other students about their concerns, and to contribute to lines of discussion that other students have initiated
- 5) Quality of the student's contributions
An interesting or important thought matters much more than quantity. Dominating the discussion is a negative. If you have a lot to say, for the sake of the general discussion you may need to exercise some restraint by picking your spots.
- 6) Quality of the student's questions
A good question is also an excellent contribution to a discussion—often even better than a good point.

Assignments

This class requires three short papers and a final paper in which you develop your thought about the poem as a whole. Paper topics will be provided. For the final paper, you are free to devise your own topic, but this should happen in consultation with me.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

I freely give extensions, but the request must be made at least 24 hours before the deadline. Late papers will be downgraded a third of a letter grade (e.g., from A- to B+) for every 24 hours that passes.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar participation grade: 30%
First paper (approximately 800 words): 10%
Second paper (approximately 1000 words): 15%
Third paper (approximately 1000 words): 15%
Final paper (approximately 2200 words): 30%

Schedule

Week 1

Aug 31 Proems of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (and to line 1.177)

Sep 2 Book 1

Week 2

Sep 7 Book 2

Sep 9 Book 3

First paper due (800 words) by Sunday, Sept. 13 11:59pm

Week 3

Sep 14 Book 4

Sep 16 Book 5

Week 4

Sep 21 Book 6

Sep 23 Book 7

Week 5

Sep 28 Book 8

Second paper due (1000 words) by Tuesday, Sept 29 11:59pm

Sep 30 Book 9

Week 6

Oct 5 Book 9

Oct 7 Book 10

Week 7

Oct 12 Book 11

Oct 14 Book 12

Fall Break: Monday, October 19, - Sunday, October 25, 2026

Week 8

Oct 26 Book 13

Oct 28 Book 14

Week 9

Nov 2 Book 15

Nov 4 Book 16

Third paper due (1000 words) by Saturday, Nov 7 11:59pm

Week 10

Nov 9 Book 17

Nov 11 Book 18

Week 11

Nov 16 Book 19

Nov 18 Book 20

Week 12

Nov 23 Book 21

Nov 25 Book 22

Week 13

Nov 30 Book 23

Dec 2 Book 23

Week 14

Dec 7 Book 24

Dec 9 Final discussion

Completion week: Monday, December 14 through Friday, December 18.

Final paper (2200 words) due by Friday, December 18 11:59pm