GSEM 623: Figures of Resistance: Ancient and Modern
Professors Annette Baertschi and Homay King
Bryn Mawr College, Fall 2017
Class: Tuesday 2:20-4:10pm
Screenings: Monday 7:10-10:00pm

Course Description:

The GSem will explore classical figures of resistance such as Prometheus, Antigone, Electra, Medea, and Lysistrata and their reception in modern art and culture. The focus will be on films and other works of art that re-appropriate and transform the ancient characters and their stories. We will discuss in particular how modern works re-contextualize the classical characters to shed light on contemporary historical, political, and social issues. Films include Jean-Luc Godard, Contempt (France/Italy, 1963), Tony Harrison, Prometheus (Great Britain, 1998), Liliana Cavani, The Cannibals (Italy, 1970), Amy Greenfield, Antigone/Rites of Passion (USA, 1991), Ingmar Bergman, Persona (Sweden, 1966), Miklós Jancsó, Electra, My Love (Hungary, 1974), Pier Paolo Pasolini, Medea (Italy/France/Germany, 1969), Arturo Ripstein, Así es la Vida (Mexico, 2000), Brian de Palma, Dionysus in ’69 (USA, 1970), and Spike Lee, Chi-raq (USA, 2015). Readings will be drawn from texts on film, psychoanalysis, political theory, and reception studies. The GSem will be coordinated with the Flexner Lecture Series and take advantage of the theoretical framework established by Professor Honig. In turn, the seminar will complement her analysis of select literary texts and films by a number of less well-known re-interpretations of ancient figures of resistance and refusal, thus opening up a more global perspective on the forms and modes of reception of the classical characters in modern art and popular culture.

Required Texts:

Homer, The Odyssey
Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound
Sophocles, Antigone
Sophocles, Electra
Euripides, Medea
Euripides, Bacchae
Aristophanes, Lysistrata

All texts are available in the Bryn Mawr bookstore. Any additional primary sources as well as all secondary readings will be available on Moodle. All films will be placed on reserve in Carpenter Library.

Requirements:

Participation: 40%
Oral presentation: 10%
Final essay (approximately 20pp for graduate students, 10pp for undergraduates): 50%
A Note Regarding Participation:

This is a graduate seminar: a high level of participation from all is mandatory in order for the seminar to function. Readings should be completed on the day that they are listed on the syllabus. Please bring copies of all readings to class, annotate them according to your own methods, and come to seminar prepared with questions, comments, and ideas for discussion.

A Note Regarding Course Content:

It is your responsibility to review the syllabus prior to enrolling in the course and to make a reasonable determination about whether you will be able to complete the course requirements, including reading and viewing all the assigned materials. If for any reason you anticipate problems with the course content or requirements, please contact the instructors immediately so that we can determine whether you should seek an alternate course.

A Note Regarding Accommodations for Students with Learning Differences:

Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of the impact of a learning difference are encouraged to meet with the instructors privately early in the semester. Students should also contact Deb Alder, the Coordinator of Access Services (e-mail: dalder@brynmawr.edu, phone: 610-526-7351) as soon as possible to verify their eligibility for reasonable accommodations, and provide an accommodations letter to the instructors at least two weeks prior to the first paper and/or exam.

SYLLABUS

Week 1: 9/5 Introduction (I)
- Introduction to the Course (syllabus and requirements)
- Brief Introduction to Film Studies
- Film Formal Analysis Terminology (+ Clips)

Week 2: 9/12 Introduction (II)
- Brief Introduction to Greek Tragedy
- Brief Introduction to Reception Studies
Receptions Journal 2 (2010), 136–155


Week 3: 9/19 Penelope

– Homer, The Odyssey (selections)

Week 4: 9/26 Prometheus

– Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound
– Tony Harrison, Prometheus (1998) – on reserve shelf

Week 5: 10/3 Electra (I)

– Sophocles, Electra

Week 6: 10/10 Electra (II)

– Sophocles, Electra
– Ingmar Bergman, Persona (1966) – PZ61.B47 P4713 2004; also streaming through Tripod on Kanopy
– Susan Sontag, “Bergman’s Persona,” in: Lloyd Michaels (ed.), Ingmar Bergman’s Persona,
Cambridge 2000, 62–85

**Week 7:**  
**Fall Break**

**Week 8: 10/24**  
**Antigone (I)**
– Sophocles, *Antigone*

**Week 9: 10/31**  
**Antigone (II)**

**Week 10: 11/7**  
**Lysistrata**
– Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*
– Casey Dué, “Get in Formation, This Is an Emergency: The Politics of Choral Song and Dance in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* and Spike Lee’s *Chi-raq,*” *Arion* 24 (2016), 21–54

**Week 11: 11/14**  
**Agaue**
– Euripides, *Bacchae*

**Week 12: 11/21 Medea (I)**

– Euripides, Medea
– Pier Paolo Pasolini, “The Cinema of Poetry” (1965)

**Week 13: 11/28 Medea (II)**

(– Euripides, Medea)

**Week 14: 12/5** Student Presentations

**Week 15: 12/12** Student Presentations