The Greek Set Book 2012/13: Homer: The Odyssey

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A selection of books/units from books 5-12 and 19-20 is taught from the original. The course aims at a familiarity with, and appreciation of, the poem’s distinctive character: language and style; its oral features (e.g. the folk-tale element, typical scenes, frequent types of similes); thematology (nostos ‘homecoming’ being the big theme); geography (‘far-off’/marvellous lands and near ones/Ithacan society and the world of the (royal) oikos); ethics and society/-ies; heroic attributes; the gods and their relationship with humans; the sophistication of the epic narrative; analogies and differences with the Iliad; intertextual resonances. Classes are interactive, and translation and commentary of the text (from the linguistic, metrical, historical and socio-cultural perspectives) will occupy us for the most part of the class, but selective secondary reading will also be discussed in the sessions.

Translations (two recommended prose ones)
Hammond, M., with intro by J. Griffin (2000, Duckworth, London)
Shewring, W., with intro by G. S. Kirk (1980, Oxford World’s Classics)
[The Loeb edn., containing the original, with A. T. Murray’s (1919) trans. revised by G. Dimock (repr. with corrections, 1998) is useful to have].

Commentaries - Companions

Vocabulary, language, metre
LSJ\textsuperscript{9d} [= Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon] is of course indispensable, especially until some Homeric vocabulary and mastery of the dialect have been acquired.
Autenrieth, G., Homeric Dictionary, 1984 [1873] is also very good and saves time.
West, M. L., Introduction to Greek Metre (Oxford, 1987) [See also ‘Metre’ in the Introductions of Rutherford 1992 (his section on ‘Grammar’ is also very helpful) and Garvie 1994 (above)].
Bibliography

Some introductory reading

Griffin, J., *Homer* (Bristol, 1980a) (with short notes on further reading and translations at the back).


General

Cohen, B. *The Distaff Side. Representing the Female in Homer’s Odyssey* (New York, 1995).

Crotty, K. *The Poetics of Supplication* (New York, 1994).


Foley, J. M. Homer’s Traditional Art (Pennsylvania, 1999).


Nagy, G., *Homer the Preclassic* (California, 2009), (esp. ch. 4).

— *Homer the Classic* (Harvard, 2009)


**On Homeric society**

**Religion**
Griffin 1980 (see above), pp. 144-204.

**On narrative technique**
Grethlein, J. and A. Rengakos (eds) *Narratology and Interpretation* (Berlin, 2009) [containing contributions on Homer and the Odyssey].

**On orality**

**Collective volumes**
Myrsiades, K (ed.) *Approaches to Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey* (New York, 2010).
Afterlife

A useful online resource is that of the Centre for Hellenic Studies of Harvard University http://chs.harvard.edu/wa/pageR?tn=Publications&bdc=12&mn=0

Assessment

• **BA degree (final exam + coursework)**
Final examination counts for 70% of the course mark. Each of the two 2,500 words essays counts for 15% of the course mark.
Essay 1 (Autumn term): to be submitted by **Mon 10 December 2012, by 6pm.**
Essay 2 (Spring term): to be submitted by **Mon 18 March 2013, by 6pm.**

• **MA degree (coursework)**
One 5,000-word essay to be submitted by **1 May** or **15 June 2013.**
Please arrange in time with me to submit a draft to comment on before the deadline.
The Odyssey is the second of the two epic poems attributed to the ancient Greek poet Homer (the first being the Iliad), and usually considered the second extant work of Western literature. It was probably composed near the end of the 8th Century BCE and is, in part, a sequel to the Iliad. Ten years after the Fall of Troy, and twenty years after the Greek hero Odysseus first set out from his home in Ithaca to fight with the other Greeks against the Trojans, Odysseus' son Telemachus and his wife Penelope are beset with over a hundred suitors who are trying to persuade Penelope that her husband is dead and that she should marry one of them. The Odyssey is one of two major ancient Greek epic poems attributed to Homer. It is, in part, a sequel to the Iliad, the other Homeric epic. The Odyssey is a fundamental work in the modern Western canon, being the oldest extant piece of Western literature, second to the Iliad. Scholars believe the Odyssey was composed near the end of the 8th century BC, somewhere in Ionia, the Greek coastal region of Anatolia.