

Euripides' *Medea*
GK9903B Winter 2026



Image: Medea on her chariot. Red-Figure Calyx-Krater. Lucanian, c. 400 BCE. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund 1991.1.

OVERVIEW

Course Information

Where/When

Instructor

E-Mail

Office

Student Hours

Please come to student hours (also called “office hours”)! They exist to help you – both regarding this course and for your broader academic development. Drop in if you have questions, but also if you want to talk to me about anything!

Course Description and Objectives

Sex, ambition, murder: Euripides' *Medea* remains one of the most well-known and popular Greek tragedies, in part due to the play's combination of the everyday and the domestic with the extraordinary, the salacious, and the ultimate taboo. Through close readings of the play in the original, we will explore Euripides' language and style and develop interpretations through literary, intellectual, and social lenses. We will also read the new fragment of Euripides' *Ino* that was just published last year as a point of comparison and as an introduction to the cutting edge of tragic scholarship.

Required Books

We will be using Donald Mastronarde's excellent Green & Yellow commentary, which is available from the Bookstore:

- D. Mastronarde, *Euripides. Medea* (Cambridge, 2002).

COURSE STRUCTURE AND EVALUATION

Grading Structure

	Percentage	Components	Timings
Participation	20%	= presentations (10%) + class discussion (10%)	Throughout the term
Examination	20%	= 2 translations + 1 “commentary”	In-class on Monday 9 th March
“New Approaches” Project	20%	Project presentation	Monday 16 th March & Monday 23 rd March (titles should be submitted to me at least 1 week before)
Final Project	40%	= annotated bibliography (5%) + research paper (25%) + related research communication/outreach exercise (10%)	Monday 13 th April 11.59 pm (titles and annotated bibliography should be submitted to me by Friday 8 th November)

Assessment Details

Participation

This is a discussion-based seminar course. The success of the class discussions depends largely on the level of your preparation and willingness to participate. You will be assessed on your class presentations and on the level of participation and engagement in class discussions.

Presentation: This need not be fancy, though a handout would be very welcome. It should be an informal talk of 15 minutes on the topic or texts in the schedule. You are not expected to offer a definitive overview or answer, but to present the central ideas to act as a conversation-starter. Though the presentation should be informed by scholarship, please don't be afraid to offer your own “take”, bring in material not on the syllabus, or use humour – all these will be highly appreciated by your classmates and by me! Your presentation will be assessed on clarity, originality, and argumentation. We will agree on a schedule for presentations in the first week.

Class Discussions: Although only some people will present in each class, I will expect everyone to have (1) read the primary texts for the week, (2) read the suggested scholarship, and (3) thought carefully about the presentation topics. This means, I will expect everyone – regardless of whether you were the presenter or not – to be able to engage with the presentation, interact with the arguments made in class, and contribute your opinions.

Examination

There will be a 3-hour exam in class. This exam will consist of 2 translations and 1 “commentary”,

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where each translation and commentary will be worth the same. There will be a choice of passages both for translations and for comment. Passages for translation and comment will be selected from the play.

“New Approaches” Project

In our final two seminars, each student will give a 20-minute presentation to the class on a new approach they would like to consider for application to studying the *Medea* or the *Ino*. It doesn't need to be a whole new theory or a paradigm-shifting idea, but it could be the application of the play to an area that could be improved by it, or bringing in methodologies or theories from other areas of Classics/disciplines/fields, or developing existing approaches, or thinking of a new topic within Greek tragic scholarship. I expect to be really generous here: the emphasis is on learning how to come up with a new research project. Try to treat the presentation as a friendly conference talk: it should be a performance and include a PowerPoint, and a handout. Titles of the presentation should be sent to me at least by 9th March, though earlier is encouraged.

Final Project

The final project comprises a research paper and a related research communication/outreach exercise. Both are due on 13th April.

Research Paper: This should be a 5000-word essay including footnotes (I will read up to another 500 words) on a topic of interest to you: this means you should choose an approach that suits you and your area of study (e.g. if you are an archaeologist, you might do an essay on the relationship between the portrayal of X in the *Medea/Ino* and on Greek vase paintings or an essay discussing papyri as archaeological artefacts or how archaeological research can shed new light on the poetry). I only ask that you include at least some literary discussion of the Greek text: literary interpretation should benefit your topic and vice versa. Please consult with me to formulate an appropriate essay title; you should have a final essay title by 23rd March.

Research Communication/Outreach Exercise: It is a crucial skill to communicate your research to those beyond your field and to the general public (remember: the public often funds our research and should be able to access the new knowledge created). You can decide the format of this research communication/outreach exercise, but it should explain the topic, findings, and significance of the research you did for your research paper and it should be short, sweet, and aimed at a lay audience. Potential formats include a podcast episode (approximately 15 minutes solo or 20 minutes in conversation), a YouTube-style video, an outreach talk delivered to an imaginary group of high-school students, or a detailed teaching-plan for a guest lecture to undergraduates.

SCHEDULE

To be distributed separately.

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Content Notice and Etiquette

This is a discussion-based class, which can only succeed in a safe and inclusive community that learns from the many different perspectives of its participants. Ancient Greek poetry often treats many topics which affected the daily life of people (ancient and modern) – including death, violence, sex and gender, sexuality, race, and age – in ways that appear to us to be insensitive or offensive. All participants must be respectful of others in the classroom. If you ever feel that the classroom environment is affecting your participation and learning in a negative way, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

Accessibility and Accommodation Policies

I am committed to teaching a course that is fully inclusive of all students. Please let me know as soon as possible if you foresee or encounter any barriers and we will determine if there are any adjustments or accommodations that can be implemented. I am open to creative solutions and to work with you.

If academic accommodation should become necessary at any point, students should contact their course instructor(s) and/or supervisor, as appropriate. Students should also contact the Graduate Chair in most cases, and especially if accommodation is needed for:

- more than one course
- more than one week
- any tests, exams, and/or assignments worth 10% or more of a final grade
- any program milestone (comprehensive exams, thesis, etc.)

In these cases, the Graduate Chair may request that a student work with Student Accessibility Services (https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html) to arrange a plan for accommodation (see SGPS Regulation 15: <https://grad.uwo.ca/resources/regulations/15.html>).

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity policies are about equity. Academic writing is a product of labour and so appropriating others' work without credit or attribution is theft. You can also see plagiarism as a form of censorship as incorrect citation or omission of authorship can amount to the silencing of scholarly perspectives and identity.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf. You are responsible for knowing and avoiding misconduct.

I encourage you to make sure you understand and know how to avoid plagiarism before submitting any work for assessment. You, as the student, are responsible for knowing and avoiding misconduct. For further details, see: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf. Western Libraries also offers resources on plagiarism: <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>.

I do not mind which referencing system you use as long as it is consistent and complete. I suggest using the style of a respected journal in our field, such as *Phoenix* or *TAPA*. The Western Libraries website offers handy guides to citation styles: <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/essayhelp/index.html>.

Statement on the Use of Plagiarism-Checking Software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing

agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this course, the use of AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT) are strictly prohibited for the purposes of gathering information or generating ideas: not only do such uses of AI tools go against and hinder the aims of this course, but the issues of large language models fabricating (or “hallucinating”) facts and sources are also well known, making them unhelpful as sources of information in an academic setting. For what it’s worth, no essay that I have generated using ChatGPT as a test case (even with further prompts) seemed likely to achieve a B grade, even at the undergraduate level.

AI tools (e.g. Grammarly, or ChatGPT with commands such as “reword”) may only be used to edit work in a limited way (e.g. to check grammar or as a thesaurus) – that is, they may only be used as a linguistic aid; they should not be used to produce partial or entire drafts and they may not be used to generate, inspire, or alter your argument in any way. (A very limited exception is the use of AI image tools to create humorous images for illustrative purposes – for example, memes – in informal presentations, as long as the use of AI is acknowledged; these cases are clearly contributing to the presentation of your thinking and not replacing thinking.)

If AI use is suspected, research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other preparatory materials may be requested by me to demonstrate stages of your process – please retain these until after final grades have been entered. An inability to produce such materials upon request may be considered negatively in grading.

Absences and Extensions

If medical accommodations due to mental or physical health issues become necessary, please contact me, your supervisor, and the Graduate Chair.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.