The "Good Life" in Greek Poetry
CS3903F, Fall 2024

Image: Athenian red-figure squat-lekythos (detail), c. 420-400 BC, attributed to the Meidias Painter.
British Museum 1846,0925.12.
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A female figure, labelled "Eudaemonia" ("Good Fortune", "Blessedness"), is seated between a woman, labelled as "beautiful", and a youth holding spears. Eros flies towards "Eudaemonia". Not visible in this photograph are female figures labelled "Pandaesia" (the "Wedding Feast") and "Hygieia" ("Health").

OVERVIEW

Course Information

Where/When	see Brightspace
Instructor	Dr Il-Kweon Sir
E-Mail	
Office	
Student Hours	Tuesdays 11-12 am and by appointment.
	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 something in class, in your reading, or even on TV that's inspired you.
Course Website	see Brightspace

Course Description

How do we lead a "good life"? In our society, everyone from politicians to retirees and children claims to have an idea of what it looks like, but we also recognise "experts" in this area, be they academics, economists, religious leaders, or philosophers. This course examines the "good life" according to ancient Greek poets, who often presented themselves as the transmitters and guardians of knowledge and wisdom in their own society. Starting from discussions of life amidst death, we will consider the importance of money, power, prestige, war, work, love, age, sex, and race to the conception of the "good life" in Greek epic, lyric, and tragedy of the archaic and classical periods. We will also study the boundaries and links between poetry and "philosophy" and the continuities and discontinuities between ancient and contemporary perspectives.

Learning Objectives

Students who complete this course will:

- be able to recognise, describe, and analyse major ideas pertinent to conceptions of the "good life" in Greek poetry up to the 5th century BCE;
- be able to recognise, describe, and analyse the relationship between presentations of the "good life" and their literary, historical, and ideological contexts;
- be able to recognise, describe, and analyse the continuities and differences in contemporary and ancient perspectives on the "good life";
- be able to recognise, describe, and analyse the rich poetic qualities of the texts studied;
- have improved their research, presentation, and writing skills.

Instructor

Hello! I'm Il-Kweon Sir (my first name is pronounced in two syllables and rhymes with "one"; "Sir" is pronounced like the title). I hail from Korea via the UK and I'm very glad to be joining Western this year from the University of Cambridge, where I have researched and taught since receiving my degrees from the University of Oxford. My teaching and research are closely aligned, focused on the study of the ancient Greek and Roman world through its languages and literature with a special interest in lyric poetry. I'm particularly excited to teach this course as it approaches some of the biggest concerns in Greek culture – themes that first drew me to Classics and continue to inspire my research – through some of the most astonishing pieces of Greek literature from a very human perspective. It also directly relates to my developing research on wellbeing in Greek literature.
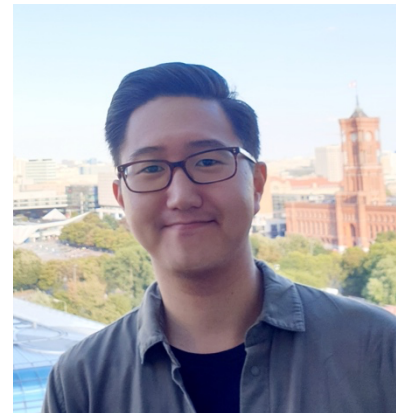
Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. The themes and content of this course would combine well with the "Greek Epic" (Fall), "Athenian Drama" (Winter), "Ancient Greek Religion" (Fall), "Women in Ancient Greece" (Fall), and "Slavery in Antiquity" (Winter) courses in the Department of Classical Studies.

Required Books

- R. Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*. (Chicago, 1951). [Re-printed many times, including recently with introduction and notes by R. Martin in 2011. Widely available second-hand and online (e.g. on archive.org).]
- A. Athanassakis, *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, Shield*. (Baltimore, 1983). [Re-printed and re-edited in 2004 and 2022. Widely available second-hand and online but 2022 edition preferred.]
- M. Griffith, G.W. Most, D. Grene, R. Lattimore (edd.), *Euripides I. Alcestis, Medea, The Children of Heracles, Hippolytus*. Third Edition. (Chicago, 2013). [Widely available second-hand and online.]
- M. Griffith, G.W. Most, D. Grene, R. Lattimore (edd.), *Sophocles II. Ajax, The Women of Trachis, Electra, Philoctetes, The Trackers*. Third Edition. (Chicago, 2013). [Widely available second-hand and online.]

All other primary texts will be made available on the course website on Brightspace.

Technical Requirements

This course will be conducted in person. However, you will need access to a computer and internet access to access the course website for course materials and notices and to submit work. Further, you will need access to a recording device (e.g. a mobile phone or computer) to record podcasts.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND EVALUATION

Grading Structure

	Percentage	Components	Timings
Participation	30%	= presentation (10%) + podcast (10%) + class discussion (10%)	Throughout the term
Mid-Term Project	30%	= 1 commentary (10%) + 1 guided essay (20%)	Released: Friday 11 October Submit by: Friday 25 October
Final Project	40%	= commentary (10%) + essay (30%)	Released: Friday 22 November Submit by: Friday 6 December

This is an "essay course". As such, the course and assessments are structured in such a way that you can develop and demonstrate competence in essay-writing, including assembling information, structuring argument, and presenting it in appropriate language and style. Consequently, you must achieve at least 50% on average in your written assignments (i.e. the Mid-Term + Final Projects) to pass this course.

Our course will be discussion-based: you are expected to learn from your fellow students as much as from me. At each Wednesday class, one student or a pair/group of students (depending on numbers) will be expected to prepare an informal presentation (of 7-10 minutes) on the presentation question of the week (listed in the schedule). The student or group will give their presentation to the class, which will be followed by class discussion using the presentation as a starting-point. The student(s) who presented in a particular session will also create a podcast (10-15 minutes) based on their presentation and class discussion for the entire class. Other sessions will consist of short lectures on specific topics, group exercises, and discussions.

As the schedule below suggests, there is also an emphasis on the reading of the Greek texts in translation. This is a crucial element of the course: we are fundamentally interested in what we can *do and think with* these works rather than learn "facts" about the ancient world.

Assessment Details

Participation
The success of the class discussions depends largely on the level of your preparation. You will be assessed on your presentation, podcast, and on level of participation and engagement in class discussions.

> Presentation: This need not be fancy, though a PowerPoint presentation or a handout would be very welcome. It should be an informal talk (up to 10 minutes) on the presentation question listed in the syllabus. The questions are purposefully broad and provocative: you should tell the class how you understand the question and the material. You are not expected to offer a definitive answer, but present enough ideas as to act as a conversation-starter. The presentation requires you to answer the question directly and clearly and offer your own perspective on the material, informed by scholarly reading. 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 class (Monday 9th September).

> Podcast: The student(s) who gave their presentation should record a podcast (between 10-15 minutes) based on their presentation and the subsequent class discussion and send it to me to share with the

course on Brightspace within 7 days of the presentation (excluding the reading week). It should not be a repeat of the presentation delivered in class but outline the major arguments discussed in class and engage fairly with a range of opinions voiced in class. It is intended that everyone can use this as a revision tool.

Class Discussions: Although only one person or pair/group will be asked to present in a given session, 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 question. 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. Likewise, everyone will be expected to participate in group exercises and class discussions that are not prompted by student presentations. In assessing participation, I value quality of participation over quantity – comments and questions that offer a new perspective in the discussion or advance the discussion are key.

We will discuss what participation might look like in greater detail in the first session; there will be opportunities to provide self-assessments mid-way and at the end of the course which will be used to inform my mark for the class discussion portion.

Mid-Term Project

At the end of Week 5 (Friday 11 October), I will release the task for the Mid-Term project with several passages for the commentary and guided essay (you will be able to choose between passages). You are required to do 2 tasks:

(1) a "commentary" (i.e. a close analysis) on a short passage or image. The word limit for the commentary is 750 words excluding bibliography (but I will read up to another 50 words). I do not expect you to extensively "research" the passages/images for comment, but rather to interpret them in the context of what you have learnt during the course. I expect you to spend between 60-90 minutes on this exercise.

(2) a "guided essay". This requires you to answer an essay question with detailed reference to a short passage provided. The word limit for the guided essay is 1500 words excluding bibliography (but I will read up to another 150 words). The word limit is not a "target"; an A-grade should be achievable in an essay of 1250 words. I would expect you to spend up to 5 hours in total, including research and writing time, on this exercise.

Please remember that the commentary and guided essay should adhere to the University's standards of academic integrity and be referenced fully. There is no time limit, but you must submit them to me via Brightspace before the last class of Week 6 on Friday 25 October. Grading criteria will be distributed with the project.

Final Project

At the end of Week 10 (Friday 22 November), I will release the task for the Final project with several passages for the commentary (choose one) and several essay questions (choose one). You are required to do 2 tasks:

(1) a "commentary". (Same guidelines apply as for the Mid-Term project.)

(2) an essay. The essay questions will reflect the topics covered throughout the course but will require you to bring the course material together in new ways. The word limit for the essay is 2500 words excluding bibliography (but I will read up to another 250 words). The word limit is not a "target". I would expect you to spend around 5-7 hours in total, including research and writing time.

Please remember that the commentary and the essay should adhere to the University's standards of academic integrity and be referenced fully. There is no time limit, but you must submit them to me via Brightspace before our last class on Friday 6 December. Grading criteria will be distributed with the project.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Mon 9ᵗʰ Sept, Wed 11ᵗʰ Sept, Fri 13ᵗʰ Sept) [N.B. Friday is the last day to add this as a half course and last day to drop this course without it showing on the transcript.]
    Being Human: Gods, Humans, Life, and Death in the *Iliad*
    Presentation Topic: Is death more important than life for the warriors in the *Iliad*?
    Texts: The *Iliad* – selections from Books 1, 9, 12, 22, 24.

Week 2 (Mon 16ᵗʰ Sept, Wed 18ᵗʰ Sept, Fri 20ᵗʰ Sept)
    The *Iliad* for Non-Warriors
    Presentation Topic: "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus": Is life so different for those in the *Iliad* who are not warriors that they might as well be from another planet?
    Texts: The *Iliad* – selections from Books 3, 6, 22, 24.

Week 3 (Mon 23ʳᵈ Sept, Wed 25ᵗʰ Sept, Fri 27ᵗʰ Sept)
    War and Citizenship
    Presentation Topic: "All for One, One for All"? Is there space for individual glory in the City (*Polis*)?
    Texts: Sophocles' *Ajax*, Callinus fr. 1, Tyrtaeus frr. 10-12.

Week 4 (Wed 2ⁿᵈ Oct, Fri 4ᵗʰ Oct) [N.B. no class on Monday (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)]
    To Live is to … Work?
    Presentation Topic: "Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." (Theodore Roosevelt, 7ᵗʰ September 1903). Is work a manifestly good thing according to Heisod's *Works and Days*?
    Texts: Hesiod's *Works and Days* – selections.

Week 5 (Mon 7ᵗʰ Oct, Wed 9ᵗʰ Oct, Fri 11ᵗʰ Oct)
    Manners Maketh Man?
    Presentation Topic: "Money, money, money! Must be funny – in a rich man's world" (Chorus of *Money, money, money*, ABBA (1976)). How powerful are money and wealth according to the lyric poets and Hesiod's *Works and Days*?
    Texts: Selections from lyric (*Theognidea*, Solon, Alcaeus, Sappho, Simonides), Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

[FRI 11ᵗʰ OCT: MID-TERM PROJECT PASSAGES & ESSAY TITLES RELEASED]

FALL READING WEEK

Week 6 (Mon 21ˢᵗ Oct, Wed 23ʳᵈ Oct, Fri 25ᵗʰ Oct)
    Whose city is it anyway? Rulership in Early Greek Poetry
    Presentation Topic: "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" (Tears for Fears (1985)). Is that true according to the early Greek poets?
    Texts: Selections from lyric (*Theognidea*, Solon, Alcaeus, Archilochus), *Iliad* – selections from Books 2 and 9.

[FRI 25ᵗʰ OCT: MID-TERM PROJECT DUE *BEFORE* THE CLASS]

Week 7 (Mon 28ᵗʰ Oct, Wed 30ᵗʰ Oct, Fri 1ˢᵗ Nov)
    Friends in High Places

Presentation Topic: "Olympic heroes"? What are the virtues of an athletic victor according to epinician poetry?

Texts: Pindar's *Olympian* 1, *Pythian* 1, *Pythian* 9; cf. Xenophanes fr. 2.

Week 8 (Mon 4th Nov, Wed 6th Nov, Fri 8th Nov)
Love for Whom?
Presentation Topic: "If you look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling you'll find that love actually is all around." (*Love Actually* (2003)). Discuss, with the surviving evidence of Sappho and Anacreon.

Texts: Selections from lyric (Sappho, Anacreon, Archilochus, Semonides, Mimnermus, Solon).

Week 9 (Wed 13th Nov, Fri 15th Nov) [N.B. no class on Monday (Remembrance Day).] [N.B. Tuesday is the last day to drop this course with WDN on the transcript; drops after this date show as F.]
Love and Suffering
Presentation Topic: "What is love? Oh baby, don't hurt me, don't hurt me no more" (Opening of *What is Love*, Haddaway (1993)). What is the point of love according to surviving Greek lyric poetry?

Texts: Selections from lyric (Sappho, Alcaeus, *Theognidea*, Anacreon)

Week 10 (Mon 18th Nov, Wed 20th Nov, Fri 22nd Nov)
Love and Hatred
Presentation: How do love and hatred interact?

Texts: Selections from lyric (Sappho, Archilochus), Euripides' *Medea*, Sophocles' *Ajax*.

[MON 25th NOV: FINAL PROJECT PASSAGES & ESSAY TITLES RELEASED]

Week 11 (Mon 25th Nov, Wed 27th Nov, Fri 29th Nov)
Race, Sex, and the "Good Life"
Presentation Topic: To what extent are Medea's race and sex to blame for her treatment in Euripides' *Medea*?

Texts: Euripides' *Medea* and Sophocles' *Ajax*.

Week 12 (Mon 2nd Dec, Wed 4th Dec, Fri 6th Dec)
Closing Discussions
Discussion Question: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." (Opening of *Anna Karenina* by L. Tolstoy (1878)).

[FRI 6th DEC: FINAL PROJECT DUE *BEFORE* THE CLASS]

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. Discussions of the "good life", whether historical or contemporary, can at times touch on very personal and deeply-held beliefs, while 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 <u>in writing at least two weeks prior</u> to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at: https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo.

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.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf.

Academic Policies and Communications

The website for the Office of the Registrar is http://www.registrar.uwo.ca.

In accordance with policy (https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf), the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login) on a regular basis for news and updates. For assistance with the course OWL site, see the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800, or with a support ticket**:** create an OWL Brightspace service ticket.

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_undergrad.pdf. You, as the student, 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. The University offers an Academic Integrity Tutorial for Undergraduate Students on OWL; students who complete the tutorial will earn a certificate: https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/dc11302e-3b48-41b2-bdf6-05a2d96c86cc. 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).

Electronic Devices and the Use of AI
There are no restrictions on the use of electronic devices for assessments.

However, 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. 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 may 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 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.) All uses of AI tools contrary to this policy will be treated as cases of academic dishonesty.

My own AI policy is different to other professors'; it is your responsibility, as the student, to fully understand my policy or ask me questions before preparing your presentations and Mid-Term and Final projects.

Absences and Extensions Policies
For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade (i.e. all elements of this course), you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf. The Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

I have scheduled two weeks for both the Mid-Term and Final projects: each of these projects are designed to be manageable in 4-5 working days alongside other work for your courses and work; the extra time is given so that you can space things out if necessary. Because of this, there can be no conflicts except for medical and religious reasons that last for longer than a couple of days. Please plan ahead appropriately.

I reserve the right not to mark unauthorised late submissions: late work will be marked solely at my discretion and availability. Late work will be penalised at a rate of 10% per day. The only exceptions to my late work policy will be for religious observances and for medical reasons (following the University's policies above).

SUPPORT SERVICES

Academic Counselling
Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you

have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html.

Mental Health Support
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (https://uwo.ca/health/) 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 and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you 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, here. 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.

USC
Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, https://westernusc.ca/services/.