

## University of Roehampton – Summer Online

**Department:** Humanities **Module:** Gods and  
Heroes in Classical Mythology **Module Tutor:**  
Constantine Christoforou

### Module rationale

The topics to be studied on this course include the enduringly intriguing Achilles and Odysseus and their pursuits in the Trojan War, Herakles and his twelve labours, and Aeneas on his journey to found Rome. We will also examine key members of the Olympian Pantheon such as Zeus, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite and discuss how their actions intertwine with the heroes of Ancient Greece and Rome. We will explore the role of these and other personages in some of the most important works of literature from Greece and Rome, including Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Sophocles' *Ajax*, Euripides' *Herakles*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. We will also consider their rich 'afterlife' in the postclassical world down to the present day with sessions exploring their portrayals in modern day film and literature.

### Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, students will:

- Have acquired a thorough knowledge and understanding of key personages from classical mythology
- Have acquired a thorough knowledge and understanding of the postclassical reception of mythological characters.
- Have gained an understanding of the application of theory to the study of myth.
- Have gained an enriched understanding of the place of myth in Western culture
- Be able to use the knowledge acquired in class and through independent study to construct coherent and critical arguments on relevant subjects
- Have had the opportunity to develop their skills in written and oral communication.

- Have had the opportunity to use a portfolio to construct their own knowledge base.

## **Syllabus**

### **Week 1:**

Monday- Introduction to the course, followed by a discussion of the creation of the Gods through Hesiod's *Theogony*. We will then discuss the myths of Prometheus and Pandora.

Tuesday- We will focus on Homer's *Iliad*, looking specifically at the hero Achilles.

Wednesday- We will focus on Homer's *Odyssey* looking specifically at the hero Odysseus on his journey home from the Trojan War.

Thursday- We will focus on the heroes of Greek tragedy, specifically: Sophocles *Ajax*, and Euripides *Herakles*

Friday- We will focus on the story of Jason and Medea, specifically their portrayal in Euripides' *Medea*, Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.

### **Week 2:**

Monday- We will focus on Virgil's *Aeneid* looking specifically at the hero Aeneas.

Tuesday- We will focus on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and analyse the ways in which he adapts and interprets Greek myth

Wednesday- We will explore Ovid's *Heroides* in which Ovid attempts to give a voice to the heroines of the ancient world.

Thursday- Guest lecturer Kimberly MacNeill will discuss the reception of the 'hero', specifically how changes in attitudes to what constitutes a hero effects the portrayal of heroes in myth

Friday- We will discuss how the Gods and Heroes are represented in modern day film and novels.

## **Teaching and Learning Methods**

This module will be taught online through a combination of online lectures and seminars. Session outlines, reading materials, and other materials will be placed on the module's online Moodle site.

## **Assessment**

Eportfolio (100%)

## **Reading list- Gods and Heroes of Classical Mythology**

### **Primary Sources:**

Hesiod- *Theogony*

Hesiod- *Works and Days*

Homer- *The Iliad*

Homer- *The Odyssey*

Sophocles- *Ajax*

Euripides- *Herakles*  
(*Heracles/Hercules*)

Euripides- *Medea*

Virgil- *The Aeneid*

Ovid- *Metamorphoses*

Ovid- *Heroides (The Epistles of  
Ovid)*

**\*\* All primary sources are accessible online at**

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu> \*\*

**Selected Further  
Reading:**

Beard, M; Henderson, J. Classics: A Very Short Introduction  
(2000)

Bartel, H; Simon, A. Unbinding Medea: interdisciplinary approaches to a classical myth  
from antiquity to the 21st century. Modern Humanities Research Association (2010)

Blanshard, A; Shahabudin, K. Classics on screen: ancient Greece and Rome on film  
(2011)

Boyd, B.W Brill's Companion to Ovid  
(2002)

Braund, D; Gill, C; Wiseman, T.P. Myth, history and culture in republican Rome: studies in  
honour of T.P Wiseman. (2003)

Bremmer, J. (ed.), Interpretations of Greek Mythology (1988,  
London)

Brown, S. A. Ovid: Myth and Metamorphosis (2005,  
Bristol)

Bull, M. The Mirror of the Gods: Classical Mythology in Renaissance Art (2005,  
Oxford)

Buxton, R. The Complete World of Greek Mythology (2004,  
London)

Buxton, R. (ed.), From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought,  
(1999, Oxford)

Caldwell, R. The Origin of the Gods: A Psychoanalytic Study of Greek Theogonic Myth(1989,  
Oxford)

Camps, W.A. An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid  
(2010)

Clare, R.J. The path of the Argo: language, imagery, and narrative in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius (2002)

Clay, J.S. Hesiod's Cosmos (2003)

Clay, J.S. The wrath of Athena: gods and men in the Odyssey (1997)

Csapo, E. Theories of Mythology (2004, Oxford)

Deacy, S. Athena (2007)

Doherty, L. E. Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth (2001, London)

Dowden, K. and Livingstone, N. (ed.), A Companion to Greek Mythology (2011, London)

Efrossini, S. Readers and Writers in Ovid's Heroides (2003)

Fowler, R. The Cambridge Companion to Homer (2004)

Fry, S. Mythos: A Retelling of the Myths of Ancient Greece (2017)

Gonzalez Gonzalez, M.M. Achilles (2017)

Grafton, A., Most, G. W., Settis, S. The Classical Tradition (2010, Cambridge, MA/London)

Graziosi, B. The Gods of Olympus: a history (2013)

Griffin, J. Virgil (2001)

Griffiths, E. Medea (2005)

Harris, S. and Platzner, G. Classical Mythology: Images and Insights (2003, New

York)

Heitman, R. Taking her seriously: Penelope & the plot of Homer's Odyssey  
(2005)

Hunter, R.L. The Argonautica of Apollonius: literary studies.  
(1993)

Kennedy, R.F Athena's Justice. Athena, Athens and the Concept of Justice in Greek  
Tragedy. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., (2009 New York.)

Knox, B.M.W. The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy. (1964  
Berkeley.)

Lively, G. Ovid: Love Songs  
(2005)

Lloyd-Jones, H. The justice of Zeus  
(1983)

Lowell, E. Oedipus (2006)

Martindale, C. The Cambridge Companion to Virgil  
(1997)

McHardy, F. Revenge in Athenian culture  
(2006)

Morales, H. Classical Mythology: A Very Short  
Introduction

Nagy, G. Ancient Greek hero in 24 hours  
(2013)

Ormand, K. A Companion to Sophocles  
(2012)

Papanghelis, T, D; Rengakos, A. a Companion to Apollonius Rhodius  
(2001)

Segal, C. Singers, Heroes and Gods in the Odyssey  
(2001)

Segal, C. Tragedy and Civilisation: An Interpretation of Sophocles. (1981 Harvard University Press.)

Stafford, E. Herakles. (2008)

Stafford, E. J., Life, Myth and Art in Ancient Greece (2004, Malibu)

Winnington- Ingram, R.P. Sophocles: An Interpretation. (1980 Cambridge university press.)

Wiseman, T. P. The Myths of Rome (2004, Exeter)

Woodard, R.D. (ed), The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology (2007, Cambridge)

Woodford, S. Images of Myths in Classical Antiquity (2003, Cambridge)

Woodford, S. The Trojan War in Ancient Art (1993, Ithaca)

Zajko, V. A handbook to the reception of classical mythology (2017)