From classical Athens to the present, critics have repeatedly redefined tragedy, and in modernity they have often identified the predicaments of individual and social existence with the tragic. We will read the major theorists of tragedy and the tragic from Aristotle to the present together with a handful of touchstone tragedies. Dramatists include Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Racine, and Milton. Theorists include Aristotle, Renaissance humanists, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Vernant, Steiner, and recent critics.

Schedule

1/6 Greek Tragedy I: Plot, Character, and Thought

**Exemplary Text:**
Sophocles, *Oedipus the Tyrant*

**Theory:**
J.P. Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguity in Greek Tragedy" [CW]

1/13 Greek Tragedy II: Recognition, Reversal, and Pathos

**Exemplary Text:**
Euripides, *Iphigenia among the Taurians*

**Theory:**
Aristotle, *Poetics*, Chs. 10-11, 16
Terence Cave, *Recognitions*, 27-40, 55-78 [CW]

1/20 The Senecan Tradition

**Exemplary Texts:**
Seneca, *Thyestes*
Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*


Theory:
A. J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca*, selections
Gordon Braden, *Anger's Privilege*, selections

1/27 The Renaissance Theory of Simple Pathetic Tragedy

Exemplary Texts:
Sophocles, *Philoctetes*
Milton, *Samson Agonistes*

Theory:
Aristotle, *Poetics*, Ch. 18

2/3 Is Christian Tragedy an Oxymoron?

Exemplary Text:
Calderon, *The Constant Prince* [CW]

Theory:
Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Nos. 1-2
Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, 1: 226-8, 2: 433-6
Steiner, *Death of Tragedy*, 3-10
Hoxby, *What Was Tragedy*, 200-3, 240-50

2/10 Neoclassical Tragedy

Exemplary Text:
Racine, *Phèdre*

Theory:
Sarasin, *Discourse on Tragedy* (1639) [CW]
Corneille, *Of the Three Unities* [CW]
Dryden, *Groundwork of Criticism in Tragedy* [CW]
Racine, Introductions to *Bérénice*, *Iphigénie*, and *Phèdre* [CW]
Selections from Rapin, *Reflections on Aristotle's Book of Poesy* [CW]

2/17 The Idealist Philosophy of the Tragic

Exemplary Text:
Sophocles, *Antigone*
2/24 Shakespearean Tragedy: Subjectivity, Organic Form, and Tragic History

Exemplary Text:
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Theory:
Herder, "Shakespeare" (1773) [CW]
Goethe, "Shakespeare and No End" (1815) [CW]
Madame de Staël, from "On Literature" (1800) [CW]
Adam Müller, from "Fragments Concerning William Shakespeare" (1806) [CW]
Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, ch. 1-2 [CW]

3/2 Ritual, primitivism, decadence

Exemplary Text:
Euripides, *Bacchae*

Theory:
Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*
Sarah Winter, "Psychoanalysis as 'Necessity': Freud's 'Tragic' Theories of the Psyche, Gender, and Cultural History" [CW]

3/9 Searching for tragedy in the modern world

Exemplary Texts:
Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*
Ionesco, *Exit the King*

Theory:
Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 87-105, 139-55
The following books have been ordered at the bookstore, or you may order them online. Any readings that are not contained in these books will be supplied as pdf files and/or photocopies. All texts will be read in English translation, though you are free to read any of them in the original language.

**Books ordered:**


**Requirements**

--Regular attendance and participation in seminar

--18-24 pp. of writing. This requirement may be fulfilled either by writing three 6-8 pp. papers spaced throughout the quarter (each focused on a different tragic theory) or by writing a single 18-24 pp. research paper at the end of the quarter.