

Epic Classes, TT 2026

In Trinity Term 2026 there will be a total of eight hours' Faculty teaching for the Epic Link paper, aimed at Classics & English undergraduates in their penultimate year (second of three, or third of four). This teaching will focus on a) the comparative aspects of the paper, and b) the compulsory translation comparison question on the exam. Your college tutors will separately arrange tutorials for this paper for you, which may also take place during this term, or may be or have been spread across other terms.

All lectures and classes will be held on Tuesdays, 2-3pm, in Trinity College, Teaching Room 5, **except week 3**, when the lecture will be held on **Thursday 14 May**, 2-3pm, again in Trinity College, Teaching Room 5. This is to avoid a clash with the annual Classics and English Lecture at the Classics Faculty.

28 April	Week 1	Epic from Homer to Dante (lecture)	Gail Trimble
5 May	Week 2	Introduction to English Epic (lecture)	Kathryn Murphy
14 May	Week 3	Modern Epic from 1800 (lecture)	Helen Moore
19 May	Week 4	Divine powers	Pantelis Michelakis Kathryn Murphy
26 May	Week 5	Gender	Gail Trimble Helen Moore
2 June	Week 6	Political identities	Emma Greensmith Margaret Kean
9 June	Week 7	Narrative technique	Pantelis Michelakis Kathryn Murphy
16 June	Week 8	Epic translation	Gail Trimble Helen Moore

Preparation will consist of reading the set texts in advance of the course, and further reading specified by the tutors for the classes in weeks 4-8, which will be sent out at least a week in advance of each class.

The Faculty set texts are as follows. You should have read all of these before the start of Trinity Term.

Homer, *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. The critical text is Monro & Allen's OCT; for an English translation Lattimore's is serviceable, but there are other good ones too.

Vergil, *Aeneid*. The critical text is Mynors' OCT; you can use the Loeb translation for an English text, but there are many other good English translations as well.

Lucan, *Pharsalia*. The critical text is Housman's Blackwell; you can use the Loeb for a translation. Susan Braund's World's Classics edition is worth consulting.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*. The best edition is Alistair Fowler's 2nd edition for the Longman Annotated Poets series; ideally, you should own a copy of this, and mine its footnotes whenever you want to make a comment on a particular passage of *PL*. It will help with the compulsory commentary question.

Dryden. You should read *The Aeneid*, books 7, 8, 12 in Dryden's translation. Other relevant epic material in Dryden is 'MacFlecknoe'; 'Preface to *Ovid's Epistles*', in *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, 5 vols (Harlow, 1995-2005), i.376-91, esp. 384-90; and his responses to *Paradise Lost*: 'Epigram' (included in Fowler's edition of *PL*, at 55); 'The Authors Apology for Heroique Poetry; and Poetique Licence', preface to *The State of Innocence* (1677), Dryden's libretto for an opera based on *PL*, in vol. XII of the *Works*; and the preface to *Sylvae*.

Pope. You should look at Pope's translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, especially for their paratextual materials. Please also read *The Rape of the Lock*; *Peri Bathous, or, The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, chapter XV: 'A Receipt to make an Epic Poem'; *The Dunciad* (the four-book variorum, at least book I)

Individual tutors for individual classes may wish to propose further reading from other epics, and you shouldn't confine your own reading to the set texts, in consultation with your college tutors.

General Reading on Epic:

F.M. Ahl, *Lucan. An Introduction* (Ithaca, 1976)

Erich Auerbach, 'Odysseus's Scar', in *Mimesis* (originally 1953; many editions since)

Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel: Towards a Methodology for Study of the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin, TX, 1981)

C. Bates (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Epic* (Cambridge, 2010)

Ulrich Broich, *The Rise and Fall of the Mock-Heroic Poem* (Cambridge, 1990)

Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance: Homer to Milton* (Oxford, 1993)

-----, *Imitating Authors. Plato to Futurity* (Oxford, 2019) [substantially engaged with Milton and imitation]

Patrick Cheney and Philip Hardie (eds), *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature. Volume 2: 1558-1660* (Oxford, 2015) [good general resource; esp. relevant are naturally the sections on epic poetry]

Denis Feeney, *The Gods in Epic* (Oxford, 1991) [look for relevant sections; esp. 129–87 as background reading for the *Aeneid*]

Barbara Graziosi and Emily Greenwood (eds.), *Homer in the Twentieth Century: Between World Literature and Western Canon* (Oxford, 2007) [lots of suggestive material, as well as good introductions; also a ch. on Joyce]

Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford, 1999)

Philip Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (Cambridge, 1993)

D. Herschkowitz, *The Madness of Epic: Reading Insanity from Homer to Statius* (Oxford, 1998)

W.R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible* (Berkeley, 1976)

C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (New York, 1961), 12-31

Nancy A. Mace, *Henry Fielding's Novels and the Classical Tradition* (Newark, 1996), esp. ch. 3

Fiona Macintosh, Justine McConnell, Stephen Harrison, and Claire Kenward (eds), *Epic Performances from the Middle Ages into the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, 2018)

David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* (Oxford, 1999), ch. 10: *Paradise Lost* and English Republicanism (excellent section on Lucan in the seventeenth century)

Henry Power, 'The Classics and the English Novel', in David Hopkins and Charles Martindale (eds), *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, 1660-1790* (Oxford, 2012), 547-68

-----, *Epic into Novel: Henry Fielding, Scriblerian Satire, and the Consumption of Classical Literature* (Oxford, 2015)

David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, 1992)

Herbert F. Tucker, *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse 1790-1910* (Oxford, 2008) [esp. ch. 5, if you're working on Byron]

Simone Weil, 'The *Iliad*, or the Poem of Force', available in various places, including several offprints and single editions in the Sackler and in the Bodleian. Worth reading in the edition *War and the Iliad*, which also contains an influential essay by Rachel Bessaloff.

On Epic Translation(s):

Colin Burrow, 'Virgil in English translation' in Charles Martindale (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* (Cambridge, 1997), 21–37 [the whole *Camb. Companion* of course useful to look at]

K.W. Gransden, *Virgil in English* (London, 1996)

George Steiner, 'Homer in English translation', in R. Fowler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge, 2004), 363–75

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