Fresh Voices 2023
Languages and Literature

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays of Trinity Term, Ioannou Lecture Theatre, 10.00 am

Week 2

M: Joshua Werrett: Religious syncretism and conversion in Roman Egypt
W: Henner Petin: How to begin a play in Classical Athens

Week 3

M: Valentino Gargano: Sophistic thought in the Bacchae
W: Peter Olive: Conceptual Metaphor Theory for Classicists

Week 4

M: Ludovico Oddi: the importance of Ennius
W: Elena Limongelli: ‘Mental’ organs in the Iliad and the texts of the Ancient Near East

Week 5

M: Max Hardy: Reading Vergil through Statius’ Silvae
W: Ben Broadbent: But what actually is an Homeric formula?

Week 6

M: Milly Cox: Props in the Agamemnon and the Ion
W: Federico Ingretolli: Double Identities and Ambiguity in Euripides’ Helen

Week 7

M: Cristiana Sessini: Between mythos and logos: Plato’s theory of recollection and its religious background.
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Week 2

M: Joshua Werrett: Religious syncretism and conversion in Roman Egypt

This lecture will explore the religious shifts which Egypt experienced under the Roman Empire, in an evolution taking us from the Egyptian deities Isis and Thoth, through the Greek deity Hermes, all the way to Christianity. As we shall see, these boundaries are by no means discrete, with strange syncretistic stories of Jesus-Horus reflecting the multi-cultural landscape of Roman Egypt. In this, we will also examine the mechanics of religious conversion more generally. This lecture will make use of a range of religious and magical texts, as well as surveying the archaeological evidence for religious syncretism in this period.

This lecture will particularly interest those studying the Religions in the Greek and Roman Worlds module, but will also be worthwhile for those interested in religion, philosophy, and cultural shifts in the ancient world.

W: Henner Petin: How to begin a play in Classical Athens

This lecture focuses on the moment in which a new play begins on the stage of Classical Athens. What are the opportunities and risks here and what implications do they have on the style and structure of the opening scene or monologue for different playwrights?

We will consider these questions across a range of plays from the syllabi of Greek Texts & Contexts, Greek Tragedy and Aristophanes’ Political Comedy.

Week 3

M: Valentino Gargano: Sophistic thought in the Bacchae

This lecture concerns the contradictory uses of sophistic references in the play, especially in the nomos vs physis theme that informs the play at large. It will begin with an overview of sophistic thought and go on to analyse the Bacchae’s often contradictory deployment of the intellectual notions associated with the sophists, drawing parallels with other Euripidean plays.
This lecture will be of interest to Mods students taking Texts and Contexts, to Greats students taking the Greek Core and Greek Tragedy papers, and anyone with an interest in fifth century intellectual thought.

**W: Peter Olive: Conceptual Metaphor Theory for Classicists**

The lecture will introduce metaphor theory as a tool for the 21st-century classicist; we will examine concepts such as metaphoric ‘blending’, the ‘career of a metaphor’, and salience. These concepts have tremendous value in addressing and solving notorious problems, with reference to Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus’ Supplices, and Andocides’ On the Mysteries.

The lecture should appeal to anyone with an interest in new approaches to texts, including greats students studying Early Greek Hexameter Poetry, Athenian Democracy, and Greek Tragedy.

**Week 4**

**M: Ludovico Oddi: the importance of being Ennius**

The main topic of the lecture is the debt Vergil owes to Ennius’ Annals. After a quick prologue on Ennius and his poem, we will examine some examples of Vergil’s imitation or variation of the Annals concerning language (and metrics), style and content. The lecture will take particular advantage of Servius’ commentaries on the Aeneid – which will be briefly introduced as well. This may be an opportunity to introduce some students to the study of fragmentary works and grammarians’ quotations of them.

The lecture will be of especial interest to Mods students studying Vergil: Aeneid, but more widely to anyone who would like to know more about fragmentary works and their preservation.

**W: Elena Limongelli: ‘Mental’ organs in the Iliad and the texts of the Ancient Near East**

The Homeric poems, as well as various texts from the Ancient Near East, display a peculiar way of describing emotional and mental processes through so-called ‘mental’ or ‘psychic’ organs. This lecture will review notable instances of this expressive style, in an attempt to 1) pinpoint its significance from both a cognitive and a poetic standpoint, and 2) evaluate the similarities and differences in the employment of mental organs in different cultures, while discussing the merits and risks of a comparative study.

The material will interest Mods students taking Homer: Iliad, and Greats students taking Early Greek Hexameter Poetry.
Week 5

M: Max Hardy: Reading Vergil through Statius’ *Silvae*

The measure of Virgil’s influence on the later Latin epic poets can easily be gauged from the many echoes and allusions with which their poems are replete; but how did his reception fare in other genres of poetry, and how about in other genres of poetry written by epic poets? This lecture will look at one of Virgil’s more anxious successors, namely the ‘silver’ Latin poet Statius (of *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* fame), and consider how he deals with Virgil in the lighter and more playful poems of his *Silvae*. Is Statius respectful? irreverent? both at the same time? or something completely different?

The lecture will be of interest to anyone taking the *Virgil, Aeneid* paper for Mods or the *Latin literature from Titus to Trajan* paper for Greats.

W: Ben Broadbent: But what actually is an Homeric formula?

The Homeric poems are not products of a purely literary culture, but in fact exemplify an oral character. This was the great contribution of Milman Parry, whose scholarship on formulae in Homer fundamentally revolutionised our reading of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. After all, we cannot now study the Homeric epics without considering this oral background, and near everything written on Homer nowadays will use language such as “formulaic diction” and the like. But what is a formula? It did not take long for academics to start quibbling about Parry's definition. This talk will trace the major revisions made to his theories and show how scholars have scrabbled and split hairs defining this single concept.

This lecture will appeal particularly to students studying the *Homer: Iliad* paper at Mods, as well as those offering *Early Greek Hexameter Poetry* at Greats. Anyone interested in oral poetry such as Homer and its reception in literate texts would also profit.

Week 6

M: Milly Cox: Props in the *Agamemnon* and the *Ion*

This lecture will discuss the form, function and role that props and costume had in tragic performance. Beginning with an introduction to props and costume in Greek theatre in general, the lecture will then go on to explore their use in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Ion*. We will address not only what the props and costumes of these two plays might have looked like in original performance, but also how they contribute to the audience's experience and can enhance our understanding of the 'text' as a whole.

This lecture may be of interest to anyone interested in the physical aspects of tragic performance, and will be of particular interest to those taking the Greats *Greek Tragedy* paper.
W: Federico Ingretolli: Double Identities and Ambiguity in Euripides’ *Helen*

This lecture examines the theme of the double in Euripides’ *Helen*. Through an analysis of select passages, I consider the different ways in which we may conceptualize the dichotomy between Helen and her phantom (e.g., reality/truth, *onoma/pragma*, illusion/appearance), looking in particular at this dichotomy as representative of two opposite forms of wifely behavior (disloyal and faithful).

The lecture will be of special interest to Greats students taking the *Greek Tragedy* or *Greek Core* papers, or anyone with an interest in the intellectual history of the fifth century.

Week 7

M: Cristiana Sessini: Between *mythos* and *logos*: Plato’s theory of recollection and its religious background.

The idea that the human mind is not a blank slate but carries within itself some kind of innate knowledge is first introduced by Plato in the *Meno*, in response to the epistemological challenge posed by what has come to be known as ‘Meno’s paradox’: how can one inquire about something which one does not know, if one does not know what to look for? And even if one stumbled upon it by change, how would one be able to recognise it as the object of his inquiry? Socrates’ answer bypasses the eristic logic of his interlocutor to present a religious truth: "men and women who are wise about divine matters" say that "the soul is immortal and has been born many times and has seen both what is here and what is in Hades". Because the soul has already learned everything, Socrates argues, one need only recover this latent knowledge, as demonstrated by the boy-slave’s ability to intuitively solve a complex geometrical problem with only minimal guidance. But how convincing is this demonstration, really? Does the theory of recollection hold up to scrutiny? Did Plato even mean to present it as a serious theory? Who are the "priests and priestesses" mentioned in the dialogue? All these questions, and more, will be answered in the course of this lecture.

The lecture is primarily aimed at Mods students taking the *Euthyphro and Meno* paper but will appeal to anyone with an interest in Plato, ancient philosophy, or ancient religion.