

**Fresh Voices Program
Languages and Literature Sub-Faculty
Trinity Term 2024**

Ioannou Centre, Mondays and Wednesdays at 10 am

Week 2

Monday: Leo Kershaw: **Euripides' *Medea* and the discourse of barbarism**

Week 3

Monday: Kieran Vernon: **Monster-slayers in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry**

Wednesday: Megan Bowler: **Nomen as omen? An introduction to etymology in Greek literature**

Week 4

Monday: Calypso Herrick-Doyle: **Male-Male Weddings in Rome and the History of their
Reception: Martial and Juvenal**

Wednesday: Charles Baker: **An Introduction to the Iliadic scholia**

Week 5

Monday: Charlotte Susser: **Women's political speech in *Lysistrata***

Wednesday: Valentino Gargano: ***peitho* in Aeschylus and Euripides**

Week 6

Monday: Constance Everett-Pite: **Poetry, Prophecy, and Unstable Knowledge in Greek Literature**

SYNOPSES

Leo Kershaw: Euripides' *Medea* and the discourse of barbarism

This lecture problematises interpretations of Medea as a 'barbarian'. In the aftermath of the Graeco-Persian wars, βάρβαρος came to connote not simply foreignness, but savagery, primitivism, and unfettered passion, but to what extent is this true of Euripides' characterisation of Medea as βάρβαρος? 20th-century scholarship plead the case for Medea as a 'discreditable barbarian mistress' (Murray 1913: 79), capable of killing her children 'because she was a foreigner' (Page 1938: xxi), and, specifically through her characterisation by Euripides, a canonically orientalist 'barbarian' (Hall 1989: 35). This lecture will scrutinise whether this discourse of barbarity holds up in comparison to the lexis of the 'other' in Aeschylus' *Persians*, and will further consider whether scholarly interpretations and translations been covertly influenced by Western colonial notions of civilisation, savagery, and barbarism. Finally, it will introduce postcolonial reinterpretations of the ethnically othered that may offer a more nuanced understanding of Medea's foreignness.

Relevant to the *Greek Tragedy, Texts and Contexts*, and *Classical Reception* papers.

Kieran Vernon: Monster-slayers in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry

This lecture examines the construction of such characters in the narratives, starting with the monster-slaying sons of Zeus and their role in pacifying the world (Apollo, Hermes, Heracles, patterned on stories of Zeus himself), including Peirithoos who is in the *Iliad* but often overlooked, then looking at the non-Zeusian monster-slayers, like Bellerophon and Meleager (and how they lurk in the background of the *Iliad*), and then Odysseus as a failed monster-slayer.

This will be relevant for the *Homer Iliad* and *EGHP* papers.

Megan Bowler: Nomen as omen? An introduction to etymology in Greek literature

This lecture will provide a general introduction to etymology in Greek literature, from Homer and Hesiod up until the 5th and 4th centuries BC. I will give an overview of Greek conceptions of etymology to see how it functions as a literary device and how philosophical enquiries about language are reflected these usages. No prior knowledge is expected, but you may like to read this article in advance: Sluiter, Ineke. 2015. 'Ancient Etymology: A Tool for Thinking', in *Brill's Companion to Ancient Greek Scholarship*. Leiden: Brill.

The range of examples discussed will be relevant to students reading the *EGHP, Lyric, Historiography, Greek Tragedy*, and *Comedy* papers.

Calypso Herrick-Doyle: Male-Male Weddings in Rome and the History of their Reception: Martial and Juvenal

The supposed phenomenon of male-male weddings – and marriage – at Rome is an understudied, but hotly contested, topic. This lecture will take a two-pronged approach, firstly examining the references to, and reality of, male-male weddings in Rome with a focus on Martial 1.24 and 12.42 and Juvenal *Satire* II. It will then trace the transmission, censorship and expurgation of these weddings in editions and translations published in England from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, revealing a contemporary discourse on homosexuality mediated through engagement with both the ancient sources and the history of their reception.

This will be of relevance for *The Reception of Classical Literature in Poetry in English since 1900*, *Sexuality and Gender in Greece and Rome*, and *Latin Literature from Titus to Trajan*.

Charles Baker: An Introduction to the Iliadic scholia

This lecture will aim to provide an undergraduate-level introduction to the Iliadic scholia, by using them to provide unfamiliar perspectives on certain passages and issues within the poem. Undergraduate students will likely have encountered the scholia only in commentaries (where they are often adduced merely by “cf. the scholia *ad loc.*”), particularly due to the difficult Greek and their primary use, in centuries past, as a textual source for editors. I will begin by introducing the scholia, with particular focus on the exegetical, and giving students an overview of their dating, origin and transmission. Of particular interest for the purposes of this lecture are the variety of scholars that contribute, named and anonymous. I will also show the general appearance of a scholion examining some of the narrative or rhetorical content of the poem, in order to illustrate the similarities and differences between the scholia (as e.g. in Erbse’s edition) and a modern commentary. This will allow me to draw a connection to the ‘Oxford’ approach to an ancient text; many voices are digested by the undergraduate, who ideally is able to reject or accept their arguments, adding their own criticism to the lines developed by previous scholars. I will argue that, if viewed this way, the reader can use the scholia to develop productive and provocative reading approaches to the Homeric text. Readers need not agree with the methods the scholia employ to benefit from an altered way of thinking about the poem.

This will be of relevance to the *Homer Iliad* paper for Mods, for *Early Greek Hexameter Poetry* for Greats, and for anyone with an interest in the intellectual history of the ancient world.

Charlotte Susser: Women’s political speech in *Lysistrata*

My idea would be to present on the portrayal of women’s political speech and participation in *Lysistrata*, and the contrast between the *agon* and the play’s return to the status quo of gender relations at the end. The contrast between these sections throws light on the interpretation of *Lysistrata*’s message, as well as the themes of political speech and gender relations.

This will be of interest for those reading *Aristophanes’ Political Comedy* for Mods, and *Greek Core, Comedy*, and *Sex and Gender* for Greats, and more generally for anyone with an interest in Aristophanes.

Valentino Gargano: *peitho* in Aeschylus and Euripides

In my lecture, I ask what role persuasion, *peitho*, plays in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* in the creation of order and justice. I will highlight the crucial role that speech and persuasion receive in *Eumenides* as foundational for civilisation, and will ask whether the audience is invited to accept this solution. From this, I will then evaluate Euripides’ take on political speech and political persuasion. Using as a parallel his *Hecuba*, where *peitho* has a crucial function, I argue that Euripides actively engages and toys with Aeschylus’ solution, raising disquieting issues about political speech and the political life altogether.

This lecture will be of use to any student taking Greek Tragedy or Greek Core.

Constance Everitt-Pite: Poetry, Prophecy, and Unstable Knowledge in Greek Literature

This lecture looks at some birds in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry and fifth-century Tragedy, and argues that the chosen texts exploit the language and associations of ornithomancy to encourage the reader/audience to interpret these animals as prophetic signs in need of divination, not mere symbols of song or metapoetic emblems. The role of birds as mediators between planes, translators of divine messages but themselves in need of decoding, thematises the slipperiness between signifier and signified and the instability of words and meanings.

This lecture will be especially useful for the *Greek Tragedy* and *EGHP* papers.