Self and Society in Ancient Drama

GESM 120g (35371R), Fall 2018

2:00-3:20pm, T TH

WPH 107

Instructor: Susan Lape

Office: PED 130T

Office hours: Thursdays, 12:30pm-2:00pm, Tuesdays, 1:30-2:00pm

And by appointment

Contact: [lape@usc.edu](mailto:lape@usc.edu)

Course Description

This course introduces the dramatic comedy of ancient Greece and Rome. The focus will mostly be on Terence, a Roman comic poet whose comedies are based on Greek originals (4 of his 6 extant plays are based on Menander). Throughout, we will be interested in the ways in which Terence’s comedies define what it means to be human through a focus on social being: simply put, no one is an island. Each character in the plays gains their identity in and through their relationship to others. But relationships can and do go wrong. We will explore how the comedies assume and create a world of status in which some people are more “valuable” than others and - at the same time - presume a common human community through an emphasis on the shared human condition. What is it that makes characters human? And what is funny about the human condition? Throughout, there will be opportunities to apply the ancient comic templates that we develop and explore to more recent comedy; after all the new comedy of Greece and Rome is the ancestor of the modern sitcom and rom com.

Course Goals:

Our primary goal in this course centers on the development of transferable interpretative skills.

Students will gain an ability to read and interpret ancient dramatic comedy

Students will learn how to identify and analyze various forms of humor

Students will learn to decode the relationship between humor and social categories

Students will learn to analyze key social and ideological concepts including precarity, autonomy, & vulnerability and their relationship to humor

Students will gain familiarity with the Hellenistic culture of Greece and Rome

Students will gain knowledge of Menander, Plautus, and Terence

Students will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge to modern comedies

Students will also enhance their group and speaking skills through some of the assignments

Students will improve their analytic writing skills

**Course Books and readings**

Please buy

Terence, *The Comedies*, available in the bookstore

S. Critchly, *On Humour*, available in the bookstore

If available in the bookstore, please buy the translations of Plautus that include the *Captivi*, *Cistellaria*, and *Epidicus*.  
Most of the secondary readings will be available on the blackboard website for this class.

**Assessment, Grading, and Policies**

Two short essays 200

Midterm exam 250

Quizzes 150

Participation and Group Work 200

Final paper or project 200

Your grade will be calculated out of 1000 points, broken down as above. The participation grade includes attendance. If you miss more than four classes without a documented medical or athletic excuse, your grade will suffer. I deduct 50 points per missed class, starting with the fifth absence. For your final paper or project, you may choose to submit a creative project, a screenplay, a painting, or the like, provided that you get my approval in advance. Students who choose to write a final paper must meet with me to discuss the project and bibliography. Quizzes will be given as needed and will not necessarily be announced. Late essays and missed exams will be penalized 1/3 grade point per day.

**Preliminary List of Assignments**

Please do the assigned reading for each class, **before** the class.

Based on our progress and other considerations, the assignments may need to be modified.

8.21.18 course introduction, introduction to new comedy

8.23.18 Reading Assignment

powerpoint on the origins of drama

Comedy and Humour

8.28.18 Reading Assignment

1. S. Critchley, On Humour ch. 1 & 2

8.30.18 Reading Assignment

1. S. Critchley, On Humour ch. 3

9.4 Reading Assignment

Critchley ch. 5 Foreigners are Funny

9.6 Reading Assignment

1. Plautus Bacchides (plot type: precarity)

9.11 Reading Assignment

Finish Critchley

9.13 Reading Assignment

1. Plautus Captivi (plot type: ethical)

9.18 Reading Assignment and Group Presentations

Cultural and literary background

1. Plautus Captivi

2. 1/2“Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: The Servus Callidus and Jokes about Torture” Author(s): Holt Parker

3. 1/2. “Fides, Aetolia, and Plautus' Captivi”  
Author(s): George Fredric Franko

4. “The Crowded House” McCarthy, BB

9.20 readings   
1.Terence Eunuch (precarity)

2. Finish Critchley

9.25 readings

Terence Eunuch – schedule amended due to Bacchae performance

\*1. J. Butler, “Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics” BB (all)

9.27 Assignment

**1. Quiz** – brief quiz on the reading assignments to date (50 points)

2. S. James, “Gender and Sexuality in Terence.”

10.2

Reading Assignment (more philosophical background)

1. Aristotle *Nicomachaean Ethics* (on friendship Books 8-9. BB)

2. Aristotle *Politics* Book 1, BB (gender and the family)

10.4 essay writing instructions and

Terence *Adelphoe*

10.9 Reading Assignment (group work on key ethical concepts for Terence: vulnerability, autonomy, agency )

1. Patronage BB

2. Leigh: “Fatherhood” BB

10.11

readings

Terence *Andria*

**Essay 1 due in class**

please write a 4-5 page essay on one of the following prompts:

1. How does the ending of the *Adelphoe* comment on or complicate the vision of fatherhood Micio espouses in the play? Are we supposed to contemplate the right way to raise a son? Is it ok to opt out of biological fatherhood and marriage?

2. Please formulate a thesis about the romantic relationship between Phaedria and Thais in the *Eunuch*? Is it based on “love”? What does love seem to be in this society? Are the partners equal? What are the effects of “love” on the partners?

3. What are we – the Roman audience - supposed to think of Chareas’ rape of Pamphila? Does it convey a critique of gender relations or hierarchy? Is “rape” the correct word and concept to describe what occurred.

4. Discuss the forms of humour (as discussed in Critchley) in any play we have read so far

10.16

Finish Terence Andria and Patronage from last time

New reading

D. Konstan: “Love and Friendship in the Classical World,” BB

**10.18 Midterm exam**

10.23

Terence Self-Tormentor

10.25

Terence Self-Tormentor

D. Konstan, “Grief and the Self” BB

D. Konstan, “Understanding Grief in Greece and Rome”

10.30

Terence “Mother-in-Law”

11.1 Terence “Mother-in-Law” secondary readings on

secondary readings – group work - finishing up Terence

1. Starks “Terence and Rome in the 160’s” BB

2. Gruen “The Theater and Aristocratic culture” BB

3. Terence and the Familiarization of Comedy

4. Terence’s Literary Self-Consciousness

11.6 Terence Phormio

11.8 \*\*Finish Critchley

**evening class:**

Movie: Dirty Rotten Scoundrels

**11.13 Quiz 2**

11.15 Plautus *Rudens*

11.20 Plautus *Stichus* BB

11.22 Thanksgiving

11.27 Plautus *Pseudolus*

**Short Essay 2 due in class 3-4 pages on a topic of your choice,**

**Topics must be approved**

topics TBA

11.29 Plautus and Slavery

Final Project Due

Tuesday Dec. 11

The Final Project may be a 6-8 page paper or a drawing, painting, a few pages for a graphic novel/ comic book.

Guidelines

The final paper may be an essay on a topic of your choice, a research paper, or a paper on an assigned topic.

Final projects must be approved by me no later than 11.22. If you plan to submit a creative project, you must also write a narrative that clearly explain the thought behind your project and how it relates to the works or themes studied in class.

Please turn in an electronic copy of all written work, creative projects must be turned in at my office in PED.

secondary Bibliography list in progress

S. McElduff 2004. “More than Menander’s acolyte…”

McGill, “Plagiarism on Stage”

Papaioannou, “The innovator’s poetic self-presentation”

Lowe 1983. Terentian originality in the Phormio and Hecyra

Lada-Richards, 2004. “Authorial voice and theatrical self-definition in Terence and beyond”

James, 1998 From Boys to Men: rape and developing masculinity in Terence’s Hecrya and Eunuchus.

**Resources**

For essay writing and written final projects, please make an appointment with the writing center at least once this semester.

Contact info:

Room: THH 216  
Phone: 213-740-3691  
Email: writing@usc.edu

The Writing Center offers free services to all USC students in the form of individual consultations and small-group workshops. Our goal is to contribute to the development of better writers, not just better products, and to assist with the skills and processes of critical thinking, drafting, and revising that lead to clearly expressed positions, coherent arguments, and persuasive reasoning.

**Accommodation of Disabilities**

Students requesting academic accommodations on the basis of a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP). A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to Professor Lape as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. The office is in Student Union 301; the telephone number is (213) 740-0776.

**Academic Integrity**

We adhere to the university’s policies on academic integrity. Any incident of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards, that I will adhere to the penalties recommended by the university, and that the recommended penalty for plagiarism on a paper or any form of cheating on an examination is a grade of F *for the course*, at the minimum; sanctions can include suspension from the university. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with standards of academic honesty and with what constitutes academic dishonesty. Here are URL’s of two excellent guides: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tio.pdf>; <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf>. The USC Libraries’ web-site also has a helpful, and strongly recommended, 15-minute tutorial on academic integrity at <http://libguides.usc.edu/academicintegrity>.