Course Description

The seminar will focus on the close-reading of poems composed in English which take as their contextual points of departure the mythic traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. The poems studied will come from a range of periods and nationalities, as well as a range of mythic contexts, thus allowing us to explore both the kinds of questions raised by classical mythic traditions and also the ways in which such questions can inform and challenge our assumptions about various English poetic traditions. The two poems on which we will spend the most time will be Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Derek Walcott's Nobel Prize-winning African-Caribbean/American poem *Omeros*. We will also be reading shorter poems by writers such as Sidney, Milton, Wordsworth, Poe, Millay, Yeats, Moore and Heaney, as well as excerpts from the works of classical authors from Homer to Ovid.

Schedule

Introductory Case Studies and Issues

Sept. 3        Introductory case study #1: Yeats, "Leda and the Swan" (1924/1927)
Sept. 10       Introductory case study #2: Poe, "To Helen" (1831/1845)
Sept. 17       The structural dynamics of the Greek and Roman mythological systems
Sept. 24       Classical myth and the sonnet: sonnets by poets from Sidney and Shakespeare to Moore and Heaney

Core Texts

Oct. 1, 8, 15  Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis* (1593)
Oct. 22        Wordsworth, *Laodamia* (1807)

Concluding Case Studies

Dec. 3        Poems to be selected by the members of the seminar

Note: there is no class on Nov. 5 (election day), which is a university holiday.

Texts/Editions

Required hardcopy editions
Walcott, *Omeros*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Recommended hardcopy editions (* indicates edition required in Literature Humanities)
*Homer, *Iliad*, Lattimore tr., Univ. of Chicago
*Homer, *Odyssey*, Lattimore tr., Harper-Collins
*Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Raeburn tr., Penguin
*Virgil, *Aeneid*, Mandelbaum tr., Bantam

Electronic Editions (for miscellaneous poems, with links via course website's "text-workbench")
Representative Poetry Online (RPO), University of Toronto
Internet Shakespeare Editions (ISE), University of Victoria
Shakespeare collection: featuring the Arden Shakespeare complete works (AS), Gale (via Columbia Univ. Libraries subscription)
Literature Online (LO), Chadwyck-Healey (via Columbia Univ. Libraries subscription)
Alexander Street Literature (ASL), Alexander Street Press (via Columbia Univ. Libraries subscription)
**Requirements**

The requirements for this course have been designed to give students maximum flexibility when it comes to their evolving schedules and needs. But given that flexibility, please note that all individual deadlines are absolutely firm.

1) Class Participation Component (including seven 500±-word analytical responses) – 50%

The class participation component will take into account: a) seven thoughtful and on-time 500±-word analytical responses to be posted online on the Discussion Board of our CourseWorks site and read by all members of the seminar (see details and schedule below); b) regular and prompt attendance; and c) thoughtful participation (always with text in hand!) in class discussions (including having read and thought about your classmates' posted responses).

Details on the schedule and options for the 1-page responses: To provide everyone with maximum scheduling flexibility, you will not have to write a response every week. Rather, the requirement is to write seven responses overall: two of the three weeks we’ll be working on Venus and Adonis, three of the four weeks on Omeros, and two of the remaining four sessions (not including weeks one and three). Each week, within 48 hours after our class, I will post two passages and/or questions (you will write on just one of the two each week you choose to write a response). These passages/questions will serve as the topic choices for your responses, which you will submit via the Discussion Board of our CourseWorks site no later than 10:00pm of the Monday evening before the next class so that everyone will have a chance to read them before class the next day. Since the quality of class discussions will in part be dependent on these shared responses, and since this is a schedule designed to give everyone maximum individual flexibility, absolutely no late submissions or extensions will be allowed for these responses. The schedule for these responses is:

"Miscellaneous" responses (write for 2 of 4 sessions)
- "Misc" choice #1 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 9/9 (for class of Tue 9/10 on "To Helen")
- "Misc" choice #2 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 9/23 (for class of Tue 9/24 on selected sonnets)
- "Misc" choice #3 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 10/21 (for class of Tue 10/22 on Laodamia)
- "Misc" choice #4 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 12/2 (for class of Tue 12/3 on class-choice poems)

Venus and Adonis responses (write for 2 of 3 sessions)
- V&A choice #1 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 9/30 (for class of Tue 10/1)
- V&A choice #2 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 10/7 (for class of Tue 10/8)
- V&A choice #3 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 10/14 (for class of Tue 10/15)

Omeros responses (write for 3 of 4 sessions)
- Omeros choice #1 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 10/28 (for class of Tue 10/29)
- Omeros choice #2 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 11/11 (for class of Tue 11/12)
- Omeros choice #3 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 11/18 (for class of Tue 11/19)
- Omeros choice #4 – posting deadline of 10:00pm on Mon 11/25 (for class of Tue 11/26)

2) Term-Paper Component– 50%

The term-paper component will consist of one paper (of approximately 10-15 pages) which must take the form of a "critical-edition-with-commentary." You will focus on either one poem of "manageable" length, such that you have the time and space to take every line into account, or one passage in either Venus and Adonis or Omeros (your choice of poem, unless you decide to work on Venus and Adonis, Laodamia or Omeros, must be cleared with me no later than our final class on Dec. 3). You will have to decide on the most effective format for your "critical edition," which must include the presentation of material ranging from textual history and analysis of formal features to commentary and interpretation. The due date for the paper is 1:00pm on Tuesday Dec. 17 (the middle of exam week), three full weeks after we finish working on Omeros so that those who choose to write on that poem will have sufficient time to work on their papers. Term-papers must be submitted via email.

**Schedule of Readings**

Note on the schedule of readings: The first two classes will be designed to give examples of ways to explore the mythic contexts of the English poems we’ll be studying, and the role those contexts can play in interpretation. The third class will then examine the overall structures of the Greco-Roman mythological systems. After that, members of the seminar will be expected to conduct their own research each week, exploring the mythic contexts of that week's poetry, and then using their findings (as well as other tools) to come to their own interpretations, which we will then consider in class. Various resources will be available through the "text-workbench" component of the course website (e.g., Greek and Roman works including some read in Literature Humanities, concordances and other search engines for both classical and English collections, scholarly dictionaries and encyclopedias, apparatus from scholarly editions, etc.). And for Venus and Adonis (which we’ll be reading in weeks 5-7, and thus still in the first half of the term), we’ll be using one of the most
recent and extensive scholarly editions of the poem. The goal is that in the second half of the course especially, students will be all the more prepared to conduct their own research each week.

Sept. 3  Yeats, "Leda and the Swan" (RPO)
Sept. 10 Poe, "To Helen" (RPO)
Sept. 17 Apollodorus, The Library of Greek Mythology, books 1-3 and epitome (pp. 27-170)
Sept. 24 classical myth and the sonnet: sonnets by poets from Sidney and Milton to Moore and Heaney, including the three poets on whom we will be working for the remainder of the term (Shakespeare's sonnet #98 (RPO), Wordsworth's "The world is too much with us" (RPO), and Walcott's "lotus eater ..." (ASL)
          Oct. 1  Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, lines 1-258; Ovid, Metamorphoses, 10.503-737; misc. Shakespearean passages
          Oct. 8  Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, finish (=lines 259-1194); Ovid, Met., 3.341-510, 4.285-388, 10.1-502, 11.1-66
          Oct. 15 Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, re-read
          Oct. 22 Wordsworth, Laodamia (RPO)
Oct. 29  Walcott, Omeros, book 1
Nov. 12  Walcott, Omeros, read through to end (books 2-7), re-read up through book 3
Nov. 19  Walcott, Omeros, re-read up through book 5
Nov. 26  Walcott, Omeros, re-read through book 7
Dec. 3   tba (poems to be selected by members of the seminar)

Note: for abbreviations, see the Electronic Editions list in Texts/Editions section above.

Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity (www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity/statement)

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars’ work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgment of those ideas in any work that informs our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

Professor Sacks’ addendum to this statement: Any breach of this intellectual responsibility will also result in the student receiving the grade of "F" for this course.

Professor Sacks’ Note on the Importance of Respecting the Privacy of Class Discussions in Our Digital Age

At the risk of sounding pathetically corny, let me say up front that I believe an undergraduate seminar can be a profoundly thought-provoking experience. But for that to happen, everyone has to feel it's a setting in which they can dare to reach outside their comfort zones, dare to be wrong, dare to admit to not knowing, dare to consider new and sometimes disturbing ideas. But those things won't happen if we aren't able to maintain and respect the privacy of our discussions, something that's become increasingly challenging in our rapidly evolving wireless and twittered world.

Therefore, recording class sessions, tweeting during them, etc. (the "etc." matters here, given how fast technologies are changing) will not be allowed in this seminar, and any such violation of our classroom’s collaborative intellectual privacy will result in your failing the course. Similarly, when class is over – though you should certainly feel free to go forth into your blogo-/twitto-spheres and rant about me – posting anything about what your colleagues said during class will also result in your receiving a failing grade for the course.

One more thing while I’m being such a bore: cell phone alerts and rings are obviously disruptive during discussions, so please don’t use your cell phones during class (you can always speak to me before class if you’re expecting an urgent call). Typing, clicking and even swiping can also be very distracting, so I’d prefer you refrained from using tablets and laptops during class as well. But if you feel you that it's important to how you learn that you be allowed to take notes electronically, I'm sure we can work something out, but you MUST come speak to me first. You can also stop by my office and speak with me if you're in doubt about anything in this admittedly annoying note.