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)
Oct. 29, Nov. 12, 19, 26 Walcott, Omeros (1990)

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
Shakespeare, Shakespeare's Poems (Arden 3rd series), Duncan-Jones and Woodhuysen eds., Bloomsbury Publishing
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)