



Save Ancient Studies Alliance

Winter 2025 Teaching Ancient Studies: Continuing Education Reading Group

From Homer To Hollywood: The Ancient World in Film

Led by John Hayden

Introduction to Reading Group:

From Homer to Hollywood will examine the ways in which aspects of the classical world have been depicted in film, and what the filmmaker's usage (and abuse) of this ancient material can say to us about our own experiences and knowledge of the classical world.

Using a variety of cinematic sources, we delve into the insights these give us about ancient society, uncovering how core ideas – including kleos, timé, arête, furor, pietas, and other ancient notions about gender, sexuality, and community – can be observed through the prism of modern cinema.

Discussion then turns to how successfully these ancient ideals have been reframed for modern society. Learners will be encouraged to share their own cinematic proclivities, which provides agency, and promotes a practical chance to apply the skills that this course aims to develop.

Reading Group Objectives:

- To make the Classical world accessible to a wide range of ākonga (learners), in a way which makes them feel safe, comfortable, and validated
- To trace a lineage between ancient texts and modern cinema and explore how classical ideals still resonate today
- To encourage, develop, and/or hone critical thinking skills among group participants
- To empower learners to bring their own experiences to bear, and provide agency in their learning by co-constructing a reading/listening list, as appropriate
- To enhance my own pedagogical awareness through inviting input from ākonga

Your SASA Educational Ambassadors:

John Hayden

- BA (Hons) Classical Studies from Otago University (New Zealand)
- 16 years as a secondary school teacher, including 3 stints as a Head of Department, Classical Studies
- Music reviewer for the 'Otago Daily Times' newspaper since November 2003
- Presenter of papers at numerous conferences looking at the intersection of popular music and classical texts - these include 'Yeezy Taught Me: Pop Music in The Classics Classroom;' 'I'll Prolly Die Anonymous: The *kleos* of Kendrick Lamar;' 'Can't Tell Me Nothing: The Principate of Hip Hop;' and the upcoming 'Magic. Madness. Heaven. Sin: Taylor Swift, Ancient Poetry, and the Allure of *amor*.'
- An unhealthy obsession with allusion, intertextuality, and classical reception



Google Classroom:

During our weekly Zoom meetings, we'll come together to discuss our readings and delve into the topic. We will also use Google Classroom to provide easy access to reading materials, resources, and facilitate ongoing discussions through open forums. This platform will also be where participants submit their assignments.

Dates:








Thursdays @ 7:00pm EST

- Session 1: January 23
- Session 2: January 30
- Session 3: February 6
- Session 4: February 13 (CXL)
- Session 4: February 20
- Session 5: February 27






Week 1: Troy, Troy Again

An examination of how this epic myth cycle has been portrayed on screen, from 1911's 'The Fall of Troy' through to the blockbuster epic 'Troy' (2004), focusing on the ways in which this famed Bronze Age tale has been adapted to reflect the expectations of audiences across time.

Readings/Viewings:

- Blondell, R. Helen of Troy in Hollywood. [Ch 4](#)
- Winkler, Martin M. *Troy: From Homer's Iliad to Hollywood Epic*. Malden, Mass ; Blackwell, 2007.
 -  Winkler 2007b.pdf
 -  Viewing Troy.pdf
 -  The Iliad and The Cinema.pdf
 -  From Homer's 'Troy' to Petersen's 'Troy' .pdf
 -  From Greek Myth to Hollywood Story.pdf
- Mary Beard explains the appeal of Homer for filmmakers: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2004/apr/30/1>
- A journey into the realm of Italian peplum: <https://www.thefilmagazine.com/italian-peplum-c-1958-1965/>
-  The Fall of Troy (1911) [English subtitles] / La caduta di Troia
-  Helen Of Troy Trailer (1956)



Resources for the Classroom:

-  AS 91204 (Clas 2.5) - Task Sheet.pdf
-  Hot Gates (2.3) - Task Sheet.pdf
-  Iliad Book 1 Tasks.pdf
-  Level 3 Classics - 3.5 (HERO INTERNAL).pdf
-  Student F - Excellence.docx

Week 2: No More Heroes?

As the needs of a society change, so do the demands on its heroes. These heroes come in many guises, whether in the at-times trashy pepla, – with Steve Reeves' portrayal of Hercules as the focal point – the ground-breaking Jason and The Argonauts (1963), the space-opera in excelsis Star Wars, or the Deep south odyssey of O Brother, Where Art Thou?., In this session, we delve into the heroic qualities of these on-screen icons.

Readings/Viewings:


















- [10 Best Hercules Movies, Ranked](#)
- [marian maguire](#)
- [The 12 Best Hercules Movies with Memorable Scenes | Greek Gods Paradise](#)
- [O' Brother. Where Art Thou? A Coen Brothers Odyssey - Filmotomy](#)
-  Pomeroy, Chapter 4 - 'The Odyssey, High and Low'.pdf
-  Nisbet, Chapter 3 - 'Mythconceptions'.pdf

-  [Level 3 Classics - 3.5 \(HERO INTERNAL\).pdf](#)
-  [Hot Damn! It's The Soggy Bottom Boys! | O Brother, Where Art Thou? \(200...](#)
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-  [The Mighty Hercules cartoon Intro 1963](#)
-  [1997 Hercules Official Trailer 1 Walt Disney Pictures](#)
-  [Ulysse 31 - 00 - Générique de début \(1ère version\)](#)
-  [Ulysses 1954 Trailer with Kirk Douglas](#)
-  [Siren Song - Didn't Leave Nobody but the Baby | O Brother, Where Art Tho...](#)
-  [Hercules Conquers Atlantis](#)
-  [The Return | Official Trailer | Bleecker Street](#)
-  [Hercules & Xena's Dramatic Reunion | Xena: Warrior Princess](#)
-  [The Simpsons - Island Of Sirens](#)

Week 3: Conquest and Empire

Though films such as *Alexander* (2004) and *300* (2006) espouse a number of virtues (alongside bringing key classical personages and events back into public consciousness), there remain overpowering notions of imperialism, masculinity, and 'otherness' within. This session discusses the extent to which these are presented on-screen, and how invoking history through a particular prism can have unintended consequences.

Readings/Viewings:

- [BBC - Movies - review - 300](#)
-  [Shahabudin, 'The Appearance of History'.pdf](#)
-  [Alexander the Great Richard Burton movie intro](#)
-  [2.3 Significant Event in the Classical World.docx](#)
-  [Hot Gates \(2.3\) - Task Sheet.pdf](#)
-  ['From Thermopylae to the Twin Towers'.pdf](#)
-  [Llewellyn-Jones, 'Help Me, Aphrodite!'.pdf](#)
-  [Nisbet, 'It's Raining Men'.pdf](#)
-  [Harrison, 'Oliver Stone, Alexander and the Unity of Mankind'.pdf](#)
-  [Büyük İskender \(Robert Rossen, 1956\)](#)
-  [Alexander \(2004\) Official Trailer - Colin Farell, Angelina Jolie Epic Movie HD](#)
-  [ALEXANDER - battle of gaugamela \(part 1\).](#)
-  [ALEXANDER - battle of gaugamela \(part 2\).](#)
-  [ALEXANDER - battle of gaugamela \(part 3\).](#)
-  [Alexander \(2004\)- Alexander's grand entry in Babylon](#)
-  [ALEXANDER - battle of India \(part 2\)](#)
-  [The 300 Spartans \(1962\) Trailer](#)
-  [300 - Official Trailer \[HD\]](#)

- o [▶ 300 - Leonidas Talking With Xerxes!! \[1080p - 60FPS\]](#)
- o [▶ 300 // It's raining men](#)

Week 4: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to The Forum

The eternal city has always been a beacon for filmmakers, to the extent that, according to Nisbet, Rome has the monopoly when it comes to modern cinematic portrayals of the ancient world. Here, the focus is on aspects of Roman society and the ways its emperors, gladiators, women, and ordinary citizens have been depicted, and how its grandeur, pomp, and debauchery have captured the popular imagination.

Readings/Viewings:

 [3.4 Task.pdf](#)


- ▶ [Nero Burns Rome and Sings](#)
- ▶ [Nero burns Rome - "Quo Vadis" - Deborah Kerr, Robert Taylor](#)
- ▶ [The Robe Trailer](#)
- ▶ [Jay Robinson as Caligula, Part I](#)
- ▶ [Ben-Hur | Chariot Race | FULL SCENE | Warner Classics](#)
- ▶ [Spartacus \(1960\) opening credits](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsg3ptVj-Bs>
- ▶ [Spartacus \(4/10\) Movie CLIP - Fight to the Death \(1960\) HD](#)
- ▶ [I'm Spartacus - Spartacus \(8/10\) Movie CLIP \(1960\) HD](#)
- ▶ [Gladiator Opening Scene Part 1](#)
- ▶ [Gladiator \(2000\) - Commodus enters Rome](#)
- ▶ [Movie Clip from Gladiator–Arrival in Rome](#)
- ▶ [A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum \(1966\) - Comedy Tonight Scen...](#)
- ▶ [HISTORY OF THE WORLD: PART ONE Clip - "Comic Philosopher" \(1981\) Mel Br...](#)
- ▶ [History Of the world Part 1 "Oedipus & Funky Town"](#)
- ▶ [Life of Brian - Latin Lesson - Romans go home!](#)
- ▶ [Biggus Dickus - Monty Python's Life Of Brian. Remastered \[HD\]](#)
- ▶ [Eric Idle - "Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life" - STEREO HQ](#)
- ▶ [Titus - Anthony Hopkins - Jessica Lange - Julie Taymor - Trailer - 1999 - 4K](#)
- ▶ [Fellini Satyricon \(1969\) ORIGINAL TRAILER \[HD 1080p\]](#)


Week 5: "What the Helen of Troy was that?"


The Greek myths have influenced culture around the world – from epic poems to blockbuster films, from literary retellings to Disney animations. But even some modern retellings of these stories ignore the complex female characters at their heart. The last installment of this epic journey looks to shine a spotlight on the remarkable women at the heart of the ancient world, sharing the nuanced stories behind characters who have so often been painted as monstrous, vengeful, or just plain evil.


Readings/Viewings:


 [Medea.4.pdf](#)


 [penelope.7.pdf](#)


 [Ancient History Day Summary - Tyla Cascaes.docx](#)


 [Too Narrow in the Hips](#)


 [Achilles and Briseis - Everyone dies](#)

 [Do you want to live forever?](#)


 [Red Sonja Prepared to be Conquered](#)


 [Sparagomos in Medea 1969](#)


 [Medea \(1969\)](#)


 [Olympias and Alexander - My Little Achilles](#)

 [Cleopatra \(1963\) Trailer #1 | Movieclips Classic Trailers](#)

 [Cleopatra | Teaser Trailer \(2025\) Gal Gadot Movie](#)

 [Cleopatra \(1963 \) Elizabeth Taylor Entrance into Rome Scene \(HD\)](#)

 [On your knees! Cleopatra cuts the Roman Empire into thirds.](#)

 [Orfeu Negro \(Black Orpheus\) | Full Movie | Flick Vault](#)

 [Arcade Fire - Afterlife \(Lyric Video\)](#)

Culminating Assignment:

Instructions for this assignment can be found in your Google Classroom under Coursework.

Certificates of Completion:

The following criteria must be met by participants in order to receive a certificate of completion:

- Complete culminating assignment
- Attended all 5 live class discussions

* If you are seeking continuing education/professional development credits SASA recommends that you check with your school district, continuing education committee, or other relevant authority in advance to ensure you receive the proper credit and advancement for your coursework. Save Ancient Studies Alliance does not guarantee acceptance by your school, district, or licensing authority.