



CLAS CCX: Comedy, ANCIENT & MODERN, SPRING 2010



INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nick Dobson
TIME: T/TH 11:00-12:15
OFFICE: WH 115A, x2103



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OFFICE HRS: MWF 12-1, T/TH 10-11 &
by appointment (or serendipity)

The ability to laugh is what separates humans from beasts. That, and the ability to accessorize. Evidence of people performing in order to make others laugh goes all the way back to Homeric poetry, our earliest surviving works of Western literature. In this class we will examine the trajectory of comedy from ancient Greece and Rome to early modern Europe and up to the present day. Some of the questions of interest to us will be: What makes something funny? Can comedy be used for serious purposes? How (dis)similar is the comedy of today to/from the comedy of earlier eras? We will attempt to find answers to these questions by reading primary texts, examining secondary literature, and watching as much comedy as possible.

Required Texts

Aristophanes: Clouds, Wasps, and Birds. tr. by Peter Meineck. Hackett, 1998. ISBN: 0-87220-360-3.

Menander. Plays and Fragments. tr. by Peter Brown and Maurice Balme. Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 019954073X.

Plautus and Terence. Five Comedies. tr. by Deena Berg and Douglass Parker. Hackett, 1999. ISBN: 0-87220-362-X.

Twelfth Night, by William Shakespeare. Simon & Schuster, 2004. ISBN: 0743482778.

Molière. The Misanthrope, Tartuffe, and Other Plays. tr. by Maya Slater. Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0199540187.

Class Format

Classes will generally meet 2 days a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 until 12:15. Attendance is recorded, & class participation counts towards your final grade. Each student is permitted 3 unexcused absences during the semester. A student with **more than THREE** unexcused absences will drop one grade point on the final semester grade for each unexcused absence over 3. **Please do not use cellphones or laptops in class; they detract from your ability to participate in class. Anyone found using a cellphone or laptop will be asked to leave and counted as absent without excuse.**

Most course materials will be available in electronic form on the Monmouth College Moodle webpage (<http://lms.monm.edu/moodle>).

Do not hesitate to ask questions in class. If you don't understand something, there are

inevitably others in the class who do not understand either. You will do the entire class a favor by asking for explanations.

Although there is no final exam in this course, please note that class **WILL MEET** during the period scheduled for a final exam (**Sat., May 8, 1 PM**). This meeting will be used for various activities, including ORAL REPORTS, a course summary, and student evaluation. Attendance at this session is mandatory.

Goals and Requirements—Your final grade will be determined in the following way:

Short Papers	15%
Midterm comparison	10%
Print Resource Summary and Review	10%
Electronic Resource Summary and Review	10%
Individual Project	20%
Class Presentation	10%
Quizzes	25%

I. Short Papers

Approximately once a week each student will submit a response to a question or topic supplied by me. These responses, at least 600 words (2 pages) in length are informal, short, non-research essays on discussion topics. Class discussions, readings, films, etc. may all be used in discussing the topics, but they are not just summaries of activities. They should go beyond mere recording of events to include personal analysis and commentary. Emphasis will be on (1) integration of the student's own ideas and thoughts with the subject matter of the course and on (2) coherent and logical expression of these ideas. In these responses you will briefly summarize the main points, offer your own opinion and thoughts about the topics raised, and support your response with specific data. These responses will be graded primarily on personal analysis and insights, but appropriate length and timeliness will also be taken into account. **Please submit ALL written assignments via email AND in hard copy.**

Grading Criteria for Responses

- A: Content, writing style, and personal analysis are all excellent.
- B: Content, writing style, and personal analysis are good.
- C: Content, writing style, and personal analysis are adequate.
- D: Assignment is submitted on time but is otherwise inadequate.
- F: Assignment is woefully short on content or not submitted reasonably on time.

II. Midterm Comparison

Each student will write a 4(ish) page research paper comparing some aspect of (an) ancient comedy to a modern comedy. Details will be given later.

III. Print Resource Summary and Review

Each student will prepare a review (1000 word minimum) on a print resource (book chapter or journal article) dealing with some aspect of comedy in ancient Greece or Rome. There will be books on reserve for this course. Available journal resources include the *American Journal of Archaeology*, *American Journal of Philology*, *Archaeology*, *Classical Journal*, *Classical Outlook*, *Classical Philology*, *Classical World*, *Helios*, *Phoenix*, and *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. I encourage you to use interlibrary loan or 1 of the online subscription databases available through the library (such as JSTOR). Since individual articles cannot be reviewed by more than one student, you should confirm your choice with me as soon as possible. Each review must include in its top matter standard bibliographic information (including Hewes Library call number, where appropriate). Below this bibliographic information summarize the source in 2 or 3 sentences.

A photocopy of journal articles **MUST** also be submitted to the instructor along with the review. Within the body of the review the following questions must be addressed: 1) What are the main points of this resource? 2) How does the author illustrate these points? What ancient sources and evidence are used to illustrate these points? 3) How is the subject of this article related to the course topic (comedy in the ancient world) and, specifically, to topics and evidence discussed in class? 4) What are the author's qualifications for dealing with this material? and 5) What is your own evaluation of the author's work?

IV. Electronic Resource Summary and Review

Each student will prepare a review (1000 word minimum) on a webpage dealing with some aspect of comedy in ancient Greece or Rome. **Wikipedia does NOT count.** Since the same material cannot be reviewed by more than one student, you should confirm your choice with me as soon as possible. Each review must include in its top matter standard bibliographic information (including web address and date accessed). A print copy of the first page (or table of contents) of this website also be submitted to the instructor along with the review. Within the body of the review you must address the following questions: 1) What are the main features of this resource? 2) What is the author(s)' point of view or main purpose? 3) How does the author illustrate and develop this point of view or purpose? What ancient sources and evidence are used to illustrate these points? 4) How is the material related to the course topic (comedy in the ancient world) and, specifically to topics and evidence discussed in class? 5) What are the author's qualifications for dealing with this material? and 6) What is your own evaluation of the author's work? All reports are to be submitted electronically to all members of the course via the college computer network. The grade for this project will be 10% of the final grade and will be based upon at least the following criteria: the quality (and length) of the material chosen; its appropriateness for the assignment; writing style; and completion of assignment instructions.

V. Individual Project

Ideally, this project will lead naturally from the print and electronic resources reviewed in II and III. Each student will pursue a semester-long project which focuses on some special aspect of comedy in the ancient world. The central product of this project can take the form of a research paper, creative writing, artwork, website or any other work which deals with material covered in course readings or discussions.

Preparation for this project must include library research, analysis of historical evidence, and original work. The project must also demonstrate significant use of ancient primary sources as well as secondary scholarly material. A prospectus for this project is due around mid-semester.

The central product of this project can take the form of a research paper, creative writing, artwork, website or any other work which deals with material covered in course readings or discussions. While length will vary according to the medium used, the central product should clearly reflect semester-long work and research. This project cannot be completed successfully in one or two days at the end of the semester.

All central products must be accompanied by:

1) A project overview and self-evaluation (ca. 750 words) which contains the following information:

- a) A summary of the project;
- b) A description of its preparation;
- c) An explanation of how you used and analyzed sources (originality); and
- d) Your evaluation of the ways your project meet the project goals (self-assessment);

2) An annotated bibliography of all works consulted. A good starting point for this bibliography is the list of print and electronic resources evaluated by the class. (Annotations summarize the resources and explain how they were used in the project. A typical annotation will be at least 30 words, not including bibliographic information.)

NOTE: A minimum of 5 sources are required for a B-range grade; more are encouraged for a project worthy of an A-range grade. Course books and website evaluated by the class can be cited in the bibliography but only as complements to at least 5 additional works. The quality of the material consulted will significantly affect the grade. It is highly recommended that a variety of resources be consulted, including books, journals, and websites. Heavy reliance on a single kind of resource is not advised.

VI. Class Presentation

During the final exam period students will present to the class five-minute oral summaries of their individual projects. The grade for this presentation will be based upon 1) the appropriateness of the presentation to the topic; 2) the presenter's ability to explain the project orally to this audience; 3) the quality and appropriateness of the visual features accompanying the presentation (e.g., posters or skits; no use of on-line resources permitted.)

This presentation will be 10% of the final score.

VII. Quizzes

There will be 1 quiz every week. At least 1 of the quizzes will be over the geography of the ancient Greco-Roman world. The map (geography) quiz must be passed in order to pass the course. Other quizzes, both announced and unannounced, may be given at my discretion. No make-ups for quizzes (except for the map quiz) will be given without documentation of excused absence.

Grading scale:

Letter grades will be assigned according to the following pattern:

A 93-100	A- 90-92		
B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82	
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72	
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62	F below 60

Honesty and Plagiarism:

Don't cheat! Passing off someone else's work as yours is plagiarism. **Any student submitting plagiarized work will receive a 0 for that assignment and will be reported to the appropriate academic authorities..**

Caveat: This syllabus is subject to revision by me, provided that written or verbal notice is given in class.