

Weekend Courses 2024-25

Reading Classical Greek: Euripides, *Bacchae*

Start date: 24 January 2025 **End date:** 26 January 2025

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Janet Watson **Course Code:** 2425NRX019

Tutor biography

Dr Janet Watson spent a number of years teaching Classics in New Zealand, at Victoria University Wellington and Canterbury University, Christchurch, and has more recently retired as tutor in Classical Greek at Newcastle University. In the course of her career, she has been a regular contributor to continuing education courses in both Greek language and classical studies and has taught for the Open University. She has a particular interest in Homeric verse and oral tradition and has published an edition of *Odyssey* books VI and VII for Bristol Classical Press and edited a volume on orality and literacy in the ancient world.

Summary of content

Over the course of the weekend you will read, translate and discuss Euripides' *Bacchae*, which takes as its theme the arrival of the cult of Dionysus into Greece, and what happens to mortals who fail to acknowledge the new god. Euripides develops this theme through the story of Pentheus of Thebes, who denied Dionysus' divinity, and as a consequence suffered the most brutal punishment.

Euripides' text is the script of a performance, so as well as discussing the presentation of character and themes of the play, you will consider how the words on the page may provide clues to stage action. While evidence for some of the conventions of ancient theatre practice have come down to us, stage directions as such were not included in the manuscripts of the plays, but in individual texts, the words often reveal key details about the stage action and stage furniture.

You will need to have a confident grasp of the fundamentals of Classical Greek in order to explore the text in its original language. For this weekend, the prescribed passages to be read in Greek are:

1-63

215-265

434-518

576-659

775-861

912-976

1043-1152

1168-1221

1259-1312

1330-1392

Aims

This course aims to:

- extend your knowledge of Greek grammar and syntax
- develop your appreciation of Euripides' literary style and dramaturgy
- extend your understanding of the historical and cultural context of the text you are studying

Course sessions

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	The prologue: Dionysus' plan; Pentheus confronts Cadmus and Teiresias
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Dionysus, disguised as a mortal, is captured and Pentheus confronts him
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Dionysus miraculously breaks out of prison, a witness reports on the women's activities on the mountain
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Dionysus exploits Pentheus' desire to spy on the women to persuade him to disguise himself as a woman
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Illustrated talk on <i>The Bacchae</i>
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Disguised as a woman, Pentheus is led to the mountain; a messenger reports his fate to Cadmus
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Cadmus brings Agave to realise that she has killed her son
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Presentation of the course

You are asked to read the Greek text in advance of the course, so that the language content of the classes is focussed on ironing out any difficulties in the vocabulary, grammar and syntax encountered during preparation and translating into English (we shall aim for fluency without departing too far from the Greek). The classes are led by the tutor, but with full participation from the students, so that each of you will have the opportunity to take your turn in reading the Greek text aloud, translating into English, and joining in discussion of the play in its historical and cultural background, and how we may respond to the themes today. After dinner on Saturday, there will be an illustrated talk related to the subject matter of the text.

Learning outcomes

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject, and you should be able to:

- recognise some new features of Greek language
- recognise more vocabulary
- recognise some new idiomatic uses
- have confidence in your ability to translate from Greek into English
- feel that you are developing a sense of the style of Euripides
- feel that you have learned something more about the background to the language and literature you are studying

Reading and resources list

Required reading – available hard copy editions of the Greek text:

Allan, Bill and Swift, Dr Laura, *Euripides: Bacchae* (2024 Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics Green & Yellow Cambridge University Press) ISBN 9781108948388

Dodds, Eric Robertson, *Euripides Bacchae* (1960 Oxford University Press) ISBN 9780198721253

Seaford, Richard, *Euripides Bacchae* (1996 Aris and Phillips Classical Text, Liverpool University Press) ISBN 9780856686092

Online editions:

Steadman, Geoffrey

<https://geoffreysteadman.com/euripides-bacchae/>

Perseus Project

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0091>

You may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

Denniston, John Dewar (1996 reprint of 2nd ed) *The Greek Particles* (Bristol Classical Press)

van Emde Boas, E. et al. (2019) *The Cambridge Grammar of Ancient Greek*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of April 2024)