

4P02: Ancient Political Theory
“Anime and Tragedy: The Epic Handshake”
Winter 2022



**Mondays 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Online (January)
MCD 303 (maybe, sometime?)**

Professor: Stefan Dolgert
Office: Plaza 345
Office Hours: Thursday 11:00 am -12:00 pm, by appointment
Email: sdolgert@brocku.ca

When I was growing up in Orange County (California) we lived very close to Disneyland, which is often also called “The Magic Kingdom.” Being the smart-asses that we were, Orange County teenagers regularly changed this to “Tragic Kingdom” as our way of poking fun at the leading cultural institution in our neighbourhood (this is also the reason for the *No Doubt* album name, from the mid-90s). We didn’t think very deeply about it at the time, but something about the ever-sunny Disney disposition seemed false or fake, and we found the constant advertising barrage trumpeting the Disney lifestyle to be simply oppressive. When Mickey Mouse (that is to say, a person working for Disney dressed in a Mickey suit) was stabbed one summer (not seriously injured, thankfully), my friend had a good chuckle about it. The tragedy we had been implicitly prophesying had finally struck Disneyland, and while there is no doubting my friend’s bad taste in laughing over this incident, we might wonder what lay behind our apparent perversity. Why, after all, would any sane person prefer a tragic life to the pleasant (if a tad plebeian) life promised by Disney?

I offer this vignette as a slightly off-kilter entre to the subject of tragedy and politics. There is much that is puzzling about tragedy. We say many things are “tragic,” but what do we really mean by this? Is tragedy more than something that makes us sad? Does tragedy even have anything to do with sadness at all? What are tragedy’s origins as an institution and an art form (in ancient Greece), and do these origins make tragedy more or less relevant today? Some literary critics (like George Steiner) have proclaimed that modern tragedy is actually impossible – that we are missing the objective conditions in the world today for something to be “tragic” – and yet Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Verdi seem to have no shortage of modern imitators. We shall be exploring each of these questions (what is tragedy, what was tragedy in ancient Athens, is tragedy possible today), but more importantly from the perspective of this class is a final question that we will devote much time and thought to: what is the relationship of tragedy to political theory? Or, as Socrates says in Plato’s *Republic*, are tragic poets the last people we should look to for political wisdom? Is tragedy “good to think with” when we approach contemporary political dilemmas? Can it help guide us, either in suggesting that we forego certain actions (say, those that are too much like Clytemnestra’s in *Agamemnon*), or by revealing the appeal of particular institutions (like Truth and Reconciliation Commissions)? Or is tragedy’s relation to political theory captured more by the disposition it cultivates in potential citizens as they ponder how to live their lives in the face of a cosmos that seems, on its face, to be indifferent to suffering?

As we explore these questions, through the texts of the ancient tragedians as well as the secondary academic literature, we will be assisted by viewing a number of episodes from the Anime series *Attack on Titan* throughout the semester. I hope that viewing the unfolding secrets in the fictional universe of Paradis (where the action of *AOT* begins) will bring us a little closer to understanding the strife between Dionysus and Pentheus, or Agamemnon and Clytemnestra – which means bringing us closer to understanding the meaning of tragedy today. And we’re lucky enough to be experiencing the unfolding of the series in real-time, as the second half of the final season begins to stream in January 2022 – as you’ll see we’ll try to connect a bit with the wider world of *AOT*-fan life as the semester goes along.

But perhaps all this is for naught...perhaps Steiner was right to say that tragedy is from a bygone era. Though between COVID and climate change I think it's pretty easy to see that Steiner was totally wrong, we'll take the semester (at least) to ponder the question.

Course Objectives:

- 1) Students will become familiar with the classic texts of the ancient Athenian playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.
- 2) Students will be able to identify the enduring cultural significance of figures such as Oedipus, the Furies, and the Bacchants.
- 3) Students will gain an understanding of the origins of tragedy in 5th century BCE Athens, including its social, religious, and political bases.
- 4) Students will learn to analyze tragedy from a variety of scholarly perspectives, including: psychoanalysis, feminism, structural anthropology, post-structuralism, Marxism, Straussianism, postcolonialism, and democratic theory.
- 5) Students will be able to explain the relation of tragedy to *Attack on Titan*, and anime more generally.
- 6) Students will develop their own general theory of tragedy, and be able to argue its relevance for contemporary politics.

Books:

- 1) *Greek Tragedies I*, ed. Grene and Lattimore, UChicagoPress. (Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*)
- 2) *Greek Tragedies III*, ed. Grene and Lattimore, UChicagoPress. (Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Euripides' *Bacchae*)
- 3) Euripides, *Orestes and Other Plays*, OxfordUP.

PLEASE USE ONLY THESE EDITIONS

- 4) *Attack on Titan* (available on Funimation.com [dubbed] or Crunchyroll.com [subtitled]...Netflix has the first season only).

Class Style:

This class will be conducted as a discussion-intensive seminar. This course will also utilize a number of different methods in presenting the materials, possibly including simulations, semi-formal debates, and role-play. Please come prepared to discuss the materials each day, and this means arguing about them in a thoughtful manner with your instructor and fellow classmates. These discussions should be respectful of others' views, but in no way does that suggest that we paper over our differences with others. We will learn from each other precisely to the extent that we can figure out exactly how much we disagree with one another.

Assignments:

Seminar Participation: 20%

Seminar Facilitation: 10%

Short Paper: 15% (6 pages, due February 26 in class). Questions will be distributed by the instructor in advance.

#TragicTitan (Twitter, TikTok, Youtube): 10% (due March 14)

Discussion Posts (online in the Forum, via Sakai): 10% (10 postings total, 1% each)

Final Paper: 35% (15 pages for undergraduates; due April 17)

Seminar Participation:

Given that this is a fourth-year/graduate course, participation counts heavily. Please make sure to actively (and thoughtfully) engage in conversation each session, and please check with the instructor if you have any questions regarding your participation grade throughout the semester.

Seminar Facilitation:

Each student will be responsible for facilitating one of the class sessions, probably in conjunction with one other student. Facilitators do not need to provide a lengthy introduction on their appointed day, but should provide several questions or topics for discussion, and should be prepared to briefly introduce each question or topic.

Discussion Postings:

Prior to each week of class BEGINNING WITH WEEK TWO, each student is required to post one item to the Forum section of Sakai by 10 p.m. on SUNDAY of that week. THERE IS NO POSTING DUE IN WEEK TWELVE. This posting is to be approximately 100-150 words (not including quote), and MUST INCLUDE A CITATION TO THE TEXT (just a brief quotation and page number is sufficient). The grade will be based on whether the posting meets these requirements – it will not be graded for content, though postings that are clearly not related to the week's readings, or that demonstrate a lack of acquaintance with the readings, will not be counted.

Each posting should address a question to the text, or to one of the other student's postings for that week. You may ALSO refer to the movie for that week, but you MUST refer to the TEXTBOOK. They can take many forms, and the following are just a few examples: 1) puzzle through what the author means... e.g. "Author X seems to state that Z is the case, but I cannot understand how this argument works, since the Author also says Y. One way to resolve this seeming dilemma is to include B in the argument, which removes the contradiction; 2) argue with the author... "Author M states X and Y, both of which result in a argument that is immoral (state why) and threatens democratic legitimacy (state why). Author M's position is of no use to us in crafting a theory of justice; 3) "Student U has posted that Author P is wrong because of K. While I agree that K is a problem, Student U does not take into account Author P's argument J, which answers the contradictions raised by Student U"; 4) engage the film and textbook, for instance "in Film A we see how Author B's ideas about violence actually play out, in real life, and what is wrong with those ideas..."

I expect that these postings will facilitate class discussions by placing a number of issues on the table well before the actual class session, and I will likely be responding to some of the issues raised in my lectures/group projects for the week. And the claims you put

forth in these posts will likely form the basis for the arguments that you will make in your midterm, essay, and final exams...so if you want to see how good an idea you have, this is a good way to test it.

Deadline to Withdraw is Friday March 4

Last date for withdrawal without academic penalty and last day to change from credit to audit status for duration 3 courses without academic penalty.

Academic Integrity:

In this course we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. You are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, and share your drafts during peer review and outside of class. In this course, those activities are well within the bounds of academic honesty. However, when you *use* another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signalling it with a standard form of academic citation. Per university policy, YOU ALSO MAY NOT RE-USE YOUR OWN WORK, FROM PREVIOUS OR CURRENT CLASSES.

STUDENTS WHO DO NOT CITE TO THE ASSIGNED EDITIONS OF THE TEXTS WILL INCUR A PENALTY OF -30% ON THEIR ESSAYS OR POSTS.

See also the Political Science Department's statement on academic integrity, which appears at the end of the syllabus.

Late Submission Policy:

The penalties for late submission of assigned coursework (e.g., papers, assignments, weekly reflections) are 2% per day, unless accompanied by medical documentation. See Medical Exemption Policy and the medical health certificate at
<http://www.brocku.ca/health-services/policies/exemption>

Turnitin.com

Written assignments may be submitted through Turnitin.com, at the instructor's discretion. The instructor will supply links and password at the time of the assignment. If you object to uploading your assignments to Turnitin.com for any reason, please notify the instructor to discuss the matter further.

Intellectual Property Notice:

All slides, presentations, handouts, tests, exams, and other course materials created by the instructor in this course are the intellectual property of the instructor. A student who publicly posts or sells an instructor's work, without the instructor's express consent, may be charged with misconduct under Brock's Academic Integrity Policy and/or Code of Conduct, and may also face adverse legal consequences for infringement of intellectual property rights.

Academic Accommodation:

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the university community with disabilities. If you require academic accommodations related to a documented disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact the Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre (4th floor Schmon Tower, ex. 3240). You are also encouraged to discuss any accommodations with the instructor well in advance of due dates and scheduled assessments.

Academic Accommodation due to Religious Obligations:

Brock University acknowledges the pluralistic nature of the undergraduate and graduate communities such that accommodations will be made for students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event. Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructor(s) for alternative dates and/or means of satisfying requirements.

Medical Exemption Policy:

The University requires that a student be medically examined in Health Services, or by an off-campus physician prior to an absence due to medical reasons from an exam, lab, test, quiz, seminar, assignment, etc. The Medical Certificate can be found at:

<http://www.brocku.ca/health-services/policies/exemption>

Schedule:**Week One, January 10: Introductions**

Short reading from Plato

Attack on Titan S1E1

Week Two, January 17: The End of Tragedy? A New Beginning?

Rethinking Tragedy: essays by George Steiner (29-44) and Simon Goldhill (45-62)

Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence* (“A Theory in Ruins” 1-22; “The Value of Agony” 23-40)

Walter Kaufmann, “Toward a New Poetics,” in *Tragedy and Philosophy*, Anchor Books (1968), pp. 87-117.

“How I Wrote The Wire (David Simon’s Writing Process)”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep4SsIiax5A>

Week Three, January 24: Anime, You Say?

“The Impact of Akira: The Film That Changed Everything.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqVoEpRIaKg>

Brian Ashcraft, “What Anime Means.” <https://kotaku.com/what-anime-means-1689582070>

Annalee Newitz (1995): “Magic Girls and Atomic Bomb Sperm”

<http://www1.udel.edu/History-old/figal/Hist372/Materials/magicgirls.pdf>

- Condry, Ian. "Anime creativity: Characters and premises in the quest for cool Japan." *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.2-3 (2009): 139-163.
- Fennell, Dana, et al. "Consuming anime." *Television & New Media* 14.5 (2013): 440-456.
- Shen, Lien Fan. "Anime pleasures as a playground of sexuality, power and resistance." *MiT5, Media in Transition: Creativity, Ownership, and Collaboration in the digital Age: International Conference*. 2007.

Week Four, January 31: The Thick Description of Attic Tragedy

- Simon Goldhill, "Modern Critical Approaches to Greek Tragedy," from *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (1997) pp. 324-347.
- Paul Cartledge, "'Deep Plays': Theatre as Process in Greek Civic Life," from *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (1997), 3-35
- Walter Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," in *Savage Energies : Lessons of Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece*, University of Chicago Press (2001), pp. 1-21 (notes go until page 36).

Week Five, February 7: "No Dad, What About You?"

- Oedipus the King*
- Attack on Titan* S3E6 "Sin"
- Walter Kaufmann, "The Riddle of Oedipus," in *Tragedy and Philosophy*, Anchor Books (1968), pp. 118-158.
- Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 81-89

Week Six, February 14: Dionysus and Bacchanalian Women

- Bacchae*
- Attack on Titan* S1E17-22 "The 57th Exterior Scouting Mission" (Parts 1-6)
- Helene Foley, "The Bacchae," in *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides* pp. 205-258.
- E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, "Maenadism," pp. 270-280

NO CLASS February 21 (Reading Week)

Week Seven, February 28: Warriors

- Philoctetes*
- Attack on Titan* S4E3 "The Door of Hope"
- Aristide Tessitore, "Justice, Politics, and Piety in Sophocles' Philoctetes," *Review of Politics* (2003):
- https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1408788.pdf?casa_token=Dhm9IK8kzjUAAAAAA:dQVoSkCQ2xJKbnZc2axXK2XkqufMoPWuGovGP1QuWoVIwTSC9oFULwM9JpYt1LA5-3Hr94oJb74B1DcFc3JywhE8Rd9i-TRaKiuvEUNPtRfHA-io9DGg

Week Eight, March 7: The *Oresteia* – Revenge as Justice

Agamemnon

Attack on Titan S3E20-21 “That Day” and “Attack Titan”

Froma Zeitlin, “Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the Oresteia”

Arethusa 11 ½ (1978) 149-181

J.P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, “Hunting and Sacrifice in Aeschylus’ Oresteia” from *Myth and Tragedy* pp. 141-160

Week Nine, March 14: Judging

Eumenides

Attack on Titan S3E22 “The Other Side of the Wall” and S4E1 “The Other Side of the Sea”

C. Fred Alford, “Melanie Klein and the "Oresteia Complex": Love, Hate, and the Tragic Worldview” *Cultural Critique* 15 (1990) pp. 167-189.

Week Ten, March 21: Politics

Orestes

Attack on Titan S4???

Matthew Wright, “Euripides’ Cleverest Play,” from *Euripides: Orestes* (Bloomsbury).

Week Eleven, March 28: Season Four...

Attack on Titan, Final Season Second Half

“Within and Without: Human-Monster Boundary in *Attack on Titan*”

<https://brill.com/view/book/9781848884816/BP000002.xml>

Griffis, Emily. "Predator vs. Prey: The Human Monstrosity in Attack on Titan." *Digital Literature Review* 4 (2017): 153-165.

Fanasca, Marta. "Attack on normativity: A queer reading of Shingeki no Kyojin (Attack on Titan)." *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture* 7.2 (2021): 255-270.

Week Twelve, April 4: Tragic Futures, Together?

An Experiential Surprise, and Wrapping Up (the Unwrappable)

Peter Euben, essay on the *Oresteia* from *The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken*.

Recommended Additional Texts on Tragedy and Politics:

Goldhill, “Civic Ideology and the Problem of Difference: The Politics of Aeschylean Tragedy, Once Again” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 120: 34-56

Elizabeth Markovits, “Birthrights: Freedom, Responsibility, and Democratic Comportment in Aeschylus’ Oresteia.” *American Political Science Review*, 103 (2009), pp. 427-441.

Rene Girard, “Sacrifice” and “Oedipus and the Surrogate Victim,” in *Violence and the Sacred* pp. 1-38; 68-88

Page duBois, “The Persistence of Oedipus” in *Out of Athens: The New Ancient Greeks*, Harvard University Press (2010), pp. 157-172.

Terry Eagleton, “Thomas Mann’s Hedgehog,” in *Sweet Violence* pp. 274-297

Page duBois, “Slaves in the Tragic City,” in *Out of Athens* 72-90 (2010)

- Arlene Saxonhouse, "Tyranny of Reason in the Polis" *APSR* 82 (1988) pp. 1261-1275.
- Zeitlin on "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama," in *Nothing to Do With Dionysos?* pp. 63-96
- Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, "Oedipus Without the Complex" in *Myth and Tragedy* pp. 85-111
- Peter Euben, "Oedipean Complexities and Political Science: Tragedy and the Search for Knowledge" in *Corrupting Youth*, 1997 (Princeton).
- Alain Badiou, "Theory of the subject according to Sophocles, theory of the subject according to Aeschylus," in *Theory of the Subject* (158-168)
- Peter Euben, "Introduction" to *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, pp. 1-42
- Charles Segal, "Greek Tragedy and Society: A Structuralist Perspective," in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory* pp. 43-75
- P. E. Easterling, "A Show for Dionysus," from *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (1997), 36-53.
- Edith Hall, "The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy," from *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (1997), 93-126.
- The Soul of Anime*, Ian Condry
- Anime, A Critical Introduction*, Rayna Denison
- Hegel on Tragedy*, edited by Ann and Henry Paolucci
- J. P. Sartre, *The Flies*
- Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City State*
- Brian Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy*
- Helene Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*
- George Steiner, *Antigones*
- George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*
- Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, *Crossroads in the Black Aegean Classics in Post-Colonial Worlds*, edited by Lorna Hardwick and Carol Gillespie
- Richard Armstrong, *A Compulsion for Antiquity: Freud and the Ancient World*, Cornell UP, 2005
- Miriam Leonard, *Athens in Paris: Ancient Greece and the Political in Postwar French Thought*, OUP 2005
- Jacques Lacan, *Seminar of JL*, Book VII, pp. 243-290
- Romand Coles, "Tragedy's Tragedy," in *Beyond Gated Politics*
- Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*
- Robert Fagles, "The Serpent and the Eagle," in *The Oresteia*, edited by Robert Fagles, pp. 13-97
- Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Foucault Reader*
- Goldhill, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology" JHS 107 (1987): 58-76
- H. P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness; The Call of Cthulhu*
- Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya, *The Watch*
- Slavoj Zizek, "From Antigone to Joan of Arc," *Helios*. 31 (Spring-Fall 2004) (51-62)
- Stefan Dolgert, "Sacrificing Justice: Suffering Animals, the *Oresteia*, and the Masks of Consent." *Political Theory* 40:3 (2012), pp. 263-289.
- Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*
- Christopher Rocco, "The Tragedy of Critical Theory" in *Tragedy and Enlightenment*

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Because academic integrity is vital to the well-being of the university community, Brock University takes academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which involves presenting the words and ideas of another person as if they were your own, and other forms of

cheating, such as using crib notes during a test or fabricating data for a lab assignment. The penalties for academic misconduct can be very severe. A grade of zero may be given for the assignment or even for the course, and a second offense may result in suspension from the University. Students are urged to read the section of the Brock University Undergraduate Calendar that pertains to academic misconduct. Students are also reminded that the Student Development Centre (Schmon Tower, Room 400) offers free workshops on writing and study skills and on avoiding plagiarism.

POLICY ON LATE ESSAYS

The policy of the Department is that essays received by the instructor or deposited in the Political Science department Essay box after 4:00 p.m. or at a time designated by the instructor, of the date on which they were due will be penalized **two per cent** for each day late from Monday through Friday and **five per cent** for the period from Friday 4:00 p.m. to Monday 8:30 a.m., and that no paper will be accepted two weeks after the due date.

An essay is considered received when the **original** hard copy (printed-not disk) of the paper is in the hands of the instructor or in the box outside the Political Science Department's office. (ALL ESSAYS MUST INCLUDE A TITLE PAGE WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CLEARLY MARKED: STUDENT NUMBER, TA and INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, COURSE NAME and NUMBER).

Having an essay date-stamped by security, or the library, or anyone else does **not** constitute receipt of the essay by the Political Science Department. Instructors may require that essays be submitted electronically through turnitin.com. In this case, students must consult with the Instructor on what constitutes a late essay.

Instructors may establish more restrictive deadlines or more severe penalties in particular courses – check the course outline. Extensions of due dates are granted only in circumstances that are beyond the student's control, such as health problems that are supported by a medical certificate or other, clearly equivalent, situations.

Time management problems are not grounds for extensions. You are strongly urged to avoid these penalties by beginning to work on essays early in the term; by setting your own target dates for completion that are several days before the due date; and by carefully budgeting your time.

POLICY ON RETURNING MARKED ESSAYS

Marked essays will normally be returned during class meetings or at the final examination.

Students who are not in class to receive their essays or do not receive them at the final examination can obtain them in two ways:

- directly from the instructor during his/her office hours (unless the instructor specifies in the course outline or by notice on his/her office door that this option is not available), and/or
- directly from the instructor on specific days and at specific times announced in class or posted on his/her office door.

Note: Essays that are not picked up within six months after the end of term will be shredded.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

**Please read and sign the following statement, and submit this sheet with your paper.
Your paper will not be graded until you have submitted this form.**

I, the undersigned, confirm that I understand that all the following constitutes academic misconduct according to Brock University's policy on academic misconduct, which in turn is consistent with general academic practice:

Quoting someone's words without using quotation marks.

Quoting someone's words without acknowledging the source.

Citing someone else's ideas in my own words but without citing the source.

Using someone else's organization of ideas.

Allowing someone else the opportunity to borrow material from my paper (e.g., by letting them have access to my paper when they are writing their own paper).

Writing the paper for another student, or doing some of the work for them (such as, but not limited to, reading the articles for them and providing them with notes on the articles).

Allowing someone else (or paying someone else) to write part or all of my paper, or do some of the work for me. The exceptions to this are that it is acceptable to allow someone to type the paper for me or make editorial comment on it. However, if someone types the paper for me, or if I incorporate an editorial suggestion, and there are errors in the typing or the suggestion was misguided, I take full responsibility for those errors.

Submitting this work to another course without both instructors' permission.

I confirm that I have not done any of the above forms of academic misconduct.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____