

Note: This prospectus gives information about what to expect in a general sense. Information is subject to change, and more specific information will be provided on Canvas closer to the beginning of the semester. Please feel free to send any queries to the instructor, Prof. James Ker (jker@sas.upenn.edu)!

CLST 301 Ancient Dialogue Workshop

This course will focus on the history of dialogue as a method of creative social communication in ancient Greek and Roman cities. We will study ancient dialogue-forms of different kinds, surveying key moments in poetry, drama, philosophy, from Homer onward, as well as imagined dialogues between moderns and ancients. The course will operate as a research workshop, proceeding through a series of case-studies in which participants analyze and critique ancient dialogues and also develop their own dialogue models. The capstone assignment for each participant will be to propose a way to present an ancient dialogue in an innovative form that facilitates productive dialogue in modern culture, and to test it out. In addition to the main instructor, the course will host a series of three visiting speakers—experts in and/or practitioners of the main models of dialogue explored in the course. This course has no pre-requisites and is open to all undergraduates. It fulfills requirements for the major in Classical Studies and for the SNF Paideia program.

Registration notes: DESIGNATED SNF PAIDEIA FOUNDATION COURSE

Class meetings will be **remote** and **synchronous**, via Zoom: MW 1.00–2.00. (No meetings will be held during the Friday slot, though students preparing a presentation for the following week will be encouraged to meet with the instructor at a convenient time on Thursday or Friday.)

If you anticipate having trouble attending synchronous class sessions due to your time-zone or other factors in your home-environment, please email Prof. Ker to discuss options. Ongoingly, exceptions to attendance will be allowed for the following reasons: time-zone; religious holiday; illness; technological constraints; family care. Please keep the instructor aware of any such factors that arise.

Assignments and grade breakdown

Preparation for class and active participation in sessions	20%
Feature-dialogue presentations (analyze together and present in class) (2) [collaborative]	30%
Midterm exam	20%
Final project [either solo or collaborative]	30%

Course materials

Most course materials will be available directly through Canvas. Information about any required books will be provided via Canvas over the winter break.

Weekly workflow

Each week, one student team will be responsible for several tasks involving the featured dialogue: (1) recording the dialogue (by Friday); (2) 10-min presentation of analysis and questions (Monday); (3) 10-min recap of student discussion and further questions (Wednesday).

The featured dialogue is posted on Friday (on V[oice]T[hread], recorded by student team) for everyone to hear and read ahead of Monday's class. By Sunday night, everyone is required to listen to the dialogue and post one critical question (on VT). Note that this first reading of the dialogue is meant to be a kind of preview/eavesdropping exercise, in which we focus exclusively on what we are hearing and seeing, without necessarily knowing the broader context.

Monday session:

- Lecture (20 mins): The instructor contextualizes the dialogue within its literary work or historical moment and gives an overview of relevant analyses.
- Presentation (10 mins): The student team presents an analysis of the dialogue and poses questions about its wider significance.
- Discussion (20 mins)

Wednesday session:

- Recap (10 mins): The student team summarizes the discussion from last time and poses further questions.
- Discussion (20 mins)
- Lecture (20 mins): The instructor gives further comparisons and contrasts for the featured dialogue, from ancient and modern culture.

Midterm exam

This exam will present you with a piece of dialogue that you have not seen before in the course, and will ask you to analyze and discuss it in light of the dialogues and approaches encountered so far. You should prepare for it by reviewing all prior readings, activities, and class-notes.

Final project

After we have completed our series of featured dialogues (week 10), each student will be responsible for devising a final project—either solo or in in groups of 2 or 3 (your choice). These projects will be planned, created, presented, and discussed in the final three weeks of the course. The final project should present an ancient dialogue in an innovative form that facilitates productive dialogue in modern culture, and to test this out in our group. Further guidelines will be provided in the middle of the semester.

SCHEDULE

Introduction to course (W. 1/20): *We will look at a sample selection of ancient dialogues involving the Colchian priestess **Medea**, in conversation with Jason, the women of Corinth, and herself; and we'll survey forms of dialogue in ancient Greece and Rome, and methods and theories of dialogue-analysis.*

Featured dialogue 1 (M. 1/25, W. 1/27): **Achilles breaks with Agamemnon (Homer, *Iliad*)**

Featured dialogue 2 (M. 2/1, W. 2/3): **Penelope tests the disguised Odysseus (Homer, *Odyssey*)**

Featured dialogue 3 (M. 2/8, W. 2/10): **Debate on the best form of government (Herodotus, *History*)**

Featured dialogue 4 (M. 2/15, W. 2/17): **Imperial oppression in the Melian dialogue (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*)**

Featured dialogue 5 (M. 2/22, W. 2/24): **Antigone speaks truth to a tyrant (Sophocles, *Antigone*)**

Featured dialogue 6 (M. 3/1, W. 3/3): **Socrates teaches and learns about love (Plato, *Symposium*)**

MIDTERM EXAM (M. 3/8)

SPRING BREAK (W. 3/10)

Featured dialogue 7 (M. 3/15, W. 3/17): **An everyday chat between two women in Alexandria (Theocritus, *Idylls 15*)**

Featured dialogue 8 (M. 3/22, W. 3/24): **A slave is confronted by his double (a god in disguise) (Plautus, *Amphitryo*)**

Featured dialogue 9 (M. 3/29, W. 3/31): **Two herdsmen talk about exile (Virgil, *Eclogues 1*)**

Featured dialogue 10 (M. 4/5, W. 4/7): **Prostitutes in conversation (Lucian, *Dialogue of the Courtesans*)**

REVIEW AND FINAL PROJECT PLANNING (M. 4/12, W. 4/14)

PRESENTATIONS of **FINAL PROJECTS** (M. 4/19, W. 4/21, M. 4/26, W. 4/28)