



Arcadia Center for Hellenic, Mediterranean and Balkan Studies

Arcadia University

GREK LIMO 320 Greek Literature as Culture

Credits: 3

Course description

The course aims to discuss a number of prose texts (e.g. novels, short stories and poems) by eminent Greek writers, from the end of the 19th century and up to the present. Its main focus is on the narrative aspect of these texts, as well as on their relation to the literary production and history of the period under study.

Rationale and Impact of the Course: The course is divided into 4 parts each constituting an independent debate on a specific theme. Additionally, through combining classroom study with extra-classroom activities, (e.g. visits to museums, art galleries, bookshops etc.), the course sets out to familiarize students with the current cultural manifestations and heterogeneity of Greece's past and present realities.

Through providing a forum for discussion of the life, culture, current and past events, history, national identity and values of what makes up Greece and the Greeks today, the course aspires to help students reflect upon the elusive nature of cross-cultural understanding and move beyond their own cultural and social preconceptions.

Learning Outcomes and Expected Student Competences:

- Mastering the skills of studying and critically interpreting primary and secondary literary and academic resources.
- Learn to distinguish and nuance the differences between their own cultural, ethnic and social “baggage” and those encountered in the texts.
- Encourage understanding on the formation and role of cultural identities.
- Become knowledgeable of a variety of writing styles, patterns and themes of contemporary Greek literature.
- Accept the wealth and value of open-ended texts, introducing or elaborating fluid concepts such as ethnicity, gender and cultural identity.
- Elaborate on the characteristics of Greek literary heroes and their interrelations to history.
- Sharpen students' critical and observation skills in order to discern how literary texts link to or contrast with, derive from, alter and shape contemporary Greek reality.

Course overview and aims:

This course is designed to enhance your stay in Greece by introducing you to Greek culture through its rich literary heritage, while at the same time helping you to explore Greek literature as a ‘slice’ of that culture. The aim of our meetings will be to highlight the importance of literary texts, both as mirrors that reflect the life and culture of Greece in the recent past, but also, as windows that offer glimpses into the life, people, mentality and culture of Greece as it is evolving today.

We will set out to answer questions such as:

- What is unique and uniquely Greek about Greek literature?
- What is it that constitutes contemporary Greek narrative form?
- What are the relevant themes, patterns and styles of Greek literature?
- What are some of the characteristics of Greek literary heroes and their interrelations to history?
- How can we insert Greek literature into the culture that produced it?
- How do literary texts link to or contrast with, derive from, alter and shape contemporary Greek reality?

Course Requirements:

The course's required texts are as follows:

- Short stories

By Georgios Vizyinos

1. "My mother's sin"
2. "Moscov Selim"
3. "Who was my Brother's killer?"

By Alexandros Papadiamandis

1. "The Murderess"
2. "The Cave of the Dragon"

- Novel

By Nikos Kazantzakis

1. "Zorba the Greek"

- Theatrical Play

By Samuel Beckett

1. "Waiting for Godot"

- Poetry

By Constantine Cavafy

1. "Waiting for the Barbarians"
2. "Ithaca"
3. "Thermopylae"
4. "Che fece il gran rifiuto"
5. "The Satrapy"
6. Various of his lust poems
7. "The walls"
8. "On the stairs"

By Yiannis Ritsos

1. "The Moonlight Sonata"
2. Various excerpts of poems from collection "The Fourth Dimension"

- Articles

1. "Altered States: Space, Gender, and the (Un)making of Identity in the Short Stories of Georgios M. Vizyenos" by Patricia Felisa Barbeito

2. "Views of Vizyenos-Why Vizyenos?" by Margaret Alexiou

3. "Cavafy's Imminent Threat: Still Waiting for the Barbarians" by Dimitris Tziovas

4. "Barbarians and their Western Genealogy" by Dimitris Dimiroulis

- Secondary Bibliography

1. Introduction in Modern Greek Literature by R. Beaton
2. Greece, Books and Writers by the National Book Center

All the required texts and articles for this course but one are scanned and can be downloaded or read from the Arcadia webpage. The only novel that students will be asked to buy is *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis (ISBN: 0684825546; Cost: To Be Determined .) A number of copies of the book exist at the Centre's library for students wishing to read on site. The book cannot be taken out of the library.

Each student will be required to:

1. Read a selection of texts such as prose, poems and articles, which can be found in .pdf form at Arcadia's website.
2. Participate in discussion effectively.
3. Complete the work assigned for each session and hand it in on time. All essays are to be typed and printed out to be given to the professor. No essay is to be handed in through email.

Assessment:

Class participation (including attendance, interest and willingness to co-operate in the sessions) 30%

Prose quality, structure, argument and critical insight of your oral and written essays 70%

Grading policy:

- Participation (15%)
- Written assignments (3 =25%)
- Oral Reports in the classroom (2=15%)
- Mini quiz tests (2=15)
- Mid-term (15%)
- Final project (15%)

Other policies:

- Participation is not just about talking, giving opinions or exercising critical capacities. It should also involve giving evidence of reading either the material assigned or other sources relevant to the subject matter.
- One unexcused absence is permitted. After that, 2.5 grade points will be deducted for every unexcused absence. If you are ill, you must inform Jan or Joanna before class meeting time for your absence to count as excused.
- Each student is responsible for performing academic tasks in such a way that honesty is not in question. All tests, term papers, oral and written assignments, and other academic efforts are to be the work of the student presenting the material. Any use of wording, ideas, or findings of other persons, writers, or researchers requires the explicit citation of the source; use of the exact wording requires a 'quotation' format.

Times and place of meetings:

The total duration of this module will be 23 two-hour sessions.

Some of those sessions will not be held at Arcadia centre, but in outdoor spaces. The exact places of those meetings will not be announced to you beforehand. I thought it wise to take in mind all cultural events occurring in Athens while we are organizing our sessions, so as not to miss out on anything interesting. Therefore, a fixed programme would not do. I can however inform you, even though you do not have the exact places we will be going to, that we will have sessions at some cozy cafeterias in central Athens, visit art galleries and museums, or attend any literary or non literary event closely related to our sessions, or initiated by an idea, a feeling, an image, a theme deriving from them. Wishes and or ideas are of course welcome.

Prerequisites: None

Course Offered: fall and spring semesters

Cost to Student: None

Course Outline:

WEEK 1

1. Meeting at Arcadia to introduce the course to the students: we will discuss the aims, contents, grading system and syllabus of the course entitled “Modern Greek Literature as culture” and then have coffee at the square Varnava.

Part I

2. Attempting to capture ambiguous moral concepts: can you pin down the contents of “good” and “evil”? Is it always easy to tell apart the “virtuous” from the “guilty sinners”? A debate on “morality” and “immorality” as portrayed in three short stories and a film. First short story: “My mother’s sin” by Georgios Vizyinos.

WEEK 2

3. Second short story: “The voice of the dragon” by Alexandros Papadiamandis.

4. Screening in class. Film title: “In America”.

WEEK 3

5. Third short story: “Who was my brother’s killer?” by Georgios Vizyinos

6. Students’ oral presentations and written assignments on moral issues and questions raised in the short stories and film under study.

WEEK 4

1. Outdoor activity: to be announced

Part II

2. Identities in flux: Heroes bordering between “sanity” and insanity” as portrayed in a novel and a short story. Novel title: “The Murderess” by Alexandros Papadiamandis.
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WEEK 5

3. An analysis of the short story: “Moscov Selim” by Georgios Vizyinos
 4. Students’ oral presentations and written assignments on issues related to the main theme of part II: “sanity” and “insanity”, reality and the doubling of reality, fluid identities, marginalisation etc.
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WEEK 6

Part III

1. Existential dramas as metaphors in poetry and theatre: a comparison between “Waiting for the Barbarians” by C. Cavafy and “Waiting for Godot” by Samuel Beckett. An introduction in Cavafy’s world through a multi-layered interpretation of the poem “Waiting for the Barbarians”: a) initial student reactions and b) an academic approach to the poem through students’ presentations of a relevant article.
 2. “Waiting for the Barbarians”: an alternative and/or supplementary academic approach of the poem filtered through students’ presentations on a second relevant article. An anthology of additional poems by Cavafy will be read and discussed in class.
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WEEK 7

3. Class test on Cavafy’s poems: “Ithaca”, “The Satrapy” “Thermopylae” and “Che feche il gran rifiuto”.
 4. Different mediums, different “readings” and interpretations: a comparison between the poem “Waiting for the Barbarians: and the theatrical play “Waiting for Godot”.
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WEEK 8

Part IV

1. Part IV: Femmes fatales: male poetic visions of fragile and blissful women. Analysis of the first poem entitled “The Moonlight Sonata” by Ritsos.
2. Answering relevant questions and analysing the main themes of “The Moonlight Sonata”: youth and old age, the purpose of art and the role of artists, the vanity of human existence, life and death etc.

WEEK 9

3. Test reviewing students’ understanding of “The Moonlight Sonata”.
4. Comparative presentations pinpointing common and different themes/symbols between “The Moonlight Sonata” and: a) four poems by Yiannis Ritsos and b) one by Cavafy.

WEEK 10

Part V

1. Part V: Mind versus body or Mind or mind supplementing the body: Nikos Kazantzakis and his novel: “Zorba the Greek”. Discussion of the novel’s six most important themes: the concept of “Greekness”, the author’s depiction of women, religion, love and life, heroes’ profiles etc.
2. Students’ oral presentations on heroes’ profiles and discussion of the prologue of the novel.

WEEK 11

3. Discussing adaptation issues and analysing a relevant article by Peter Bien.
4. Students’ oral presentations on comparing the novel and its film adaptation by M. Cacoyiannis.

WEEK 12

To be announced