Seneca tragicus

The University of Edinburgh
School of History, Classics, and Archaeology
2010–2011, Semester 2
Seneca tragicus (LATI10034)

You should use this course handbook in conjunction with the Honours Handbook 2010–2011 which was distributed earlier. There you will find information on course protocol, in particular on plagiarism and penalties for late coursework and a section on assessment. If you do not have a copy of the handbook it can be downloaded from: http://www.shc.ed.ac.uk/undergraduate

GENERAL INFORMATION

COURSE ORGANISER

Dr Michael Lurie
Office: West Wing (Teviot Place) 01M.13
Phone: (0131) 6503588
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Other helpful contacts are the Classics secretaries, Elaine Hutchison (E.Hutchison@ed.ac.uk) and Jill Shaw (jill.shaw@ed.ac.uk).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 1 BCE – 65 CE) was not only an orator, statesman, philosopher, and an author of philosophical essays, but also a brilliant playwright, whose tragedies exercised a powerful influence over the Renaissance theatres of Italy, France, and Elizabethan England. The course examines Seneca's plays in their historical, literary, and intellectual contexts. Particular attention is paid to Seneca's transformation of Greek models, the role of Stoic philosophy, political background, and the history of reception of Seneca's plays in Europe.

TEACHING ARRANGEMENTS

PLACE: West Wing (Teviot Place) 01M.20.
TIME: Tuesdays in Semester 2 at 16.00–17.50.

ASSESSMENT

This course will be assessed by a combination of prescribed coursework, which will count for 35% of the final mark, and a two-hour examination, which will count for the remaining 75%. There is no resit examination for this course, unless it is being taken as part of an Ordinary degree programme.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

– translate fluently and accurately from the prescribed texts into clear and appropriate English
– produce problem-oriented, well-argued, well-researched, relevant, and coherent coursework essays on specific aspects of Seneca’s work and Roman intellectual history
– demonstrate in written work and in examinations an informed understanding of the most important historical, literary, cultural, intellectual, and philosophical issues raised by the
study of Seneca’s tragedies, Latin poetry, and Roman intellectual history as well as of the most important scholarly approaches in the interpretation of Seneca’s work – make judicious use of dictionaries, commentaries, works of reference, and critical studies

DETAILLED INFORMATION ON COURSE

PARTICIPATION AND CONTACT

There will be classes on all Tuesdays in Semester 2. In most meetings interaction and discussion rather than passive listening will be the norm. You are expected to prepare in advance for each meeting, in particular by reading thoroughly the relevant Latin text.

Attendance is of course expected, and it will be appreciated of students who for whatever reason cannot attend a particular meeting give notice of this by e-mail. Spare copies of handouts will be available. Persistent absence without sufficient justification will be reported to the student's Director of Studies.

Messages about the course may be circulated to students by e-mail. It is now a University requirement that students must respond to e-mails sent to their University e-mail address and it will be assumed that every member of the class can be contacted at this address and checks incoming mail regularly.

Feedback from students is always welcome. You may either contact the course organiser personally or speak to the Class Representative. At the end of the course, you will be asked for your anonymous comments on a course assessment questionnaire.

TEACHING PROGRAMME

Week 1: Seneca: rhetoric, philosophy, tyranny
Week 2: Insatiable desire and the spread of evil
  – *Thyestes* 1-175
Week 3: Atreus and stoic psychology or: Who is a true king?
  – *Thyestes* 176–404
Week 4: A king without a kingdom
  – *Thyestes* 405–622
Week 5: Cosmic sympathy and the conflagration of the universe
  – *Thyestes* 623–884
Week 6: Recognition in the dark. *Thyestes* and the problem of evil
  – *Thyestes* 885–112:
  – Retrospective I: Seeing Seneca as a whole
Week 7: From Sophocles to Seneca
  – *Oedipus* 1–201
Week 8: Fate, divination, and inverted nature
    – Oedipus 202–402
Week 9: Magic spells and tragic ghosts
    – Oedipus 403–708:
Week 10: High-speed recognition or: The mechanics of fate
    – Oedipus 709–914
Week 11: No Stoic world? Stoicism and Seneca’s tragic vision
    – Oedipus 915–1061
    – Retrospective II: Theatrum Mundi

ASSESSMENT: COURSEWORK

There will be one essay (ca. 3,500 words), worth 35% of the marks for the course, due by 12 noon on Thursday 24 March 2011. The essays can be 'more literary' or 'more philosophical' in approach or deal with Seneca’s transformation of Greek models or look at the reception of Seneca in modern Europe. They should, however, focus on the set texts. If you wish to choose your own subject please consult with me about the title by seventh week. Otherwise try one of the following topics. Feel free to adapt the wording.

‘These are not tragedies! These are declamations, composed according to the norm of tragedy and spun into acts’ (F. Leo). Discuss [Your answer must be based on a detailed analysis of one of the set texts]

What role, if any, does Stoic philosophy play in Seneca’s tragedies? [Your answer must be based on a detailed analysis of one of the set texts]

Are Seneca’s plays mere showpieces of technical virtuosity? Or are they to be taken seriously as literature? [Your answer must be based on a detailed analysis of one of the set texts]

‘Seneca’s Thyestes is a political play of the age of Nero.’ Discuss

What makes Seneca’s Oedipus so different from Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex?

Discuss the influence of Seneca’s Thyestes or Oedipus on the Renaissance theatre of Italy, France, and Elizabethan England. [Your answer must be based on a detailed analysis of particular plays]

Discuss any modern translation, adaptation, or production of Seneca’s Thyestes or Oedipus.

ASSESSMENT: DEGREE EXAMINATION

The degree examination (two hours) will consist of translation and interpretation of passages from the prescribed texts and an essay question.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. PRESCRIBED EDITION:
   O. ZWIERLEIN (OCT 1986)

2. TRANSLATIONS:

3. COMMENTARIES:

   Hercules furens:
   – ed. by J. G. Fitch (Cornell 1987)

   Troades:
   – ed. by E. Fantham (Princeton 1982)

   Phoenissae:
   – ed. by M. Frank (Leiden 1995)

   Medea:
   – ed. by C. D. N. Costa (Oxford 1973)

   Phaedra:

   Oedipus:
   – ed. by A. J. Boyle (Oxford 2010)

   Agamemnon:
   – R. J. Tarrant, Seneca, Agamemnon, ed. with a commentary (Cambridge 1976)

   Thyestes:
   – R. J. Tarrant, Seneca’s Thyestes. Edited with introduction and commentary (Atlanta 1985)

   [Octavia]:
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

B. Seidensticker & M. Armstrong, ‘Seneca tragicus 1878-1978 (with Addenda 1979 ff.),’ *ANRW* II. 32.2 (1985) 916–968
O. Hiltbrunner, ‘Seneca als Tragödiendichter in der Forschung von 1965 bis 1975’, *ANRW* II.32.2 (1985) 969–1051

5. COMPANIONS AND COLLECTIONS OF ARTICLES ON SENeca

J.-P. Aygon (ed.), *Sénèque, un philosophe homme de théâtre?* (Toulouse 2014)
S. Bartsch & D. Wray (eds), *Seneca and the Self* (Chicago 2009)
S. Bartsch & A. Schiesaro (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Seneca* (Cambridge 2014)
M. Billerbeck (ed.), *Sénèque le tragique* (Vandœuvres, Genève 2004)
A. J. Boyle (ed.), *Seneca Tragicus: Ramus Essays on Senecan Drama* (Victoria 1983)
G. Damschen & A. Heil (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Seneca, Philosopher and Dramatist* (Leiden 2014)

6. BOOKS ON SENeca AND SENeca’S PLAYS

M. Billerbeck, *Senecas Tragödien : sprachliche und stilistische Untersuchungen* (Leiden 1988)
J. Dingel, *Seneca und die Dichtung* (Heidelberg 1974)
C. Kugelmeier, *Die innere Vergegenwärtigung des Bühnenspiels in Senecas Tragödien* (München 2007)
W. L. Lieberman, *Studien zu Senecas Tragödien* (Hain 1974)
N.T. Pratt, *Seneca’s Drama* (Chapel Hill 1983)
O. Regenbogen, *Schmerz und Tod in den Tragödien Senecas*, (1927/1928); repr. (Darmstadt 1963)
T.J. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley 1989)
P. Schaefer, *De philosophiæ Annaeanae in Senecae tragoediis vestigis*, Diss. Jena (1909)
B. Seidensticker, *Die Gesprächsverdichtung in den Tragödien Senecas* (Heidelberg 1969)
7. ARTICLES (PART. ON THYESTES AND OEDIPUS)


T. Birt, ‘Was hat Seneca mit seinen Tragödien gewollt?’, Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur 14 (1911) 336–364


F. Egermann, ‘Seneca als Dichterphilosoph’, Neue Jahrbücher für Antike und deutsche Bildung 3 (1940) 18-36


E. Fantham, ‘Virgil’s Dido and Seneca's tragic heroines’, Greece and Rome 22 (1975) 1-10


C. J. Littlewood, ‘Seneca’s Thyestes: The tragedy with no women’, MD 38 (1997), 57–86


G. Müller, ‘Senecas Oedipus als Drama’, Hermes 81 (1953) 447–464


8. THE AGE OF NERO


S. Bartsch (ed.), Cambridge Companion to the Age of Nero (Cambridge, forthcoming)

W. J. Dominik, J. Garthwaite, P. A. Roche (eds.), Writing Politics in Imperial Rome. (Leiden/Boston 2009)


M. Griffin, Nero: The End of a Dynasty (New Haven: 1984)


V. Rudich, Political Dissidence under Nero: The Price of Dissimulation (New York 1993)

V. Rudich, Dissidence and Literature under Nero: The Price of Rhetoricization (New York 1997)

J. P. Sullivan, Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero (Ithaca: 1985)

G. Williams, Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire (Berkeley: 1978)

9. Hellenistic Philosophy

9.1. INTRODUCTIONS (WITH CHAPTERS ON STOICISM AND FURTHER BIBLIOGRAPHY)


9.2. STOIC PHILOSOPHY, PART. IN ROME

R. Salle (ed.), *God and cosmos in Stoicism* (Oxford 2009)

9.3. STOICISM IN EUROPE

B. Neymeyr (ed.), *Stoizismus in der europäischen Philosophie, Literatur, Kunst und Politik: eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Moderne* (Berlin 2008)

10. RECEPTION OF SENECÁ’S PLAYS IN EUROPE

M. Del Sapio Garbero, *Identity, Otherness and Empire In Shakespeare’s Rome* (Farnham 2009)
T.S. Eliot, ‘Shakespeare and the stoicism of Seneca’ (1927)
—‘Seneca in Elizabethan Translation’, in *Selected Essays* (e.g. London 1951)
G. W. M. Harrison (ed.), *Seneca in Performance* (Duckworth 2000)
J. Jacquot (ed.), *Les tragédies de Sénèque et le théâtre de la renaissance* (Paris 1964)
F. Kiefer, ‘Seneca’s Influence on Elizabethan Tragedy: An Annotated Bibliography,’ *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 21 (1978) 17-34

Lefèvre, E. (ed.), Der Einfluss Senecas auf das Europäische Drama (Darmstadt 1978)

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R. A. McCabe, Incest, Drama and Nature’s Law, 1550-1700 (Cambridge 2008)


G. Mezzadroli, Seneca In Dante : Dalla Tradizione Medievale all’officina dell’autore (Firenze 1990)


D. Share (ed.), Seneca in English (Penguin 1998)

M. L. Stapleton, Fated Sky: the Femina Furens In Shakespeare (Newark 2000)


R. W. Tobin, Racine and Seneca (Chapel Hill 1971)