One of the two foundational epics of so-called Western Culture, the *Odyssey* features a wily hero whose journeys are extraordinary and whose longing for home is unbounded. The *Odyssey* offers a complex meditation on brotherhood, bestiality, sexuality, kinship, and power; it is the great epic of cross-cultural encounter, in all its seductive and violent aspects, as well as the great poem of marriage. An adventure in nostos (homecoming), the *Odyssey* shows us the pleasures and dangers of voyaging among strangers. Constantly exploring the boundaries between the civilized and the savage, the poem offers as well a political critique of many ancient institutions, not least the family, patriarchy, hospitality customs, and the band-of-brothers so central to epic ideology. And as a masterwork of narrative art, the *Odyssey* asks us to consider the relation of fiction to "truth." We will explore these and other matters in the *Odyssey*, and may make some concluding forays into contemporary re-workings of Odyssean themes and characters.

**Week 1   Jan 24**    Introduction; problems and perspectives.


**Week 2   Jan 31**    Books 1-4

Background reading:
Week 3  Feb.7  Books 5-8

Background reading:
Vernant, J-P. "The Refusal of Odysseus" in Reading the Odyssey, ed. S. Schein (1996);
Companion to Homer, ed. Fowler, R. (2004);

Week 4  Feb. 14  Books 9-12

Background reading:
Vidal-Naquet, P. "Land and Sacrifice in the Odyssey" in Reading the Odyssey;
Doherty, L., “Sirens, Muses and Female Narrators in the Odyssey, Ch. 5 in The Distaff
Side, ed. Cohen, B. (1995); Vernant, J.-P. “Death with Two Faces”, in Reading the
Odyssey

Week 5  Feb 21  Books 13-17

Background reading:
Rose, P., "Class Ambivalence in the Odyssey," Ch. 13 in Homer: Readings and
Images, ed, C. Emlyn-Jones (London: 1992); Horkheimer, M. and T. Adorno,
“Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment” Ch. 2 in Dialectic of Enlightenment (Stanford:
2002), ed. G. Noerr, transl. E. Jephcott (originally published as Dialektik der

Week 6  Feb. 28  Books 18-21

Background reading: Hoelscher, U. “Penelope and the Suitors” in Reading the
Odyssey; Foley, H. "Penelope as Moral Agent,"in The Distaff Side [Recommended:
Schein, S. “Female Representations and Interpreting the Odyssey in The Distaff Side

Week 7 March 6  Books 22-24

Background reading: Zeitlin, F. "Figuring Fidelity in Homer's Odyssey" ch 9 in Playing
the Other (1995); check out this link on video games:
In class viewing of “O Brother, Where Art Thou?” (Coen Brothers)

**Take-home exam due by email with a paper copy in my mailbox by Tues. March 13 noon.**

The required books for this course are available at the NYU Bookstore:
*The Odyssey of Homer*, tr. Richmond Lattimore (Harper Perennial: 1991)
*Reading the Odyssey*, ed. Schein, S. L. (Univ. of California Press 1996)

Secondary readings (other than those in *Reading the Odyssey*) will be posted on Blackboard.

Course requirements: 1) class attendance and participation; any unexcused absence (except for emergencies) will automatically lower your grade 2) required reading; 3) *weekly response paragraphs on the assigned reading*; 4) in-class written exercise; 5) final take-home exam.

Grading will be based on: class participation and response paragraphs 40%; in-class exercise 20%; final exam 50%.

All your written work must be your own; “borrowed” work will be severely sanctioned in accordance with school policies. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.

**Class Paragraphs**: beginning next week (Jan. 31), please post on Blackboard and bring to class a coherent 1-2 paragraph response to a passage (to be specified) from the week’s primary or secondary reading; students will volunteer or may be called on to read their observations and comments. These paragraphs will not be graded, but do constitute an element of your participation in the course.