Ancient reflections in a time of modern war

In this course we will explore ancient Greek attitudes toward war, as represented in epic, drama, and historiography. Among the topics we will consider are: rhetoric and rationales for and against war; war and social cohesion; war and empire; the erotics of war; the stakes of civil war; war and gender; the social costs of war; the implications for our contemporary situation.

Week 1. Jan.29  Introduction. handout: selections from lyric poets; Herodotus, Histories; Euripides, Medea; Plato, Symposium; Aeschylus, Eumenides


Week 5. Feb.26  Sophocles, Ajax; Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War: Book 1 chs. 1-23; 66-88; Book 2 chs. 34-65; Book 3
Week 6. March 5  

Week 7. March 12  
Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*

Take-home final exam due March 21, emailed and delivered in hard copy to my office.

The primary (ancient) texts for this course are available (under the course number and instructor’s name) at Shakespeare & Co. Bookstore, 716 Broadway (right across the street from Gallatin). Other readings are available on NYU Classes. Texts designated ‘reading’ in the weekly schedule above are required; you are urged (but not required) to read those designated ‘recommended’, and it will be to your advantage to draw on them in your written work.

*The Iliad of Homer*, tr. R. Lattimore (Univ. of Chicago Press)  
Euripides IV, edd. Grene, D. and R. Lattimore (Univ. of Chicago Press)  
Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, tr. R. Warner (Penguin)  
McLaughlin, E. *The Greek Plays* (Theatre Communications Group 2004)

- Course requirements: 1) class attendance (more than 1 absence -- except for documented emergencies -- will automatically lower your final grade) and participation; 2) required readings; 3) *weekly response paragraphs on the assigned reading* 4) 2-page paper; 5) take-home final exam.

Grading will be based on: class participation and response paragraphs 30%; short paper 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.

*Response papers*: each week -- beginning with next week’s meeting (Feb. 5), please post on NYUC (by 9 p.m. the evening before each class) AND bring to class a coherent 1-2 paragraph response to the week’s reading (primary or secondary); students will volunteer or be called on to read their observations and comments. These response paragraphs will not be graded, but constitute an essential element of your participation in the class. Your paper response may include outlining or critique of arguments in the secondary material.

NB. No non-organic brains in class, i.e. no computers!