Kinship and Community: Ancient Texts and Modern Theories
Fall 2014 — IDSEM-UG-1739
Mon. and Weds. 4:55-6:10

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Office hours: Mon. 6:15-7:30 and Weds. 3:45-4:55 (and by appt.) in 619 1 Washington Pl

What is the relation of the family to larger structures of community and of state? Do kinship bonds provide a model for those of community or must they be superseded in the interest of a more enlightened state? To what degree do contemporary aspirations for gender equality entail a radical renovation of our understanding of kinship and of the family? We will consider these questions through a close reading of ancient texts, from the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions, which we will read in conjunction with some contemporary thinkers—theoretical, poetic, and dramatic—on kinship and the state.

Learning Goals:

1. To gain a knowledge of some of the texts that have been foundational for western thinking about kinship and the state, as well as for contemporary anthropological, psychoanalytic, and queer understandings of kinship.
2. To gain skills in close reading (and in reading from different perspectives) and in critical writing.
3. To actively reflect upon the history of some of our contemporary quandaries and debates about kinship and its relation to the self and the state.

Syllabus:

Weds. Sept. 3: Course Introduction, and an introduction to the *Oresteia*

Mon. Sept. 8: Aeschylus *Oresteia*: “Agamemnon”
Weds. Sept. 10: Aeschylus *Oresteia*: “Libation Bearers”

Mon. Sept. 15: Aeschylus: *Oresteia*. “Eumenides”
Weds. Sept. 17: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter; “The Primacy of the Mother” and "Motherhood and Daughterhood" from *Of Woman Born* (pp. 84-109 and 218-41)* and “Diving Into the Wreck”*

Mon. Sept. 22: Sophokles *Oedipus Tyrannos*
Weds. Sept. 24: Sophokles *Oedipus Tyrannos*

Weds. Oct. 1: Sophokles *Antigone*

Mon. Oct. 6: Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, parts I, II.1-3, and IV

Mon. Oct. 13: Academic Holiday

Mon. Oct. 20: Plato *Republic*5*
Weds. Oct. 22: Aristophanes *Ecclesiazusae*

Weds. Oct.29: Longus Daphnis and Chloe. Essay #2 Due

Mon. Nov. 3: Longus Daphnis and Chloe

Weds. Nov. 5: Ovid Metamorphoses Book 10* and Frank Bidart “Second Hour of the Night” (from Desire).


Weds. Nov.12: Genesis

Mon. Nov. 17: Genesis Exoduss

Weds. Nov. 19: Exodus

Mon. Nov. 24: Exodus; B. Johnson, “The Biblical Moses” and “Moses, The Egyptian”* (pp. 16-24 and 46-57 of Moses and Multiculturalism)

Weds. Nov. 26: Freud Moses and Monotheism, pp. 3-35, 66-117, 142-64

Mon. Dec. 1: Excerpts from Paul Romans* and Galatians; Vibia Perpetua Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.* Essay #3 assigned.


Mon. Dec. 8: Kushner Angels in America. “Perestroika”


Books are available at the NYU Bookstore; readings that are followed by an asterisk will be available on the course site on NYU Classes.

Class Requirements:

1. Three essays of 6-8 pp. (75% of final grade). You can, after receiving my responses to your first two essays, rewrite your essay or respond at greater length to one—or more—of my critical points; any rewrites are due at the end of the semester.

2. Class Participation: i) Contributions to class discussion; and ii) Weekly Questions, which will take the following form: beginning next week (Sept. 15), please post, in the folder for the week in “Forums” on the Classes site, one set of two or three well-formulated questions/observations on the week’s reading, either by midnight on Sunday or midnight on Tuesday; it’s your choice whether to offer questions for the Monday or the Wednesday class, but you must offer questions for one of those sessions each week. Be prepared to be called on to present one or more of your questions for discussion.

Unexcused late essays will lose a full letter grade for every two days that they are late. Weekly Questions cannot be made up.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade.

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin
website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.