First-Year Seminar:
Lethal Passions: Medea and her Legacies
Fall 2018

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Trajectories:

The mythic figure of Medea has held our imagination for nearly 2500 years. What kind of woman is capable of casting such an enduring spell? Best known as the partner of Jason and the murderer of her own children, Medea has been the name of an exploration into the passion and violence, the devastation and vengeance, the complex relations and modes of betrayal that so often punctuate our everyday existence. She has demanded that we think about the relations between the sexes, the meaning of home and exile, the experience of the foreigner, the ethical and moral dimensions of agency and decisions, and the meaning of motherhood. Because these issues are at the heart of the ways in which we still today inhabit the world, her popularity has outlived the ancient Greek texts in which she was born and has found new expressions in a variety of forms—including tragic drama, poetry, novels, painting, cinema, and music—and new cross-cultural and trans-historical afterlives. This course will seek to understand the reasons for her longevity in the rich complexity of her character and actions and to explore the various ways in which her story has been revised and recontextualized across the ages for new and different ends. We will consider a range of texts from antiquity to the present in order to think about how they understand the tensions, contradictions, and conflicting desires embodied and enacted in this mesmerizing figure. In doing so, we will arrive at a more nuanced and comprehensive appreciation of one of the most fascinating and moving figures of all time, a figure who has remained for us because she tells us who we are and what we can become.

This is a First-Year Seminar and is intended to encourage students to analyze more challenging texts and to develop oral, research, and writing skills. Students are strongly encouraged to use the University’s resources: Bobst Library, the Writing Center, and the College Advising Center.

Required Texts:

Available at NYU Bookstore:
Euripides, Medea
Seneca, Medea
Christa Wolf, Medea: A Modern Retelling
Toni Morrison, Beloved
Cherrie Moraga, The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea
Ariel Dorfman, Purgatorio
Available on NYU Classes:
- Ovid, *Heroines*
- Heiner Müller, *Medea Material*
- Olga Taxidou, *Medea*
- Franca Rame, *Twenty-Five Monologues for One Woman: Medea*
- Brendan Kennelly, *Euripides Medea: A New Version*
- Corrado Alvaro, *The Long Night of Medea*
- Oscar van Woensel, *medEia*
- Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*

Assignments:
- **September 4:** Introduction: “Lethal Passions”
- **September 11:** Euripides, *Medea* 80 pages
- **September 18:** Seneca, *Medea*  Jules Dassin, *A Dream of Passion* 100 pages
- **September 25:** Euripides, *Medea* and Seneca, *Medea* (continued) Ovid, “Medea to Jason,” from *The Heroides* 50 pages
- **October 2:** Lars von Trier, *Medea*  Oscar van Woensel, *medEia* 60 pages  
  **1st Paper Due**
- **October 23:** Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Medea*  Franca Rame, *Female Parts: Medea* 50 pages
- **October 30:** Christa Wolf, *Medea: A Modern Retelling* 180 pages
- **November 6:** Brendan Kennelly, *Euripides’ Medea: A New Version* 70 pages  
  **2nd Paper Due**
November 13:    Toni Morrison, *Beloved*  
               300 pages

November 20:    Corrado Alvaro, *The Long Night of Medea*  
               Marina Carr, *By the Bog of Cats*  
               100 pages

November 27:    Cherrie Moraga, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*  
                150 pages

December 4:     Ariel Dorfman, *Purgatorio*  
                60 pages

December 11:    Conclusions—Presentation of Paper Topics

December 21:    **Final Paper Due**

**Musts:**
1. Do all the reading.
2. Come to all the seminars.
3. Talk a lot in class.
4. Give two formal oral presentations.
5. Write two 5-page papers.
6. Write a final paper (10 pages).

Class attendance, preparedness and participation 10%
Two oral presentations:  
1st Presentation 10%
2nd Presentation 15%
Two 5-page papers:  
1st Paper, October 2, 2018 15%
2nd Paper, November 6, 2018 20%
Final Paper, due on Friday, December 21, 2018 30%