We will read foundational works from three different ancient cultures: China, Greece, and Israel. We will pay particular attention to the question of the kinds of values that these foundational works were meant to instill in their ancient audiences. What, for each culture, constitutes the exemplary person? In particular, what does each work have to say about the nature of heroism, war, and peace?

Emphasis will be on close and attentive reading of the texts. Literature, during this period, was meant to be taken in by the ear rather than the eye, and we will emphasize the oral [spoken aloud]/aural [heard] dimension of these works. We will read selections from Robert Fitzgerald’s translation of the *Iliad*, which is written in a supple blank verse that is the rough equivalent of Homer’s dactylic hexameter line. Blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) is the metrical form that arose, in sixteenth-century England, as a way to translate ancient epic verse (specifically Virgil’s dactylic hexameter) into English. Blank verse is the medium in which Shakespeare wrote his plays and Milton his great epic poem, *Paradise Lost*. Students will train their ears to hear and scan ancient verse, even if (as is supposed) they do not know the ancient languages (Chinese, Greek, Hebrew) themselves; and to hear modern attempts at approximating the aural effects of ancient poetry and prose.

**Required Texts:**

*Note: It is important that you read the assignments in the specific translations chosen for the course. Literary translation is an art, and the translations chosen for this course are particularly artful and beautiful.

**Assignments**
I. September 27: Introduction; Problems of Translation; *Book of Songs* 1, 23; September 29: No Class (Rosh Hashanah)

II. October 4: *Book of Songs* 5, 20, 23, 26, 29, 30, 32, 40; Oct. 6: *Book of Songs* 41, 42, 45, 58, 61, 69, 76, 81


VI. Nov. 1: *Iliad*, Books XIII-XV; Nov. 3: *Iliad*, Books XVI-XVIII

VII. Nov. 8: *Iliad*, Books XIX-XXI; Nov. 10: *Iliad*, Books XXII-XXIV; **second paper due, 3-5 pp. in length**

VIII. Nov. 15: Genesis 1-10; Nov. 17: Genesis 11-18

IX. Nov. 22: Genesis 19-25.11 (through the end of the Abraham narrative); Nov. 24: No Class: Thanksgiving

X. Nov. 29: Genesis 37-43 (the story of Joseph and his brothers); Dec. 1: Genesis 44-50 (the story of Joseph and his brothers); **third paper due, 3-5 pp. in length**

XI. Final Exam (Oral), week of Dec. 5-9; please make an appointment to see me in the afternoon of that week for 15 minutes.

**Requirements:**
Students must keep up with the reading assignments, regularly attend class, and participate in class discussions. **More than two unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade by five points per missed class.**

Written work will consist of three short papers (3-5 pp. in length). You will be given specific topics for these written assignments. If you speak with me sufficiently in advance, you are free to write on a topic of your choice. Please note:

***Any submitted paper that is plagiarized (even in part) will result in an automatic failure for the course.***

The final will be an oral exam. I will meet with each student individually. Students will be asked to memorize twenty lines of verse from Robert Fitzgerald’s translation of the *Iliad* and, like the ancient “rhapsodes” who recited the Homeric poems to ancient audiences, to “perform” their lines and to discuss the context and significance – for the concerns of the course as a whole -- of the passage they have chosen to memorize. I’ll expect you to make comparisons between the passage you have chosen to memorize and the other works we have read. In other words, you’ll need to be able to discuss the *Book of Songs*, *Iliad*, and the Bible.

Your grades for the course will be based on the following criteria:
class participation: **10%**
papers: **60%** (20% for each of the three papers)
final exam: **30%**