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 does each culture have to say about 1) the causes of war and peace; and 2) the relation between extending hospitality toward the stranger and the very nature of what it means to be human?

Emphasis will be on close and attentive reading of 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. Students will train their ears to hear and scan ancient verse, even if they do not know the ancient languages (Chinese, Greek, and Hebrew) themselves; and to hear modern attempts at approximating the aural effects of ancient poetry and prose.

In this class, you will develop the ability to appreciate and analyze literary texts from a variety of cultural and linguistic traditions in the ancient world. You will be asked to demonstrate this ability in both written and spoken English. In our increasingly multicultural world, both in the classroom and in the workplace, you will be increasingly expected to develop what is called “intercultural competence.” This class, by exposing you to foundational texts from three ancient and very different cultures, will boost your “intercultural competence.”

**Required Texts**

*Book of Songs*, trans. Arthur Waley (Grove Press)


Yvor Winters, “The Audible Reading of Poetry” (available on Canvas)

**Assignments**

I. September 25: Introduction; hospitality, war, and peace and the ending of Homer’s *Iliad* (24.477-486); problems of translation: Homer in English verse; Sept. 27: *Odyssey*, Book 1; *Book of Songs* 1, 5; translating the *Book of Songs*

II. October 2: *Odyssey*, Books 2 and 3; *Book of Songs* 20, 23; October 4: *Odyssey*, Books 4 and 5; *Book of Songs* 26, 29, 30, 32

III. Oct. 9: *Odyssey*, Books 6 and 7; *Book of Songs* 40, 41, 42, 43; October 11: *Odyssey*,
Books 8 and 9; *Book of Songs* 45, 58, 61, 69

IV. Oct. 16: *Odyssey*, Book 10; *Book of Songs* 76; **first in-class writing assignment**; October 18: *Odyssey*, Book 11; *Book of Songs* 81, 92

V. Oct. 23: *Odyssey*, Books 12 and 13; *Book of Songs* 93; Oct. 25: *Odyssey*, Book 14; *Book of Songs* 104

VI. Oct. 30: *Odyssey*, Book 15; *Book of Songs* 110; Nov. 1: *Odyssey*, Book 16; *Book of Songs* 115

VII. Nov. 6: *Odyssey*, Books 17 and 18; Nov. 8: *Odyssey*, Book 19; *Book of Songs* 23, 143; **second in-class writing assignment**

VIII. Nov. 13: *Odyssey*, Books 20 and 21; Nov. 15: *Odyssey*, Book 22; *Book of Songs* 166, 185, 201, 230

IX. Nov. 20: *Odyssey*, Books 23 and 24; *Book of Songs* 234, 235, 241, 245; Nov. 22: **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving)

X. November 27: Genesis 37-43 (beginning of narrative of Joseph and his brothers); Nov. 29: Genesis 44-50 (conclusion of narrative of Joseph and his brothers)

XI. Final Exam (Oral), week of Dec. 3-7; 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 two in-class assignments (identification and explication of passages from the reading). **These assignments must be taken at the scheduled times. There will be no exceptions except in the case of medical emergencies, with my advanced approval.**

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 *Odyssey* 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*, the *Odyssey*, and Genesis.
Use of electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, or cell-phones during class is strictly forbidden (with the exception of students with documented disabilities who may use laptops and/or recording devices, with my prior approval). Please close your laptops and put away your phones before the start of class.

**Always bring the required texts (i.e. books) to class. Students without a text will be counted as absent.** You shouldn’t expect to receive a good grade, or even a passing grade, if you don’t put the required time into preparing for class by carefully – and even with loving attention – reading our texts. Preparing for this class is like practicing a musical instrument. You absolutely need to make it a habit to practice if you wish to get anywhere with the material.

I expect you to come to class having closely read the assigned texts beforehand. I recommend that you read the texts to yourselves aloud. You should expect to spend at least twice the amount of class time preparing for each class. Since our class meets for 80 minutes, your class preparation should take 160 minutes, or two hours and forty minutes.

Your grades for the course will be based on the following criteria: class participation: 10%; written assignments: 60% (30% for each of the two in-class writing assignments); final exam: 30%