Tragedy and the Tragic

16:470:671, Index 11248
Spring 2016 (cross-listed with Comparative Literature 16:195:516:02)
Tue 4:30-7:10, German House, Seminar Room 102

Description:
The course examines concepts and examples of tragedy and the tragic in the German tradition and beyond. Our exploration will cover the reception of Greek tragedy in German thought (from Hölderlin, Hegel, Schelling up to Nietzsche and Benjamin) as well as contemporary reevaluations of tragedy for an allegedly “post-tragic” age (C. Menke, Nancy, Lehmann). Peter Szondi’s 1961 “An Essay on the Tragic” (Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, paperback 2002) will be a constant point of reference.

Discussion in English; all readings available in English translation and also in the original German whenever relevant.

Requirements & Final Grade:
Active class participation/attendance 15%
Oral Presentation (15-20 min.) 15%
Short outline of proposed final project (2-4 pp. double-spaced) 15%
Final paper (15-20 pp.) 70%

4/22: Final project outline due
5/6: FINAL PAPER DUE via the Sakai-“Assignments”-tool (no late papers accepted)

Required texts: All readings on the syllabus are available on Sakai as pdf.
Performance recordings will be made available as required.
1st class (1/19)

Introduction: tragedy, the tragic, the “return of the tragic” in the 20th century
Euripides, Bacchae (405 BCE)


2nd class (1/26)

Aristotle, Poetics (335 BCE)

3rd class (2/2)

Sophocles, Oedipus the King (429 BCE); Friedrich Schelling, “Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism” (1795) [extract]; Peter Szondi, “An Essay on the Tragic” (1961, pp. 1-10, 59-63)

4th class (2/9)

Sophocles, Antigone (442 BCE); Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit (1807) [extract], Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Lectures on Aesthetics (1818-1829) [extract];

5th class (2/16)

Friedrich Hölderlin, Letters to Böhlendorf (1801), “Remarks on Oedipus”/“Remarks on Antigone” (1804)

6th class (2/23)

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy I (1872), Euripides, Bacchae (405 BCE), Plato, Phaedo (b/w. 385/378 BCE)

7th class (3/1)

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy II (1872), Richard Wagner, Rhinegold (1869)

8th class (3/8)

The 20th century “rebirth” of tragedy: Euripides, Bacchae (405 BCE)

SPRING BREAK
9th class (3/22)
Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Mourning Play* (1927); William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1599)

10th class (3/29)
Christoph Menke, *Tragic Play. Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett* (2005)

11th class (4/5)

12th class (4/12)

13th class (4/19)

14th class (4/26)
Final discussion (rereading Nancy) / Final paper workshop