

**Prof. Dr. Martin Jörg Schäfer**, Craig Visiting Professor in German  
Department of Germanic, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures  
172 College Avenue, Room 304 / Main office tel.: 732-932-7201  
Email: martin.schaefer@rutgers.edu / office hrs.: Thursday 2-3, and by appointment

## 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)	
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.

### **1<sup>st</sup> class (1/19)**

Introduction: tragedy, the tragic, the “return of the tragic” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Euripides, *Bacchae* (405 BCE)

Recordings: The Performance Group, *Dionysus in 69* (1967); K.M. Grüber, *Bakchen* (1974)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> class (1/26)**

R. Felski, “Introduction,” in: *Rethinking Tragedy* (2008); Jean-Luc Nancy: “After Tragedy” (2008);

Aristotle, *Poetics* (335 BCE)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> 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)

### **4<sup>th</sup> 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];

### **5<sup>th</sup> class (2/16)**

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

### **6<sup>th</sup> class (2/23)**

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

### **7<sup>th</sup> class (3/1)**

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

### **8<sup>th</sup> class (3/8)**

The 20<sup>th</sup> century “rebirth” of tragedy: Euripides, *Bacchae* (405 BCE)

Recordings: K.M. Grüber, *Bakchen* (1974); H. Nitsch, *das orgien mysterien theater, 122. Aktion* (2008)

## **SPRING BREAK**

**9<sup>th</sup> class (3/22)**

Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Mourning Play* (1927); William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1599)

**10<sup>th</sup> class (3/29)**

Christoph Menke, *Tragic Play. Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett* (2005)

**11<sup>th</sup> class (4/5)**

Heiner Müller, *Hamletmaschine* (1977); Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (1999),  
Recording: R. Wilson, *Hamletmaschine* (1986)

**12<sup>th</sup> class (4/12)**

Elfriede Jelinek, *Rechnitz* (2008) or *Sports Play* (1998)

**13<sup>th</sup> class (4/19)**

Recording: J. Wieler, *Rechnitz* (2008) or E. Schleef, *Sports Play* (1998)

**14<sup>th</sup> class (4/26)**

Final discussion (rereading Nancy) / Final paper workshop