


**GRK 2004 Ancient Greek Level IV (TTh 2-3:15)**

<http://myweb.ecu.edu/stevensj/GRK2004/2019syllabus.pdf>

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**Objectives.** Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- read and understand a work of Classical Greek high poetry.
- identify and explain all the elements of the complex sentence in Classical Greek.
- situate Aeschylus in the Greek enlightenment of the fifth century BC.
- discuss the literary-philosophical implications of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*.

**Textbooks:**

- Aeschylus. *Prometheus Bound*. (Cambridge UP: 1983). 9780521270113
- Liddell and Scott's Greek English Lexicon, abridged (Oxford Little Liddell with enlarged type for easier reading: Martino Fine Books 2015) 9781614277705

**Additional Materials on Bb:**

- Bryn Mawr Commentary by William C. Scott (1981). 9780929524016
- Aeschylus Bibliography from the Loeb edition of Aeschylus Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Alan Sommerstein (Harvard UP 2008).

**Grading:**

Homework and Class Translation	30%	A 93-100, A- 90-92
Midterm	30%	B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82
Article Presentation	10%	C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72
5-page paper on a close reading of Greek	30%	D+ 67-69, D 63-66, D- 60-62, F 0-59

Aeschylus is the first, most enigmatic, and most poetic of the three Greek tragedians whose works are preserved for us. Born 525 BC in Eleusis, initiated into the mysteries, fought at the battle of Marathon 490 (his brother was one of the 192 Athenians who died there), at the battle of Salamis 480 (commemorated in his staging of *Persians* in 472), and the battle of Plataea in 479, and won first prize

for his tragedies 13 times between 484 and his death, the last time in 458 for the *Oresteia*. He is thought to have been invited to Syracuse and the court of the tyrant Hiero. Died 456/5 at Gela in Sicily. The *Prometheus Bound* is of uncertain date. It mentions the eruption of Mt. Aetna in 479, which would then be a *terminus post quem*, but contemporary scholars like M.L. West (*Studies in Aeschylus*. Stuttgart 1990, 67-72) and Mark Griffith (*The Authenticity of Prometheus Bound*. Cambridge UP 1977) put it closer to 430 and make it the work of his son Euphorion. Against this argument is the extensive use made of the play by Plato, who begins *Republic* with Prometheus imagery and returns to it in books 6-7, but also alludes to *Seven Against Thebes*, and the lost *Niobe* and *Palamedes*. Such a concentration of allusions makes it tempting to think Plato associated the play with Aeschylus. Scholars at the library of Alexandria agreed; and so did many modern scholars, including the great C.J. Herington (of Yale and UNC). The problem with such a tempting thesis, however, is that the style and meter are different from Aeschylus' other plays. Aeschylus' son Euphorion won first prize with four of his father's unpublished plays, and he won first prize in 431 over plays by Euripides and Sophocles, which suggests a family workshop and tradition of greatness that makes it much more difficult to distinguish between Aeschylus and his son. In 429 Cratinus published a comedy that mocks lines from the play, making a proximate date more attractive. If the greatness of the thematic vision of the play make us want it to be by Aeschylus, we may at least say that if it is by the apple, it did not fall far from the tree.

The seven plays that have come down to us are: *Suppliants* (*Supplices*, *Ἰκέτιδες*, probably the earliest in the 490s, but may have been restaged in the 460s), *Persians* (1st prize 472), *Seven Against Thebes* (*Ἑπτὰ ἐπὶ Θήβας*, *Septem Contra Thebas*, 1st prize 467); *Agamemnon*, *Libation Bearers* (*Choephoroi*), *Eumenides* (1st prize 458) and *Prometheus Bound*.

It is commonly said that the *Prometheus Bound* (*Προμηθεύς δεσμότης*, *Prometheus Vincetus - PV*) is part of a trilogy including *Prometheus Unbound* (*Προμηθεύς λυόμενος*), and *Prometheus the Bringer of Fire* (*Προμηθεύς πυρφόρος*); but this is far from certain. There is no indication in the Medici Codex (a 10th c. manuscript with a life of Aeschylus and titles of 73 plays, a codex found by Lorenzo de Medici in the 15th c. and now in the Laurentian library in the cloister of the Basilica di San Lorenzo in Florence, xxxii 9) of whether or how the plays were grouped into trilogies or tetralogies, nor have the other two plays survived, except for a few fragments of the *Luomenos*. Scholars want the *Purphoros* to treat Prometheus bringing fire to man a second time after his liberation, commemorated by the institution of the Athenian festival of the *Promethea* with a torch race imitated by the festival to Bendis at the start of Plato's *Republic*; but only one meaningless fragment of *Purphoros* survives, so there is no room for such wild conjectures. Since Prometheus is punished for stealing fire, it would make more sense for *Purphoros* to come first in a trilogy, but there is no indication that *PV* is responding to a previous play. There is also another play with Prometheus in the title, the 'fire-starter' (*πυρκαΐος*) which may be the satyr play or another name of the *Purphoros*; but it is now thought to be the satyr play of the *Persians* tetralogy. We suspect a relationship between *PV* and the *Luomenos*, because *PV* predicts that Herakles must one day come and rescue him, and this happens in the *Luomenos* when Zeus finally relents. The longest fragment of *Luomenos* (Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 2.23-5) portrays Prometheus as still chained and describing his treatment to a chorus of Titans, who have just been freed by Zeus' first act of justice, while the other fragments show P. giving Herakles directions for the journey to complete his labors after unchaining him. Romantic obsession with this play inspired Goethe, Byron, Marx, and Nietzsche, including a lyric drama of that name by Percy Bysshe Shelley, and *Frankenstein* by his wife, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft).

Arguments against Aeschylus' authorship of *PV* arose in the 19th century over his portrayal of Zeus as a tyrant. Zeus is accused of unjust cruelty by Prometheus, and it seems confirmed by the opening scene in which his henchman *Kratos* ('might, force') criticizes Hephaistos for his weakness. The last line of the play is Prometheus protesting his unjust treatment. This portrait struck critics as inconsistent with the justice of Zeus immortalized in *Oresteia*. This problem is not difficult to solve if we assume it is a prequel to the Hesiodic Zeus of divine justice, i.e., that together *PV* and *Luomenos* are meant to describe how Zeus is forced to change by Prometheus – to reject his inclination to continue the tyrannical traditions of his father Kronos, and his grandfather Ouranos. These two plays then become the origin of Zeus' justice.

A number of interesting questions emerge from *PV* that have received too little attention. Prometheus is a genius, the active benefactor of mankind with rational arts (436-506), who is chained in place and forced to suffer passively (at interesting moments, his powers of prophecy which are a curse – he knows the eagle is coming – also fail, and he thinks every bird sound is the eagle). He interacts with Io, a woman changed into a cow, a mere animal to satisfy the bodily lusts of Zeus, who is stung by a gadfly and cursed to be always moving. Together they seem to suggest the soul and the body, and so we ask whether there is an allegory of the human condition which might make us reinterpret the last line: is it unjust for the reason to be chained in a body? Plato's use of the gadfly allusion in *Apology* (30e), makes us wonder whether he saw this play as proto-philosophy. The other question is how Hesiod describes the punishment of man for P's theft of fire by the curse of Pandora, the first woman. Aeschylus makes no mention of this tradition, in which P. is a trickster, like Kronos, whose genius Zeus admires, nor of woman as a punishment for man (though Io as body may imply something similar). Rather A. portrays this tale of the origins of Zeus' justice by saying the only P. knows which woman Zeus must not bed, lest he beget a son mightier than himself. That is, Zeus' lusts will beget an offspring through whom he will become the victim of his own *kratos* ('might'). P. with his foresight is the only one who can save Zeus from the consequences of his own bodily desires. There seems to be a connection between lust and tyranny in this play. Lastly we should take special note of perspective and point of view. Everyone who travels by Prometheus urges him to beware of the powers of Zeus and to show the very restraint that he is trying to enforce upon Zeus. P. is incapable of accepting moderation. The personification of reason is incapable of *sophrosyne*, the Greek virtue of self-control / rational control of the passions. The play ends with his railing against injustice, and no respect for any authority above himself. Is this the true nature of mortal reason? And so we are left to consider what the play means and whether it is heroic, tragic, a portrait of man, etc. The play invites romantic interpretations, which are always a mistake.

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### Assignments:

Tues. 1/8	Introduction to Aeschylus, meter, sight read lines 1-11
Thurs. 1/10	lines 12-35
Tues. 1/15	lines 36-60
Thurs. 1/17	lines 61-87
Tues. 1/22	lines 88-127
Thurs. 1/24	lines 128-167
Tues. 1/29	lines 168-196
Thurs. 1/31	lines 197-241
Tues. 2/5	lines 242-283
Thurs. 2/7	lines 284-329
Tues. 2/12	lines 330-372
Thurs. 2/14	lines 373-414

Tues. 2/19	lines 415-458
Thurs. 2/21	lines 459-499
Tues. 2/26	lines 500-525. Midterm review.
Thurs. 2/28	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
3/3-3/10	Spring Break, no class
Tues. 3/12	Advising this week and next. Lines 526-588
Thurs. 3/14	lines 589-639
Tues. 3/19	lines 640-686
Thurs. 3/21	lines 687-741
Tues. 3/26	Pre-registration for summer and fall. Lines 742-785
Thurs. 3/28	lines 786-828, article presentation
Tues. 4/2	lines 829-876, article presentation
Thurs. 4/4	lines 877-925, article presentation
Tues. 4/9	lines 926-969, article presentation
Thurs. 4/11	lines 970-1013, article presentation
Tues. 4/16	lines 1014-1062
Thurs. 4/18	lines 1063-end, final discussion.
Thurs. 4/25	<b>4-5 page paper due.</b>

#### Meter:

The spoken parts of Greek tragedy are written in iambic trimeter. An iamb is a short followed by a long, and trimeter should mean that there are three such units. But the standard iambic foot of tragedy actually has two iambs, so there are 3 feet of 2 iambs each or 6 total. The first beat of an iambic foot may be long or short (x, meaning *anceps*, Latin for “uncertain”), so in place of an iamb, the first unit may be a spondee (two longs); and sometimes the poet may resolve a long into two shorts to imitate a scene with panic or chaos. The last beat of the line is also *anceps*:

x – ∪ – / x – ∪ – / x – ∪ x (iambic trimeter)

Always short	Always long	Long or short (look up)	Diphthongs always long
ε, ο	η, ω	α, ι, υ	αι*, αυ, ει, ευ, οι, ου, (υι)

Open syllables that end in α, ι, or υ may be long or short and have to be looked up in a dictionary since they vary word by word. \* The -αι diphthong is short in the nom. pl. of 1st decl. nouns and 1-2 adjectives. For -α endings, in 3rd decl. acc. sing., it is short; In 1st decl., the nom. and acc. sing. are short; the rest are long. But it is very rare that you cannot reason out the line by checking all the known quantities first. Thus the word *ἐπαγγελοῦμεν* would be syllabified as follows:

*ἐ-παγ-γε-λοῦ-μεν*. The second and last syllables are closed and thus long. The fourth syllable is open and ends in a diphthong and thus is also long. The first and third which end in a vowel that is always short are short syllables: ∪ – ∪ – – .

Note: Certain combinations of consonants may be left together or split as the meter demands, the so-called “mute-liquid rule”. Any two of the following may be split or left together as needed: <sup>5</sup>

	Mutes			Liquids
	palatal	dental	labial	$\lambda, \mu, \nu, \rho$
voiceless	$\kappa$	$\tau$	$\pi$	
voiced	$\gamma$	$\delta$	$\beta$	
aspirated	$\chi$	$\theta$	$\phi$	
sibyllated	$\xi$	$(\sigma)$	$\psi$	

The chart is arranged in this way to show the linguistic relationships between these consonants. When a closed syllable is needed, the sibyllated version of the consonant may be regarded as two letters and split in half:  $\xi = \kappa + \varsigma$ ;  $\psi = \pi + \varsigma$ . There are also instances of elision that affect consonants. The final vowel of prepositions and conjunctions is dropped before another vowel: thus for  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota} \acute{o}$ , the final  $-ι$  is dropped; as a result, then  $-\pi$  will be affected by the rough breathing of  $\acute{o}$  and move to the aspirated form  $-\phi$ , producing  $\acute{\epsilon}\phi' \acute{o}$ . It is important to be aware of such changes especially with prefixed verb forms (e.g.,  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\iota} + \acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota = \acute{\epsilon}\phi\acute{\iota}\sigma\tau\eta\mu\iota$ ). In past tense indicatives, however, an augment will come between the prefix and the stem, and is not aspirated, so the prefix will change between tenses (aor.  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\alpha$ ).

As for pronunciation: at first, simply work on correct pronunciation and accent. Then add longs and shorts as a subtle feel beneath the pronunciation, and in the end make accents musical (raise your voice a fifth) rather than stressed. The effect should be to turn the Greek first into poetry, then into song.