

**Program in Cultures, Civilizations and Ideas**  
**Humanities 331: The Politics of Adaptation**  
**Spring 2022**

“Now goddess, child of Zeus, / tell the old story for our modern times. / Find the beginning.”

— Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Emily Wilson

Instructor: Dr. Angelina Del Balzo

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Office Location: G B18-1 (basement level)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 13:30-15:20 and by appointment in person or via Zoom

Class Times: Wednesdays 17:30-20:20

Class Location: G-160

### **Course Description**

The CCI Program seeks to explore the meaning of culture through the analysis of exemplary texts. Many of the texts on our HUM 111 and 112 syllabi are popular inspirations for adaptation, using these widely read and influential texts as a catalyst for interrogating contemporary political and aesthetic concerns. This honors seminar seeks to understand adaptation as a method of critical engagement, part of a series of conversations between texts, readers/audiences, and scholars. Postcolonial and feminist writers in particular have often used adaptation as a means of “writing back,” dramatizing what has remained absent or suppressed in the Western canon. These adaptations have a particularly fraught relationship with the “canon,” often expecting a common knowledge of works fully ensconced in the English-language curriculum and in doing so reenforcing the very cultural practice they mean to critique.

Taking the *Odyssey* as a case study, we will read contemporary adaptations of Homer’s text from Europe, Africa, and the Americas to think through questions of genre, language, and culture. How do different genres and forms interpret the same story, and to what effects? What makes a text like the *Odyssey* “canonical” and how does that change our relationship to it? Who or what are excluded in definitions of the canon? How are encounters with the canon raced and gendered, and how do they change in different linguistic contexts or in areas with different histories of colonialism? Despite these various problems, why do writers and artists continue to engage with texts like the *Odyssey*?

### **Required Texts in Meteksan Kitabevi (links provided on Moodle when available)**

- Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Emily Wilson (W.W. Norton & Co., 2018) ISBN 978-0393356250
- Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad* (Canongate, 2006) ISBN 978-1841957982
- Louise Glück, *Meadowlands* (Ecco, 1997) ISBN 978-0880015066
- Njabulo Ndebele, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* (Ayebia Clarke Pub., 2004) ISBN 978-0954702304
- Suzan-Lori Parks, *Father Comes Home from the Wars Parts 1, 2, & 3* (Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 2015) ISBN 9781559365000

Other required readings will be posted as PDFs on Moodle.

## Assessment

### Participation (20%)

- *In-class participation (10%)*: This course is an honors seminar, so students are expected to actively contribute to group discussions. For our seminar to be successful, students must do the assigned reading listed on the syllabus before class meets, attend classes **with a copy of the text**, regularly contribute to discussion, and actively take notes on discussion during class.
- *Discussion posts (10%)*: Students will write **one approximately 50-word forum post** on the following week's class material by **midnight Sunday** and **one approximately 25-word response** to a classmate's post by **midnight Tuesday** before class. I will post a prompt for each week, but students are not required to respond to the prompt and can write about any aspect of the week's reading. Posts and responses will be recorded on a completion basis only, with no qualitative grade assigned.

### Discussion Leading (10%)

- Each student will be responsible for leading discussion on **one text** for **10 minutes** during one class period during the semester. Students will temporarily take the place of the instructor by guiding discussion through **2 analytical discussion questions** that focus on specific aspects of the text. Sign-ups will be done via a link to Google Sheets posted on Moodle.

### Research Paper (45%)

Over the course of the semester, students will work on producing an **academic research paper** on an adaptation of the *Odyssey*, either a text on the syllabus or another text (with prior approval). More detailed instructions and rubrics will be distributed.

- *Prospectus (10%)*: Students will submit a **one-page prospectus** that includes the text chosen, the interpretive problem or question that you plan to address, and an attached **bibliography of 5-6 secondary/theoretical sources** that you plan to engage with. **Due Week 6.**
- *Exploratory Essay (10%)*: Students will write a **3-5-page essay** that narrates the evolution of your thinking as you (re)read your chosen texts and how it has changed as you read the work of other scholars/theorists on your topic. **Due Week 12.**
- *Final Draft (25%)*: Students will produce a **10-12-page research paper** that engages with and contributes to the scholarly conversation around your text. **Due Finals Week**

### Adaptation (25%)

Students will produce their own adaptation of the *Odyssey*. More detailed instructions and a rubric will be distributed. **Due Week 15.**

- *Project (10%)*: Acceptable formats include but are not limited to short films, illustrations, short stories, screenplays, poetry, plays, performances, social media pages, etc. Your adaptation may be either a direct reinterpretation or more loosely influenced by the text's themes, but in either event must engage with the specific aspects of the text.
- *Reflection (15%)*: Students will include a **reflection** where they describe their project's relationship to the *Odyssey* and what aspects of the text you responded to or engaged with.

## Grading

93-100%	A	Outstanding	73-76%	C	Pass
90-92%	A-		70-72%	C-	
87-89%	B+	Very Good	67-69%	D+	
83-86%	B		60-66%	D	Lowest Grade for Credit
80-82%	B-	Good	Below 60%	F	Fail
77-79%	C+				

I am always happy to discuss your work and ways to improve in office hours. You may request a formal regrade of any assignment, but please be aware that your grade **may go up or down**.

## Course Policies

*Attendance:* Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Per Bilkent policy, the grade **FZ** will appear on the transcript of those who miss more than **20%** of our scheduled meetings (8 hours of class time), regardless of reason. Late arrivals count toward the hourly total. **20% is the absolute maximum you can miss and still pass the class.** You never know when you may need to miss class, so please plan accordingly. I recognize, however, that we are in an ongoing emergency situation. **Please get in touch via email if persistent obstacles arise.** I will do my best to be as flexible as I can be within university policies.

*Communication:* The best way to discuss your work is during my student office hours, which will be **Tuesdays 13:30-15:20** and **by email appointment**. I need **at least 3 days' advance notice** to arrange a meeting, whether in-person or on Zoom.

### *Email and Feedback Protocol:*

- In all email correspondence, please include your name and the **course number (HUM 331)**.
- I will respond to emails within a day during the week. Detailed feedback on writing may take longer.
- I will not answer email on the weekends.
- As a policy, I will read drafts up to a paragraph, but I will not read full drafts before the deadline. I will offer feedback and suggestions, which you can then apply to the rest of your writing. For full draft feedback, please make an appointment at BilWrite well before the assignment is due: <http://bilwrite.bilkent.edu.tr/>
- Extensions are given upon request, no reason/excuse required. Email me before the deadline as soon as possible and we will discuss a new deadline.
- **I will not respond to emails regarding assignments sent to me 24 hours before the deadline or regarding assignments or grades sent within 24 hours after graded feedback has been given to students.**

*Plagiarism:* Plagiarism is the use of ideas or words of another without citation. The work you do for this course must be your own. Any instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Consequences will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but at a minimum plagiarism will result in a 0 on the assignment in question. Other consequences may include failing the course and possible expulsion from the university. For the university policy on plagiarism, see [https://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/web/provost/SAIC\\_Students.pdf](https://w3.bilkent.edu.tr/web/provost/SAIC_Students.pdf)

*Technology:* Please be aware of how your technology usage affects your engagement with the class and those around you. Cell phones may be used for dictionaries during class (on silent), and laptops are allowed for note-taking purposes. Texts in class may be brought **either** in hard (paper) copy or electronically on laptops or e-readers.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: 2 February

Course Introduction

*Wishbone*, "Homer, Sweet Homer" [watch in class]

### Week 2: 9 February

*Odyssey*, Translator's Note (pg. 81-91); Book 1 (pg. 105-119), Book 5 (pg. 180-196)

Lawrence Venuti, "Adaptation, Translation, Critique:" "Adaptation as Translation," pg. 28-30 [Moodle]

Emily Wilson, "Translating Homer as a Woman:" pg. 279-286 [Moodle]

Week 3: 16 February

*Odyssey*, Book 9 (pg. 240-258), Book 10 (pg. 259-278) Book 12 (pg. 301-315)  
Carol Ann Duffy, “Circe” [Moodle]  
Maya Phillips, “Circe” [Moodle]  
Linda Hutcheon, selections from *Theory of Adaptation* [Moodle]  
Julie Sanders, selections from *Adaptation and Appropriation* [Moodle]

Week 4: 23 February

*Odyssey*, Books 16 (pg. 369-385), Book 19 (pg. 424-444), Book 20 (pg. 445-459)  
Sleater-Kinney, “The End of You” [Moodle]  
Ocean Vuong, “Telemachus” [Moodle]  
Derek Walcott, “Sea Grapes” [Moodle]

Week 5: 2 March

*Odyssey*, Book 21 (pg. 460-475), Book 22 (pg. 476-493), Book 23 (pg. 494-506)  
Dorothy Parker, “Penelope” [Moodle]  
Edna St. Vincent Millay, “An Ancient Gesture” [Moodle]

Week 6: 9 March

**\*No class\***

**Due: Research Paper Prospectus due to Moodle on Sunday 13 March at 23:59**

Week 7: 16 March

Louise Glück, *Meadowlands*: pg. 1-32

Week 8: 23 March

Louise Glück, *Meadowlands*: pg. 33-61  
Jane Hedley, selections from *Modern Marriage and the Lyric Sequence* [Moodle]  
**\*Withdraw Deadline 22 March at 17:30\***

Week 9: 30 March

Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*: Intro and Ch. 1-13 (pg. xix-98)  
Adrienne Rich, selections from “Writing as Re-Vision” [Moodle]

Week 10: 6 April

Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*: Ch. 14-29 and Notes (pg. 99-198)  
Jasmine Richards, selections from “Rereading Penelope’s Web” [Moodle]

Week 11: 13 April

Njabulo Ndebele, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*: pg. 1-78  
Barbara Goff, selections from “Postcolonial Translation” [Moodle]  
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, selections from *Decolonising the Mind* [Moodle]

Week 12: 20 April

Njabulo Ndebele, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*: pg. 79-146  
Justine McConnell, selections from “South African Penelopes” [Moodle]

**Due: Exploratory Essay due to Moodle on Sunday, 24 April at 23:59**

Week 13: 27 April

Suzan-Lori Parks, *Father Comes Home from the Wars: Part 1, 2, & 3*  
Stacie Selmon McCormick, selections from *Staging Black Fugitivity* [Moodle]

Week 14: 4 May

**\*No class\* Ramadan Bayram**

Week 15: 11 May

Dir. Joel and Ethan Coen, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*

Hugh Ruppersburg, selections from “History, Race, and Myth in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*” [Moodle]

**Due: Adaptation in class and/or to Moodle on Wednesday, 11 May at 17:30**

Finals Period: 15-28 May

**Due: Final Paper 22 May at 23:59 to Moodle**