GRE2401/4302 "Greek Epic Poetry"
Spring Semester 2017
Periodisk evalueringsrapport

Type of course, target audience and goals of the course

This is a regular course (text seminar) that is jointly taught on third-year BA level and MA level (*heis-emne*). Students who wish to take the course must have completed the introduction to Greek (GRE1001 and GRE1002); however, at least 40 ECTS points in Greek are recommended as previous knowledge. At the end of the course students should be able to

- translate, understand, interpret and discuss texts from Greek epic poetry;
- know, understand and analyse the formal characteristics of Greek epic (incl. metrics);
- have a general overview of the history and development of Greek epic;
- understand and discuss critical reading on Greek epic, and use commentaries.

Syllabus and structure of the course programme

We read Hesiod's epic poem *Works and Days* (*Erga kai Hemerai*). We used the textual edition by Solmsen, Merkelbach and West (1990). The students were supposed to read and use West's (1978) commentary alongside. In addition to this, occasionally I gave the students some critical reading assignments, e.g. the introduction from Most's (2006) edition, some chapters from *Brill's Companion to Hesiod* (2009), and a research article by Lilah Grace Canevaro ("The Clash of the Sexes in Hesiod's Works and Days", *Greece & Rome* 60, 2013, 185–202).

In the first two sessions I provided the students with some general background information on Greek epic poetry and on Hesiod. From the third session onwards, we read (viz. translated, analysed and discussed) Hesiod's *Works and Days* from beginning to end (roughly 80–90 lines per session).

In addition to the main seminar, four optional double-sessions on metrics (hexameters) were scheduled. In this tutorial I put the emphasis on reading practice, less on theory.

Teaching format

The course was taught in interactive seminar format. The students were supposed to come to class prepared; in class they had to translate and to participate in the discussions.

Compulsory activities and final examination

- Compulsory attendance for the seminar (because of the interactive teaching format; the metrics tutorial was optional).
- Mid-term essay (3–4 pages); the students could choose between three topics which I assigned to them at the beginning of the semester.
- Final examination: written exam (four hours) consisting of a translation of an excerpt from the syllabus, as well as interpretive questions.

Student numbers

There were four students enrolled in the course (all on BA level, none on MA level). One of them was an exchange student from the University of Bologna, Italy. Three of them wrote and passed the final exam (characters ranged between A and C).

Results of the course evaluation

I decided to evalute the course orally. I asked the students to discuss pro's and con's amongst themselves and then I discussed their ideas with them. They all emphasised that they liked the course and its teaching format. They particularly stressed that they were very happy about the clear organisation and structure of the course, and about the interactive teaching (especially the exchange student from Italy, who said that this teaching format was new to her compared to the non-interactive 'mass teaching' at her home university). One student stated that she had been "thinking hard about something to criticise, but couldn't come up with anything". Furthermore, one student suggested that the metrics tutorial could be taught more comprehensively, viz. not only on metrics (hexameters), but also to include some brush-up e.g. on epic language and/or stylistic devices.

Conclusion

I am of the opinion that the course was, overall, a success, and I note with satisfaction that the students evaluated it very positively. In turn, I was very satisfied with the performance of my students: they all worked hard, were motivated and participated actively in the seminar discussions. I therefore suggest that the course be taught along similar lines again in the future, and with a similar interactive teaching format. To achieve this end, I strongly recommend that future teachers of the course make attendance a compulsory activity too.

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