Unit Description – The Hellenistic period witnessed many new developments in the retelling of myths. In this unit we shall read some texts in which poets looked back at traditional stories of the gods and heroes, and explored them in a fresh light. Perhaps the central example of this re-exploration is Apollonius’ epic about the Argonauts; we shall be reading most of Book 3, which deals with the actions of hero(in)es (Jason and Medea) as well as gods. Our other poets are Callimachus (his poem about the myth of Teiresias’ blinding), Theocritus (his poem about the Cyclops) and also the less well-known poet Moschus (a poem about Europa and the metamorphosed Zeus).

Contact Hours and Mode of Teaching: 3 hours per week, classes and seminars

Methods of Assessment:

Year 2: 1 essay of 2,500 words (50%) and 3 class tests of 45 minutes each (equally weighted, total 50%).

Year 3: 1 essay of 3,000 words (50 marks) and 3 class tests of 45 minutes each (equally weighted, total 50 marks).

One of the three class tests will be on unseen translation, on one piece of text 20 lines in length, without use of a dictionary. The other two class tests will be on prepared text translation (10-12 lines) and context/interpretation knowledge, on one piece of text 20 lines in length (no reference texts will be allowed in this test).

Essential Reading


Apollonius of Rhodes, Jason and the Golden Fleece (The Argonautica), translation by R.L. Hunter, with bibliog. on pp. xxxii-xxxiii.


Set texts
