

Course Title: Literature: Modern Writers in Greece  
Course Code: ENGL 322  
Credit Hours: 3  
Location: Classroom 1, Main building  
Instructor: Sigrid Heath  
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Office Hour: by appointment  
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## Syllabus

### Course Description:

An expansive and nuanced exploration of the work of Greek writers in the 20th and 21st centuries offers a rich view of the continued robust evolution of Greek writing, building on an unbroken tradition of storytelling lasting many millennia and continuing into the present. The writers who we read and discuss lead us through a history of struggle in modern times that evoke an inherited memory of similar trials. These writers have known the depredations of Axis occupation (the Greeks had been occupied many times in history by many different foreign powers), civil war (the Greeks know all the stories of the Peloponnesian conflict), famine, oppression and repression, and the transcendence of the artist — and the people of Greece — through passionate expression of love for their country.

### Course Context:

These writers tell us, each in his or her way, that it is not nationalism that fuels and sustains their art, but a form of patriotism that transcends all ideology to embrace the landscape itself, the sky, the sea, the iconic architecture, the pervasive and palpable presence of the past, the language, the music, the Greek way of looking at the world that has persevered as long as the Greeks have been Greeks.

### Course Objectives:

- Presenting and discussing the social, historical and emotional themes that drive the character's inner most words.
- Explaining and detailing the various dramatic and prose constructions that most typify the style of each writer.
- Students discovering and appreciating the use of Greek myth, classical and Hellenistic history and culture themes in the development of each writer's work.
- Exploring how authors have been impacted by the spirit of the place in and about

which they have chosen to write.

- Students gaining an appreciation of how the nature and environment of Greece are used to energize the characters and color the theatrical place settings for the individual works.

### **Learning Outcomes**

*By the end of the course, students will:*

- Be able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the social, historical and emotional themes that drive the character's inner most words.
- Be able to identify the various dramatic and prose constructions that most typify the style of each writer.
- Be able to demonstrate familiarity and appreciation of the use of Greek myth, classical and Hellenistic history and culture themes in the development of a writer's work.
- Be able to discuss how the authors themselves have been impacted by the spirit of the place in and about which they have chosen to write.
- Be able to demonstrate understanding of how Greece's nature and environment are used to energize the characters and color the theatrical place settings for the individual works.

### **Course Methods and Details:**

This HISA course, more than any other, is founded specifically on the fact of the program's location on a Cycladic island. The HISA vision of imparting an appreciation of the cultural heritage of Greece as well as its people and inspirational landscape is especially important, as we explore how writers have used what Lawrence Durrell referred to as spirit of place in constructing not only a setting for their works but also characters, atmosphere and theme.

During the semester, students will read Nikos Kazantzakis's *Zorba* in its entirety, poems and essays by Constantine P. Cavafy, Kostis Palamas, Yannis Ritsos, Angelos Sikelianos, George Seferis (winner of the 1963 Nobel Prize for Literature), and Odysseus Elytis's *The Axion Esti* (winner of the 1979 Nobel) in its entirety. With our study of *The Axion Esti*, we will listen to sections of the oratorio by Mikis Theodorakis based on Elytis's poem.

Modern Greek writing arises from, and often refers directly to, Greek literature going back to Homer. If students have not had sufficient exposure to the ancient texts, the instructor will assign excerpts. When possible, students of Writers of Ancient Greece might visit the class to share their explorations of Homer and poets of the Archaic and Classical eras. Confusion regarding the nature of certain gods and goddesses will be resolved through reading of the appropriate section from Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*.

## Course's Approach

The first and obvious requirement is that the students give themselves over to a deep reading of the material. They will be asked to keep a notebook in which they write down thoughts and observations to share with the class. Early in the semester, their exploration will be guided by the instructor who will provide questions for which they must look for answers in the text. As the semester progresses, they will be expected to formulate their own questions and answers. Students tend to find that they will increasingly discover both questions and answers not only in the texts, but also in the relationship between the writer's language and the individual student's growing appreciation of Greek culture and traditions.

Having an idea or experiencing a connection with the work can be thrilling, but the student must be able to clearly and succinctly communicate this connection to the class. At the halfway point of the semester and again toward the last class meetings, the students will be given assignments above the expectation of class contribution. Typically, this will require the student to demonstrate an understanding of each writer's work in context and an ability to describe a through-line in terms of theme, spiritual/aesthetic search, sensory/emotional experience, running through the different works explored. Again, the student will be expected to offer a personal response drawing from their own experience of Greek culture.

### Grade Weights:

Attendance and class discussions:	40%
Completion of assignments (include an oral presentation)	30%
Final Essay (2000 words):	30%

### Grading Scale, Late Assignment, Attendance and Make-Up, Academic Integrity, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policies:

Students are required to abide by HISA's Academic policies first introduced and explained at the school and class orientation. See the attached policy sheet.

### Bibliography and Reference Materials

- *Zorba*, Nikos Kazantzakis.
- C. P. Cavafy, *Selected Poems*, Avi Sharon, translator; Penguin Classics, 2008.
- Kostis Palamas, *The Greek Poets*, ed. Constantine, Hadas, Keeley, Van Dyck; W. W. Norton, 2010.
- Yannis Ritsos, *Selected Poems*, Manolis, trans; Ecstasies Editions, 2013.
- Angelos Sikelianos, *Selected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, (2nd bilingual edition), Denise Harvey, 1996.
- *On The Greek Style, Selected Essays on Poetry and Hellenism*, by George Seferis, trans. Rex Warner and Th. D. Frangopoulos; Denise Harvey, 2000.
- Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke, *The Greek Poets*, ed. Constantine, Hadas, Keeley, Van Dyck; W. W. Norton, 2010.

- Odysseus Elytis, *The Axion Esti*, trans. Edmund Keeley and George Savidis; Anvil Press Poetry, 2007.
- *The Axion Esti*, oratorio by Mikis Theodorakis, based on Elytis's poem; 1996 performance at Odeon of Herodes Theater, Athens, 2012 performance with laika singer Yiannis Kotsiras.
- *Rebetika, Songs From the Greek Underworld*, ed. Katherine Butterworth and Sara Schneider; Aiora Press, 2014.
- *Greece, Books and Writers*, Ministry of Culture, National Book Centre of Greece, 2001 (plus, as needed, excerpts from Robert Fagles's translations of Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Illiad*; Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*; *The Landmark Herodotus* and *The Landmark Thucydides*, Robert Strassler (Quercus, 2007); and readings from plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes).