Revenge

“I want no evil gossip spread around about me. They are going to say it was a dignified revenge killing, and they are going to admire the style.”

- The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover

In this course we will examine literary representations of revenge, paying particular attention to cultural and historical context. Revenge as an ethos tends to arise in societies in which the central authority is perceived as absent, weak or corrupt, and for that reason revenge narratives lend themselves particularly well to Historicist criticism. In this course we will examine a handful of texts in different genres, including Aeschylus’ tragic cycle The Oresteia, the anonymous thirteenth century Icelandic history Njal’s Saga, William Shakespeare’s sixteenth century tragedy Titus Andronicus, and Thomas Middleton’s seventeenth century play The Revenger’s Tragedy. Our final text will be Peter Greenaway’s 1989 sumptuous re-imagining of a Renaissance tragedy, The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover.

This course is worth a single credit hour. Course requirements will include one researched essay in addition to one shorter assignment and a final exam. Participation in class discussion is assumed.

Due to the mature themes and content of this course, your professor strongly encourages discretion.

Prerequisites: English 102