

The Center for Hellenic Studies and  
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# *Homer and Hesiod*

July 18-19, 200\*  
The Center for Hellenic Studies  
Washington, DC

Directed by  
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# *Homer and Hesiod*

Center for Hellenic Studies  
3100 Whitehaven Street NW, Washington, DC  
July 15-16, 200\*

While the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are somewhat familiar to most college graduates, the less well known Homeric Hymns, along with the poetry of Hesiod, are equally important to the Western poetic tradition. Through discussion of the Hymns and Hesiod's two major poems, the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, the seminar will provide an overview of the ancient cultural landscape and explore the importance of these texts in the evolution of Mediterranean civilizations as well as their formative role in the development of artistic, political, religious, and even economic conventions of the Greco-Roman world. Participants will consider ways in which these literary works can contribute to the development of courses in a variety of disciplines, informing discussions on topics including the cosmology of ancient Greece, the protocols of human-divine interactions, and the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

The first day of the seminar will focus on an overview of the oral tradition that gave rise to Homeric and Hesiodic poetry, examining (1) the roles of individual performers in such traditions, (2) the ways in which performances became literary artifacts, and (3) the evolution of the various versions of the written poem into the text we commonly use today. Our work will also situate the poems in their cross-cultural context, by examining the relationship between the Greek epic tradition and those of other civilizations, for example, the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Assyrians as reflected in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

On this and the following day, we will consider a selection of the Homeric Hymns with special emphasis on (1) the *Hymn to Demeter*, the most important source for our understanding of the Eleusinian Mysteries; (2) the *Hymn to Apollo*, which features a "signature" of Homer as the notional author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; (3) the *Hymn to Hermes*, which hints at the hegemonic ambitions of the tyrants of Athens in the sixth century BCE; and (4) the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, which recounts the encounter between the goddess and Anchises, which resulted in the birth of Aeneas, the Dardanian warrior, who according to the tradition Virgil followed in the *Aeneid* escapes the fall of Troy and eventually makes his way to Italy where his descendants found Rome. The second day will also feature a brief overview of the archaeological evidence that currently informs our understanding of the archaic period depicted in the poems as well as an analysis of representations in sculpture and in vase paintings that match the representations in the verbal art of the Homeric Hymns and of Hesiodic poetry.

On the third day we will turn our attention to Hesiod, with an in-depth examination of the *Theogony*. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Homer and Hesiod "composed the theogony for the Greeks, giving the gods their names, defining their honors and abilities, and describing their forms" (*Histories* 2.53). This poem begins with a hymn to the Muses, in which the audience meets Hesiod himself, a shepherd with his flock in the foothills of Mount Helicon who emerges as a primal *persona loquens* in the Greek poetic tradition. This poem also contains the story of Pandora, the Titanomachy (a fierce battle between the Titans and the Olympian gods supported by the giants Briareos, Kottos, and Gyges, the hundred-handed offspring of Ouranos and Gaia), a description of Tartaros, the underworld, and concludes with a catalogue of liaisons between goddesses and their mortal lovers.

The fourth day will feature an exploration of the *Works and Days*, the first didactic poem that outlines the precepts for living an honest, productive life and includes the first almanac with advice on what to do or not to do on certain days. The *Works and Days* also contains the story of Prometheus and Pandora as well as the myth of the Five Ages and the allegory of the Hawk and the Nightingale. On both the third and fourth days, we will look at comparable poetic compositions from neighboring societies, such as the dream of Nebuchadnezzar from the Hebrew Bible as related in Daniel 2.31-35.

On the fifth day we will look ahead to the subsequent evolution of lyric poetry and the echoes of ideas from the Homeric Hymns and Hesiodic poetry in the verbal art of later poets, for example, the motif of a poet's "calling," which takes various forms among Hesiod's successors and provides insights into how later generations understood the role of poets and their poetry. The fifth day will also feature discussions about potential approaches to the poem for a wide variety of undergraduate courses in world literature and mythology.



## Seminar Leaders

Gregory Nagy is the Francis Jones Professor of Classical Greek Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. He has served as chair of Harvard's Literature Concentration, chair of the Department of the Classics, president of the American Philological Association, and, since 2000, director of the Center for Hellenic Studies. His publications include *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, which won the APA's Goodwin Award of Merit; *Greek Mythology and Poetics*; *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past*; *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*; *Homeric Questions*; *Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival in Classical Athens*; and *Homeric Responses*. In the spring of 2002, he delivered the Sather Lectures at the University of California, Berkeley, on "Homer the Classic."

Kenneth Scott Morrell is associate professor and chair of Greek and Roman Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, and is currently the director of outreach at the Center for Hellenic Studies. In addition to publishing and teaching on ancient Greek and Latin literature, he has participated in an archaeological survey in southwestern Turkey and has been active in a variety of initiatives related to the use of information technology. He was an original member of the Perseus Project and more recently has been involved with Sunoikisis ([sunoikisis.nitle.org](http://sunoikisis.nitle.org)) and the Collaboratory for GIS and Mediterranean Archaeology (CGMA) Project ([cgma.depauw.edu](http://cgma.depauw.edu)).

## Who Should Participate

This workshop is designed primarily for non-specialists. Faculty members in all disciplines who might have occasion to use the Homeric Hymns and the poetry of Hesiod in their courses are encouraged to read U Materials for the workshop will be available in electronic and printed formats in advance of the seminar. Participants will be asked to read a core subset of the texts before our work in Washington begins and then, once the seminar is underway, to contribute their ideas, energy, experience, and skills to creating modules for use in different academic settings.

## Participants, Location, and Expenses

Twenty-three individuals will be selected by competitive nomination. Participants must be full-time faculty members at CIC member institutions and can be in any field or department. The seminar will take place at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, DC. Housing will be provided at the Center and at a nearby hotel. Room, board, books, and other expenses will be fully covered with support from CIC, the Center for Hellenic Studies, and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. Participants or their institutions will be expected to cover the cost of transportation to and from Washington.