

**Course Number**

Classics 250

**Course Title**

Oral Poetry from Homer to Hip-Hop

**Quarter/Year**

Spring 2021

**Day/Time**

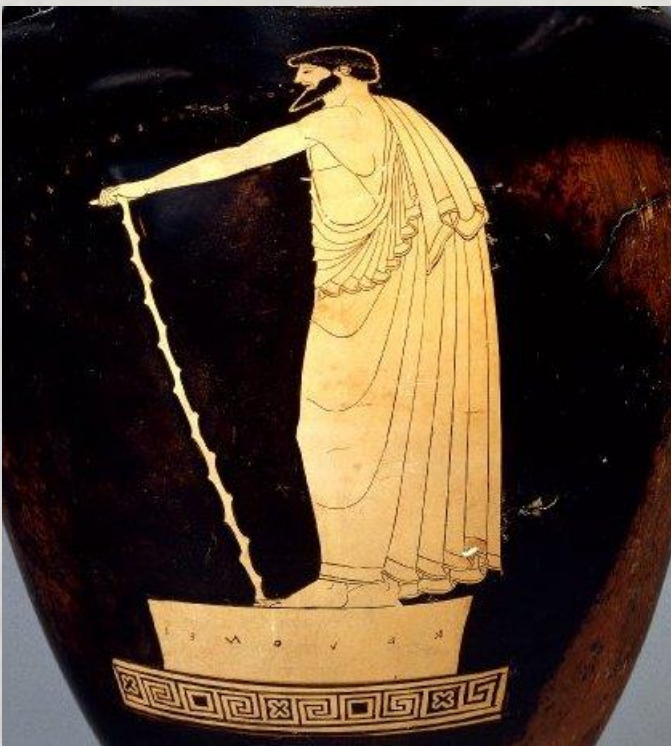
MW 12:30-

**Instructor**

Radding

**Degree/Distro Fulfillment**

VI



**Course Description:**

What do Homer, Vyasa, and Eminem have in common? All three practiced “oral poetry” – poetry that is improvised or composed extemporaneously before an audience. In this course, we will explore a variety of poetic traditions, beginning with the Homeric epics and weaving our way through the spaces, times, and traditions of Indian epic poets, West African griots, Slavic bards, and, finally, contemporary American hip-hop. Along the way, we will study the contents of these poetic traditions, but we will also investigate the modes and moments of poetic creation, and consider the effects of transcribing, and thus rendering immutable, that which was once spontaneous and ever-shifting. The course will also include visiting experts to demonstrate and discuss improvised oral poetry in action!

**Required Textbooks**

Stanley Lombardo tr., *The Essential Homer*, ISBN = 978-0872205406  
 Satyamurti, Carole. *Mahabharata: A Modern Retelling* (ISBN-13: 978-0393352498)  
 Niane, D.T. *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (978-1405849425)  
 Other readings will be made available on Canvas, and may be added to reading list.

**Assessments**

Attendance/preparation/participation: 15%, Presentation: 20%,  
 Midterm paper: 25%, Final paper prospectus: 5%, Final paper: 35%