

# Dusting Off the Classics: Homer's *Iliad*

University of Denver

[University College Enrichment Program](#)

Spring 2022

[Richard Sacks](#)



UNIVERSITY of  
DENVER

ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Five Tuesday evening sessions from 6:30-8:30pm: March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 12

via Zoom (registration link tba), with class size limited to 23

Course homepage: <https://sacks-richard.com/homers-iliad-at-du>

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## COURSE OVERVIEW

For nearly 3000 years, Homer's *Iliad* has captured and haunted the imaginations of generation after generation. Indeed, the first 15 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed over a dozen new translations just into English alone. So what is it that still moves us today about this tragic story set in a few short weeks during the 10th and final year of the seemingly endless Trojan War, a conflict that had already become part of the dim, dark, mythic past even for the *Iliad*'s ancient Greek audiences? Join Richard Sacks, who spent four decades at Columbia University teaching texts such as the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, *Beowulf* and *Genesis*, in a close reading of this dazzling and daunting poem as it ruthlessly confronts us with explosive and seemingly imponderable questions about the human condition and our place in the cosmos. Looming large within those questions is the agonizing issue of how war affects the human spirit: our sense of our own humanity; the way we look at the core values of the societies in which we live and serve; our ability to see ourselves and others clearly; the ways we view our gods and the mythic landscapes they inhabit; and ultimately, our willingness and ability to come to terms with the inescapable fact of our mortality.

## READING SCHEDULE

March 15	book 1	Introduction to the <i>Iliad</i> and its traditions: beginning with the wrath ( <i>mēnis</i> ) of Achilles and the plan of Zeus
March 22	books 2-7	From Achilles' withdrawal to Hektōr's emergence: the ever-expanding dimensions of the <i>Iliad</i>
March 29	books 8-13	Achilles' struggles with the grief ( <i>achos</i> ) of the Achaians ( <i>Achaioi</i> ): questioning our core traditional values
April 5	books 14-19	Hektōr's destructiveness and the death of Patroklos: putting our core traditional values to the test
April 12	books 20-24	From Achilles' all-encompassing destructiveness to what lies beyond: the impossible and imponderable dimensions and values of the <i>Iliad</i>

## NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

The edition/translation which we will be using in class is: *Homer, The Iliad, A New Translation by Peter Green*, published in 2015 by the University of California Press and issued in paperback in 2019 (ISBN 978-0520281431). Students are welcome to use the translation of their choice, keeping in mind that choosing a translation often involves a difficult set of trade-offs when it comes to readability, accuracy, and the inevitability of a translator's interpretive prejudice. Green's translation is not always the most beautiful one, but by and large it comes closest to the original Greek without crossing the line into unreadability or interpretive prejudice. It also corresponds very closely to the line numbers in the Greek text (as was the case with Lattimore's 1965 translation), a feature which makes things much easier when it comes to finding one's place in the text (and in class!) and taking advantage of powerful online tools for analysis.

## COURSE RESOURCES

Materials such as weekly handouts and updates, as well as links to online resources, will be posted on the course website "materials and info" page (<https://sacks-richard.com/iliad-at-du-materials>). Note that two powerful (though cumbersome) online resources we will explore are the [The Chicago Homer](#) and the [Perseus Digital Library](#).