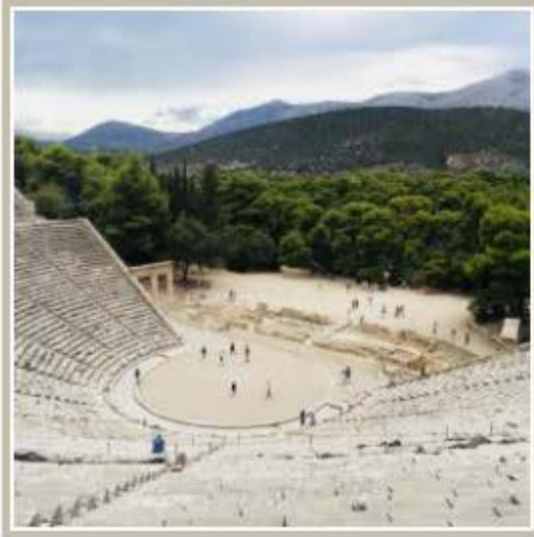


HOME ENHANCE RESEARCH CONNECT PEOPLE HELP TRAVELERS

New Stanford course explores ancient myths on campus and in Greece

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Pui Shiau



The ancient city of Epidauros

Image credit: Courtesy Pui Shiau

You have a great idea, but how do you develop your idea into a tangible project? Seed funding allows researchers to test out their ideas, and since 2013 the Office of International Affairs (OIA) has provided such funding to meet faculty needs and fill funding gaps. These have included proof of concept funding for international opportunities for students and travel funds to bring international research partners to Stanford.

OIA had the opportunity to meet with, [Rush Rehm](#), professor of theater and performance studies and classics, artistic director of Stanford Repertory Theater (SRT), and a 2015 OIA seed grant recipient, to learn how his idea has developed into a Stanford in Greece program.

How did the idea of Stanford in Greece start?

RR: It all started in 2012, when the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation in Athens, Greece, invited SRT to mount our *Wanderings of Odysseus* production in their mainstage theater. The response was overwhelming, and it made me think of how to continue the artistic exchange between Stanford and Greece. Later I met Eleni Papalexiou, a faculty member of theater studies at the University of the Peloponnese, and a Fulbright scholar doing research at Stanford on contemporary approaches to staging Greek tragedy. She joined my seminar on Greek tragedy, and we began exchanging ideas about establishing a summer institute in the Argolid region of Greece to serve as an international research center on contemporary productions of Greek tragedy. We agreed that a good first step would be to bring SRT's one-woman show *Clytemnestra: Tangled Justice*, starring core company member Courtney Walsh, to Nafplion. The site of the University of the Peloponnese, Nafplion is lovely coastal town with a lively cultural life, and once served as the capital of Greece.

What did the OIA grant enable you to do?

RR: The funds from the seed grant allowed Eleni and me to continue our work together, and to bring *Clytemnestra* to Nafplion. The logistics can prove daunting, but Eleni's ongoing work with renowned Italian director Romeo Castellucci made the process easy and delightful. In March 2016, we had two successful performances, one at Nafplion's wonderful Trianon Theater, with many people filling the aisles of the packed theater, and one at the American Hellenic College in Athens. The success of *Clytemnestra: Tangled Justice* paved the way for what lies ahead in 2018!

How will you broaden your research and impact students?

RR: During my recent sabbatical in Greece, I worked on a new project exploring the environmental aspects of Greek tragedy, delivered the keynote at a conference at the University of Peloponnese, and furthered my conversations with Eleni and the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation. As the next step in building a



summer program in Greece, Eleni and I discussed the prospect of bringing Stanford students to Nafplion, where they could meet with theater and classics students from the University of Peloponnese.

Thanks to the interest and support of the Department of Classics, this has become a reality. In winter quarter 2018, I will offer the majors seminar, *Greek Tragedy and the Argolid*, focusing on tragic stories set in that area. Immediately afterwards, during spring break, 12 students from the seminar will join me in Nafplion. We will engage the material that we studied in the classroom in the places where the tragedies are set, and where the myths arose.

What will be unique about the Stanford in Greece program?

RR: In the Argolid region, we will visit archaeological sites in Mycenae, ancient Corinth, Tiryns, Argos, Nemea, and Epidauros, and thanks to friends who know the area backwards, go off the beaten path with guided hikes in the Argive countryside to areas that gave rise to the relevant tragic myths. The students also will do workshops on contemporary approaches to Greek tragic choruses, working with Dr. Papalexiou and myself. Reading the tragedies, visiting the sites, and performing sections of the choruses will provide a deeply immersive experience for the students.

What is the value of this program for the Classics Department?

RR: Studying classics and working on Greek tragedy in Greece makes sense. Students realize, perhaps for the first time, that this great literature, theater, philosophy, and art came from a real place, a specific environment, one of great beauty and ruggedness, a landscape blessed with a stunning aura and an all-too-real history. This is the first time the Classics department has done something like this over spring break, and we hope the program will grow in various ways.

“Every year we fund individual travel for our undergraduate majors, yet there is no avenue for study-travel on a group basis. The fact that this opportunity comes after our capstone Majors' seminar means that students will be especially well prepared to benefit.” – Grant Parker, chair of the department of classics

What are your long term plans for Stanford in Greece?

RR: Following our spring break in Nafplion, we move onto SRT's 20th anniversary summer festival, which takes place at Stanford from June – August 2018. Entitled *After Troy: Hecuba/Helen*, the festival will include performances of Euripides' Hecuba and Helen, a film series by Michael Cacoyannis (Electra, Trojan Women, Iphigenia, Zorba the Greek, etc.), a symposium on theatrical heroines and war, and a Stanford Continuing Studies course on Euripides. We can do this with the generous support of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Stanford Continuing Studies, Theater and Performance Studies, the Department of Classics, and many other programs and departments.

Then we hope to bring the production of *Hecuba/Helen* to Athens in September 2018, under the aegis of the Michael Cacoyannis Foundation. This will allow Stanford students to experience the thrill of performing tragedy in the land of its birth. In this way, and over the long-term, we hope to build on Stanford's ongoing relationship with Nafplion, Athens, and the ancient Greek world.

To learn more about the Stanford in Greece program, contact the [Department of Classics](#).

To learn more about OIA's International Research Exploration Fund and other Stanford funding opportunities, visit seedfunding.stanford.edu.

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