

The Iliad: A Guided Reading Seminar

A 12-Week Expert-Led Journey Through Homer's Epic

with Kirk Barbera

Live Meetings: Sundays, 10:30 AM–12:00 PM CST
(8:30–10:00 AM PT · 11:30 AM–1:00 PM ET)

Start Date: January 18, 2026

End Date: April 12, 2026

About the Course

This course is designed for **first-time readers of Homer**.

No prior knowledge of *The Iliad*, Greek mythology, or ancient history is required. Kirk's new translation of *The Iliad* will be provided as part of the course. In both print and ebook format.

Readers who have encountered Homer before—whether in school, on their own, or elsewhere—will come away with an understanding of the epic that **very few readers today ever achieve**.

After years of studying, teaching, and translating *The Iliad*, Kirk Barbera has developed a distinctive way of approaching the poem: not as an academic artifact, but as a living work that shaped, and still shapes, how human beings understand honor, excellence, competition, individuality, and meaning.

What You'll Learn

Beyond understanding the story itself, participants will explore questions that lie at the heart of Western civilization:

- **What is a hero?**
And why did the Greeks become obsessed with discovering *the best*—an obsession that gave rise to the Olympic Games and competitive excellence as a cultural ideal.
- **Who is the greatest Greek hero?**
Achilles, the mightiest warrior? Or Odysseus, the trickster hero?

- **How does Homer invent a storytelling form that still governs narrative today?**
From epic conflict and character arcs to moral tension and psychological depth, the *Iliad* establishes patterns that persist in literature, film, and modern storytelling.
- **Where do we first see the roots of individualism?**
Discover how Homer takes traditional folk heroes and transforms them into unique characters with never before projected traits.
- **How did the Greeks grapple with fate and free will?**
The *Iliad* presents a world governed by destiny—yet filled with choice, responsibility, and consequence.

Throughout the course, Kirk connects Homer’s epic to **our own ways of understanding the human world today**—from modern ideas of success and competition, to leadership, rage, grief, mercy, and what it means to live a meaningful life.

This course will be followed by an Odyssey course. All will be completed before July 17th, 2026, when Christopher Nolan’s *The Odyssey* will be released in theaters. Participants of either the *Iliad* course or the Odyssey course (ideally both) will enter that theater knowledgeable about all the important elements of Greek literature and the specialness of these epic tales.

Reading Schedule & Weekly Themes

Week 1 — Orientation & the Wrath of Achilles

Sunday, January 18

Discuss:

- Introductory materials from the course edition (How to Read an Epic, Homer and the Trojan War Cycle, the world of gods and heroes)
- *Iliad* Chapter 1 — *The Conflict*
- *Iliad* Chapter 2 — *Armies Arrayed*

Week 2 — War as Spectacle and Illusion

Sunday, January 25

Discuss:

- **Chapter 3** — *The Duel Between Paris and Menelaus*
 - **Chapter 4** — *Truce Shattered*
-

Week 3 — Heroic Ideals Tested

Sunday, February 1

Discuss:

- **Chapter 5** — *The Hero Diomedes*
 - **Chapter 6** — *Hector's Farewell*
-

Week 4 — Stalemate and Momentum

Sunday, February 8

Discuss:

- **Chapter 7** — *The Duel Between Hector and Ajax*
 - **Chapter 8** — *The Tide of Battle Turns*
-

Week 5 — Persuasion and Refusal

Sunday, February 15

Discuss:

- **Chapter 9** — *The Embassy to Achilles*
-

Week 6 — Strategy and Desperation

Sunday, February 22

Discuss:

- **Chapter 10** — *The Raid at Night*
 - **Chapter 11** — *Agamemnon's Heroic Moment*
-

Week 7 — Fate at the Walls

Sunday, March 1

Discuss:

- **Chapter 12** — *The Trojans Attack the Greek Wall*
 - **Chapter 13** — *The Battle for the Ships*
-

Week 8 — Divine Delay

Sunday, March 8

Discuss:

- **Chapter 14** — *The Seduction of Zeus*
 - **Chapter 15** — *Zeus Awakens*
-

Week 9 — The Turning Point

Sunday, March 15

Discuss:

- **Chapter 16** — *The Death of Patroclus*
 - **Chapter 17** — *The Battle for Patroclus' Body*
-

Week 10 — Grief and Civilization

Sunday, March 22

Discuss:

- **Chapter 18** — *The Shield of Achilles*
 - **Chapter 19** — *Achilles Armed*
-

Week 11 — Rage Unleashed

Sunday, March 29

Discuss:

- **Chapter 20** — *The Return of Achilles*
 - **Chapter 21** — *Achilles Battles the River Xanthus*
-

***WEEK OFF APRIL 5th IS EASTER**

Week 12 — The Meaning of the Ending

Sunday, April 12

Discuss:

- **Chapter 22** — *The Death of Hector*
- **Chapter 23** — *The Funeral Games*
- **Chapter 24** — *A Father's Plea*