

CLST 0019: Town and Countryside in Ancient Greece
First-Year Seminar • Fall 2025

Syllabus. NB: *This is the syllabus from Fall 2024. The dates, content, and other details will change.*

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:15–11:45 AM
Cohen Hall 237

Instructor: Tom Tartaron, Associate Professor, Classical Studies tartaron@sas.upenn.edu

Office hours: By appointment; Cohen Hall 293

The ancient city of Athens, Greece, is renowned as the birthplace of democracy; Sparta is famous for its warlike society; Olympia for the Olympic Games; and Delphi for its famed oracle. But the Greek landscape was dotted with hundreds of other cities, towns, villages, sanctuaries, and hamlets. This seminar is a journey through town and country in ancient Greece, from dense urban spaces to vast forests and agro-pastoral countrysides. We will examine many lines of evidence: (1) ancient texts (e.g., Homeric epics, Hesiod's depiction of rural life, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the tragedies and comedies of the great playwrights, the geography of Strabo, the travel writing of Pausanias); (2) inscriptions that record details of life and death; and (3) archaeology (site discovery and excavation, recovery of the material remains of everyday life). These sources will reveal much information about how urban and rural life were organized. We will focus mainly on the Classical period (roughly the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.), but to put these findings in perspective, our inquiries will extend much further in time and space. A central aim of this seminar is to get you to think about what is recognizable in lives lived 2,500 years ago, and what really is foreign to us. In what ways have we inherited the "DNA" of Classical Greece, and what ways have we diverged with new influences, directions, and sensibilities? Finally, of what value is the study of the Classical world today?

Course Aims: The main aims of the course are as follows;

1. To become familiar with the monuments and institutions of a number of ancient Greek city-states (called in Greek *polis*, singular, and *poleis* plural), both the urban center (*astu*) and its associated countryside (*chora*), with which it existed in a symbiotic relationship.
2. To examine critically the various kinds of evidence, including ancient texts, inscriptions, and material culture derived from archaeological research, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each and thus understand *how we know what we think we know* (epistemology).
3. To learn about the latest techniques in archaeology and textual analysis, often from the sciences, that have revolutionized the amount and quality of knowledge we can generate about life in ancient Greece.

4. To explore critical topics, such as democracy and slavery, to learn about historical context, and to discuss how we evaluate these practices given our 21st century experiences and sensibilities.

Course Delivery:

1. **Lecture:** The Tuesday and Thursday meetings will mix illustrated PowerPoint lectures with discussion of the readings and visual material that I present. You'll have several short readings to do BEFORE each class meeting. I will post my PowerPoint presentations AFTER lecture.
2. **Readings:** There is no required text to purchase. The readings will be available on Canvas as PDFs, and you will also be assigned various Web sites to visit, read, and critique. I will often ask you to bring to class a response based on readings.
3. **Quizzes and discussion posts:** At certain times during the semester, you will take a short quiz and/or make one or more discussion posts on Canvas. This is to make sure you've understood the content from the readings and lectures and to prepare you for the next week's class meetings.
4. **Response papers:** I will assign 1–2 short writing assignments in which you will be asked to react to some provocative, and possibly controversial, statement.
5. **Exams:** There will be a midterm exam and a final exam, both in-person. Details will follow, and there will be various optional study aids in advance of each exam.
6. **Museum visit and exercise:** A visit to the **Penn Museum** will be scheduled in lieu of a lecture to allow you to interact with genuine ancient Greek objects in the Greek gallery. I will design a museum exercise focused on these collections, which you will need to complete by visiting the Museum on your own.

Course Requirements/Evaluation:

- Participation (discussion/lecture posts, quizzes, in-class discussion): 20%
- Response and/or positions papers: 20%
- Museum exercise: 20%
- Mid-term exam: 20%
- Final exam: 20%

Course Schedule

T 27 Aug: Introduction to the Course

Orientation

- Introductions

- Schedule
- Canvas
- Work and assignments
- Sources

THEME 1: BACKGROUND AND FORMATION OF THE CITY

R 29 Aug: Background to the Greek World, Part 1

Timeline of Greek prehistory and history

- How established
- Major developments and historical trends
- Focus on Classical period

Epistemology (how do we know what we think we know)?

- History: strengths and weaknesses
- Thucydides' statement on Athens and Sparta
- Archaeology: strengths and weaknesses
- Uneven knowledge (e.g., Athenocentric study of Classical period)

Setting of the Greek world

- Location in Mediterranean, sea and land
- Mediterranean environment
- Tectonic plates, subduction zone: volcanoes, faults, earthquakes, mountain building
- Topography
- Resources and products
- Connection and movement

*Reading and Viewing, available on Canvas. Note: Assignments (reading, viewing PowerPoints and web sites, etc.) should be completed **before** the date of the meeting.*

- Osborne, R. 2009. *Greece in the Making: 1200–479 BC*, Second Edition. London: Routledge, pp. 18–34.
- Tartaron, T. F. in press. "Land and Sea." in *Oxford History of the Classical Greek World*.
- Handout: Timeline of the Ancient Greek world, Bronze Age to the Age of Alexander

T 3 Sep: Background to the Greek World, Part 2 (Center and Countryside in Pylos kingdom)

The Greek world before the polis

- Late Bronze Age Mycenaeans: Homer's Heroes
- The "Dark Age" and the "Eighth Century Renaissance"

Reading

- World History Encyclopedia, "Mycenaean Society," please read article and watch video. https://www.worldhistory.org/Mycenaean_Society/
- Davis, J. L. 2022. *A Greek State in Formation: The Origins of Mycenaean Pylos*. Oakland: University of California Press. Please read pages xxv–xxix, 15–28.
- Thomas, C. 1993. *Myth Becomes History: Pre-Classical Greece*. PAAH 4. Claremont, CA: Regina Books. Please read pages 69–82.

R 5 Sep: Archaeological Methods and Written Sources

Archaeological methods

- Excavation, survey, analytical techniques

Ancient Greek authors

- Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Thucydides, Strabo, Pausanias

Reading

- Cambridge Archaeology Field Group. 2012. "What is Fieldwalking?"
- Cambridge Archaeology Field Group. 2012. "Geophysics Primer."
- Grant, J., S. Gorin, and N. Fleming. 2002. *The Archaeology Coursebook: An Introduction to Study Skills, Topics and Methods*. Please read pp. 33–48, 80–92.

Assignment

Quiz #1: Mediterranean environment. Available 9/3, due 9/10.

T 10 Sep: Formation of the Polis: Athens, Sparta, etc. The *Polis* as City-State

Introduction to the city (Greek *polis*, plural *poleis*)

- *Oikos* and *Demos* in early Greece
- Symbiosis of city (*astu*) and countryside (*chora*)
- Formation of Greek polis: *synoikismos*
- The city-state

Reading and Viewing

- Thucydides 2.15–2.17 (Theseus as founder of Athenian polis)

- Anderson, G. 2003. *The Athenian Experiment: Building an Imagined Political Community in Ancient Attica, 508–490 B.C.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (excerpt).

Discussion Post #1: Origin of the city and formation of the polis. Available 9/10, due 9/17.

THEME 2: EXPLORING THE ANCIENT GREEK CITY

R 12 Sep, T 17 Sep: Features of the Ancient Greek City: Agora

Elements of a Classical Greek urban center

- City plan and layout
- Acropolis, agora, city wall, theater, temples, law courts, civic offices, markets, cemeteries, domestic areas, industrial areas, roads, etc.
- Architecture: temple (Doric, Ionic), stoa, domestic
- Examples: Athens, Olynthus, Megara Hyblaea
- Ancient texts (including inscriptions), archaeology of urban centers

Reading and Viewing

- Wikipedia: Layout of Classical Athens. Scroll down about halfway to “The City”:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Athens
- Camp, J. M. II. 2010. *The Athenian Agora Site Guide*. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Please read pp. 14–21, 29–33; skim rest of book noting the different kinds of things happening in the Agora.
- The Khan Academy on the Agora and Athenian democracy:
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-ap/greece-etruria-rome/v/athenian-agora>
- The American School of Classical Studies at Athens video interview with and portrait of John Camp, the long-time director of excavations at the Athenian Agora
<https://vimeo.com/166798518>
- The Assassin’s Creed Odyssey Tour of the Athenian Agora. This is an animated video game tour of the Agora. It should not be considered a reliable and accurate representation of the Agora in Classical times, but it is entertaining and does give you a feel for the experience of a Greek agora. Also, when it presents “Learn More” panels, these are quite good and generally accurate. The main character is rather rude and clumsy, constantly running into people, but hey, it’s a videogame! Once you have viewed this episode, you will be asked to evaluate it as a teaching tool. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4BekelT3Pc>

Position Paper #1: The Athenian Agora. Available 9/17, due 9/26.

R 19 Sep: Features of the Ancient Greek City: Acropolis and Greek Temples

Elements of a Classical Greek urban center (continued)

- Acropolis as the sacred citadel and origin place of Athenians
- Temple Architecture (Doric, Ionic)
- Parthenon and other buildings on Acropolis
- Public inscriptions
- Cemeteries

Reading and Viewing

The Khan Academy on the great architectural orders of Greek temples, and the Parthenon:

Classical Temples: Architectural Orders

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-ap/greece-etruria-rome/v/the-classical-orders>

The Acropolis and the Parthenon

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-ap/greece-etruria-rome/v/parthenon>

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-ap/greece-etruria-rome/v/phidias-parthenon-sculptures>

Funerary stelai:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-ap/greece-etruria-rome/v/hegeso-stele>

Quiz #2: Greek temple architecture. Available 9/26, due 10/2.

T 24 Sep, R 26 Sep: Domestic Settings and Other Greek Cities

Other cities: Olynthus, Megara Hyblaea, Stryme

- Urban excavations
- Urban surface survey
- Examples: Olynthus (northern Greece), Megara Hyblaea (Sicily), Stryme (northern Greece)

Reading and Viewing

Olynthus

- Wikipedia, "Olynthus": <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olynthus>
- Cahill, N. 2000. "Olynthus and Greek Town Planning," *Classical World* 93: 497–515.

Megara Hyblaea

- Wikipedia, "Megara Hyblaea": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megara_Hyblaea
- Treziny, H. 2016. "Archaeological data on the foundation of Megara Hyblaea. Certainties and hypotheses," in L. D. Donnellan, V. Nizzo, and G.-J. Burgers, eds., *Conceptualising Early Colonisation*. Turnhout: Brepols, pp.167–178.

Molyvoti, Thrace (Stryme): urban surface survey

- PowerPoint: The Molyvoti, Thrace Archaeological Project (MTAP) Urban Survey

THEME 3: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

T 1 Oct: Athenian Democracy, Part 1

Political organization (How does this relate to us today?)

- How did Athenian democracy originate and develop?
- Democracy and oligarchy
- What was Athens' democracy really like?
- Sparta: An alternative society

Reading and Viewing (for 1 and 8 October meetings)

- Blackwell, C. W. 2003. "The Development of Athenian Democracy," in C. W. Blackwell, ed., *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy*. Stoa: a consortium for electronic publication in the humanities [www.stoa.org]. 27pp.
- Blackwell, C. W. 2003. "Athenian Democracy: An Overview," in C. W. Blackwell, ed., *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy*. Stoa: a consortium for electronic publication in the humanities [www.stoa.org]. 57 pp.
- Woodruff, P. 1993. *Thucydides: On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*. Indianapolis: Hackett. Please read pp. 39–46, the famous Funeral Oration of Pericles.

R 3 Oct: NO CLASS – FALL TERM BREAK

T 8 Oct: Athenian Democracy, Part 2

Quiz #3: Athenian democracy. Available 10/8, due 10/15.

R 10 Oct: Visit to Penn Museum: Greek Gallery

Reading

- Penn Museum Greek Gallery guide (skim)
- Greek Gallery web site: <https://www.penn.museum/on-view/galleries-exhibitions/greece-gallery>

We will meet at the **East Entrance** of the Penn Museum and proceed together from there. Please be on time. There are lockers near the entrance for you to store things you won't need (backpacks, computers, etc.). I will give more detailed instructions closer to the date.

T 15 Oct: Visit to Penn Museum Collections Study Classroom

Engaging with ancient Greek objects

We will meet at the Penn Museum to look at examples of Greek ceramic objects ranging from the Geometric period to the Hellenistic period in the Collections Study Room. For this exercise, I would like you to do background reading on these objects by searching for them in the Penn Museum online collections database: <https://www.penn.museum/collections/>. The easiest way to access them is to search by the accession number as listed below. It will also be easy to do further online reading on these artifact types (kylix, olpe, etc. are the names of the shapes) if you wish to do so. We will again meet at the East Entrance of the Penn Museum.

Kylix, red figure MS2495

Olpe, Corinthian MS2523

Kyathos, black figure MS4863.36

Geometric bowl, MS5288A

Amphora handle MS 3300

Neck amphora, black figure MS4852

Tanagra figurine, color 91-26-145

Geometric bowl lid, MS5288B

R 17 Oct: Midterm Examination

The Midterm Examination will be in-person. The details will be communicated to you closer to the date.

T 22 Oct: Athenian Theater and Democracy

The connection between theater and democracy

Reading and Viewing

- BBC video: "Ancient Greece: The Greatest Show on Earth: Democrats"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAkLTWQUbG8>

- TED-Ed video: “A Day in the Life of an Ancient Athenian”: [A day in the life of an ancient Athenian - Robert Garland](#)

Museum Exercise: Topic TBA. Available 10/24, due 11/19.

R 24 Oct: Women and Slaves in Athens and Sparta

Women and slaves in the Classical period

- What was the true status of women and slaves?
- How was the status of Spartan women different from that of their Athenian counterparts?
- Could women subvert the patriarchy?

Reading and Viewing

- Facts and Details video: Slavery in Ancient Greece: [SLAVERY IN ANCIENT GREECE | Facts and Details](#)
- World History Encyclopedia, “Women in Ancient Greece,” read article and watch video: <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/927/women-in-ancient-greece/>
- Chapter: “Valour, Duty, Sacrifice: Sparta,” please read pages 44–67.

T 29 Oct: The Polis in Crisis: Human and Natural Disasters

Poleis in Crisis (and does this relate to us today?)

- Stasis
- Territorial disputes and perpetual warfare
- Devastating the countryside, siege of cities
- Plague: the plague of 430–426 BC in Athens

Reading and Viewing

- Woodruff, P. 1993. *Thucydides: On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*. Indianapolis: Hackett. Please read pp. 46–58, the Plague of 430–426 BC
- Thucydides 3.70–3.84, the case of stasis at Corcyra in 427 BC

Discussion Post #2: Breakdown in civil society. Available 10/29, due 11/7.

THEME 4: THE GREEK COUNTRYSIDE

R 31 Oct: Introduction to the Greek Countryside: The Rural Landscape

Reading

- Hesiod's *Works and Days*, please read pp. 71–79.
- Foxhall, L. 2020. "The Village beyond the Village: Communities in Rural Landscapes in Ancient Greek Countrysides," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 38: 1–20.
- McHugh, M. 2017. *The Ancient Greek Farmstead*. Oxford: Oxbow. Please read pp. 13–27.

T 5 Nov: Finding Rural People and Places Archaeologically

Evidence for agricultural activity (farmsteads, etc.) in the archaeological record
Molyvoti, Thrace (Stryme): rural surface survey

- PowerPoint: The Molyvoti, Thrace Archaeological Project (MTAP) Hinterland Survey

Reading

- McHugh, M. 2017. *The Ancient Greek Farmstead*. Oxford: Oxbow. Please read pp. 27–33, 44–60; skim pp. 61–98.

Discussion Post #3: Rural settlements and people. Available 11/7, due 11/14.

R 7 Nov: Travel by Land and Sea

Reading

- World History Encyclopedia, "Travel in the Ancient Greek World."
<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/605/travel-in-the-ancient-greek-world/>
- Papadopoulos, N. et al. 2015. "Geophysical mapping of a classical Greek road network: a case study from the city of Elis, Peloponnese," *Archaeologia Polona* 53: 489–492.
- Mules in the ancient world: <https://www.mulemuseum.org/history-of-the-mule.html>
- Reed, C. M. 2003. *Maritime Traders in the Ancient Greek World*. Cambridge University Press. (Excerpt, pp. 6–14.)

T 12 Nov: Pastoralism

Reading

- Cardete, M. C. 2019. "Long and Short-Distance Transhumance in Ancient Greece," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 38: 105–121.
- *Expedition* 19(1), Fall 1976: *Special Issue: Ethnology and Archaeology in Greece*: Read articles by Joan Bouza Koster; Harold Koster; and Mary Clark Forbes.
- Stroszeck, J. 2004. "Divine Protection for Shepherd and Sheep: Apollon, Hermes, Pan and their Christian Counterparts, St. Mamas, St. Themistocles and St. Modestos," in B. Santillo Frizell,

ed., *PECUS: Man and Animal in Antiquity. Proceedings of the Conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 9–12, 2002*. Rome, pp. 231–240.

R 14 Nov: Rural Sanctuaries: Delphi, Olympia

Reading

- Armstrong, S. "An Echo of Delphi: The Pythian Games Ancient and Modern." 6 pp.
- Meyer, A. 2016. "Delphi and Discord," *Discentes* 4(2): 25–31.
- Kyle, D. 2014. "Greek Athletic Competitions: The Ancient Olympics and More," in P. Christensen and D. Kyle, *A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity*. New York: John Wiley and Son, excerpt pp. 21–35.
- Olympic Museum (Lausanne, Switzerland). *The Olympic Games in Antiquity*.

Quiz #4: Sacred places in the countryside. Available 11/14, due 11/21.

T 19 Nov: Urban-Rural Relations: Urban Attitudes toward Country Folk (and vice-versa)

Readings

- Hesiod's *Works and Days*; please read pages 68–79.
- Aristophanes, *Acharnians*
- Ehrenberg, V. 1943. *The People of Aristophanes. A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy*. London: Taylor & Francis, reprinted 2013. Please read chapter III, "The Farmers," pp. 73–94.

THEME 5: THE COMPLEX LEGACY OF ANCIENT GREECE: RECEPTION OF CLASSICAL GREECE FROM ANTIQUITY TO TODAY

R 21 Nov: Ancient Travelers and the Search for Ancient Sites

Pausanias in the second century A.D. visits "Old Greece"

Reading

- Pausanias' Description of Greece (excerpts from Book 1, Attica, on Canvas)
- Strabo, Book IX, Chapter 1: Attica:
https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Strabo/9A*.html
- Lincoln, C. 1881. "Where was Dodona?" *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 2: 228–232.

T 26 Nov: Travelers and Romantics in the Early Modern and Modern World

Reception of Greek rural landscapes in art and poetry

- Myths of Arcadia, Romanticism

- Victorian poets, artists, philhellenes: Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley
- Travelers and the search for ancient Greek sites
- British Library, "Romantics & Victorians: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics-and-classical-greece>
- Byron, George Gordon (Lord Byron), *The Isles of Greece* (poem, 1819).
- Twain, Mark. 1869. *The Innocents Abroad Volumes I and II*. American Publishing Company. Please read pages 46–65 in the Google Books version. Make sure you scroll down to Volume II: https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Innocents_Abroad/eJ4-im1MxIC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

Discussion Post #4: The legacy of ancient Greece today. Available 11/27, due 12/3.

T 3 Dec: The Contested Legacy of Ancient Greece and Why We Study It

The Legacy of Classical Greece in the 21st Century

Does Classical Greece matter to us today?

- Neo-Nazis co-opt classical antiquity
- Resistance to, rejection of "Western canon"
- Value of studying ancient Greece today?

McCoskey, D. E. 2018. "Beware of Greeks Bearing Gifts: How Neo-Nazis and Ancient Greeks Met in Charlottesville"

https://origins.osu.edu/article/beware-greeks-bearing-gifts-how-neo-nazis-and-ancient-greeks-met-charlottesville?language_content_entity=en

Cooperman, J. 2021. "Loose Canon: Can Classics Survive the Neo-Nazis?"

<https://commonreader.wustl.edu/loose-canon-can-classics-survive-the-neo-nazis/>

Hall, E. 2015. "Classics for the people – why we should all learn from the ancient Greeks"

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/20/classics-for-the-people-ancient-greeks>

Poser, R. 2021. "He Wants to Save Classics From Whiteness. Can the Field Survive?"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/02/magazine/classics-greece-rome-whiteness.html>

O'Brien, C. 2018. "Defending the Classical Languages from the Charges of Racism"

<https://epochemagazine.org/13/defending-the-classical-languages-from-the-charges-of-racism/>

R 5 Dec: Conclusions and Final Discussion

FINAL EXAM: TBA