

CLST/ANCH/BFS 1201 The Ancient Economy

Fagin 214

T.TH TBD



Instructors:

Kim Bowes

Department of Classical Studies

Cohen Hall 265

kbowes@sas.upenn.edu

Office: (215) 736-1285

Cell: (917) 699-0340

TA: TBD

Research support: Rebecca Stuhr, Classics Reference Librarian

Contact info also on Library Guide

This class uses the combined and often clashing disciplines of economics, history, literature, plus the natural sciences, to make sense of a subject we think we know – economics – in a period we know much less about – the ancient Mediterranean.

In this course, you'll study economic activity in the Greco-Roman world. Ancient Greece and Rome have been called some of the first "global" economies - they engaged in long-distance trade, introduced the first coinage systems, and built and manufactured at large scales relative to other pre-modern cultures. At the same time, they remained agrarian societies, with high levels of inequality and social systems that often placed social capital ahead of profit. Using textual sources, archaeology and techniques from the natural and social sciences, this class will not only look at basic elements of economic activity in the ancient world – demographics, trade, monetization, industry – but also ask critical questions about how – or if – modern economic methods can be applied to the distant past.

In this course we'll study economies before economics. As a result, we'll have the opportunity to question the assumptions we make by virtue of applying particular disciplinary knowledge. Is "economics" the right way of studying economic activity in the past? How do the rules of history, or literature, produce different results? By applying different kinds of disciplines to the deep past, we'll have the opportunity to question what we think we know, and to ask how using certain disciplines' "rules" impact the results of our research.

Thus, a major component of the course addresses **source analysis**: for many lessons, you'll be asked to confront an ancient source - legal, philosophical, archaeological, scientific data - and understand its author's intent and audience, and gauge what, if anything, it can tell us about ancient economic activity or thought. We'll also spend a considerable time parsing secondary sources, and asking how they make use of this same primary source data and whether or not their conclusions are justified by that data. Finally, we'll think a lot about what constitutes quantitative data: where does the data come from, what does it leave out, how and what kind of quantitative analyses are supported by the evidence.

No previous knowledge of the ancient world or economics is necessary. Basic Excel skills are necessary, but those without them will be given support to learn during the semester.

This is a SAIL course – Structured, Active, In-Class Learning. Thus, much of the class will be spent NOT with us lecturing at you, but with you working through the materials singly and in groups. By learning this way, you'll not only learn about the ancient economy, but actually DO ancient economic history in each class. All the data shows that **doing things** is more pedagogically effective than **hearing them**. You'll also hone your skills at working in a group, learning to discuss, listen and comment effectively. We'll be intervening regularly to help you develop these skills.

Course aims: At the completion of this course you should:

1. Have a basic understanding of the evidence for ancient economic activity – from inscriptions and archaeological datasets to literature and legal sources.
2. Have the essential toolkits for analysis and criticism of these sources, asking what constitutes our "data" and what behaviors/activities it documents.
3. Be able to carry out basic analysis (averages, trends over time, deviations from a mean) on a quantitative dataset
4. Understand and critique the major methodological debates within the field, particularly the application of modern economic models versus the use of traditional social history.
5. Be attuned to how different kinds of knowledge passed through us through disciplines impacts our understanding of the past.
6. Improve your oral communication skills through in-class group work, debates and a 5-minute oral presentation.

Activities and Evaluation:

Participation/active learning: This is the heart of the class. You will need to have read CAREFULLY your readings AND datasets, and come to class prepared to work on the tasks

assigned under “Active learning.” Lectures are often a minority part of the class and are meant to be participatory. Each class there will be an active learning component, about half individual and half in groups. You’ll be asked to complete a task around the active learning theme outlined on the syllabus. You will have needed to have done the reading in order to do these tasks.

Participation: Effective participation means speaking up in class – asking questions and participating in discussion, on a regular basis. It also means listening, and encouraging others to participate.

Quizzes: We will occasionally quiz you on your understanding of the reading before you’re asked to do in-class exercises. These quizzes will all feed into your participation/active learning grade.

Data project/paper: This is the research component of the class. You’ll be asked to 1. Identify (from a selection provided by me) a quantitative dataset and analyze its significance, potentials and pitfalls, and 2. analyze the data for what it tells us about ancient economic activity. The research will be presented ORALLY in a 5-minute powerpoint presentation submitted through CANVAS, AND in a 10-page paper.

Most of the readily available datasets pertain to Roman-period material. We’ll thus spend the first half of the term giving you the tools to ask different economic questions using Greek-period material, during which time you’ll also identify your dataset, the questions you want to ask of it and its limitation. The second half of the term will see you working on your data and doing the reading and research to place your data in context.

No excel experience? No problem! There are online tutorials and help via the library:

<https://guides.library.upenn.edu/excel/home>

You’ll need to be comfortable working with excel by the second half of the term. Please be in touch with one of us if you need more help.

Office Hours: Before you decide in your data/subject, you have to come and visit one of us during office hours. This is obligatory! It’s a way for us to make sure you haven’t chosen something impossible to carry out, and to get to know you!

Exams: These will test your understanding of themes of the course, and ask you to apply course themes to unknown data/sources.

Evaluation

Participation/active learning/quizzes: 30%

Midterm: 15%

Written assignments: 25%

1: Data identification, description and limitations: February 20 (5%),

2: Initial data presentation, and contextual bibliography: April 2 (5%),

3: 10-page paper including data, data analysis, and argument: April 28 (15%)
Oral presentation: 10% (April 28)
Final: 20%

Policies

Grades: We're happy to meet with you to help you improve your performance in class. But grades once assigned are not negotiable, unless we've made an actual mistake.

Students are expected to follow the [Code of Academic Integrity](#) as laid out in the College regulations. Violations of the code — i.e., cheating on exams, plagiarism, etc. — will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and will be given a failing grade for the assignment, plus whatever other sanctions are imposed by the Office. If you have any questions or doubts about what constitutes a violation of the code, please ask.

This class is intended to facilitate learning for all. If you need accommodations for a disability, please register with [Student Disabilities Services](#). Official requests for accommodations need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except under unusual circumstances.

If you would like to request accommodations for other reasons, please feel free to speak with either of us.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

January 16: Introduction

January 21: What do we mean by an “ancient economy”? I: Finley

Readings: Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 2nd edition, 1999, pp. 17-62

(<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu:17241/concern/monographs/b2773v84w?locale=en>)

Active learning: Taking apart Finley’s argument

January 23: What do we mean by an “ancient economy”? II: Modern models

Readings: Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, forward by Ian Morris (pp. x-

xxxii:<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu:3130/2027/fulcrum.b2773v84w>; Scheidel, Walter, Ian

Morris, and Richard Saller, eds. 2007. *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, introduction

(<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2101/10.1017/CHOL9780521780537.002>); North, Douglas, The New Institutional Economics,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE)* / *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, Vol. 142, No. 1, 3rd Symposium on The New Institutional Economics (March 1986), pp. 230-237.

Active learning: Taking apart the Stanford and NEI approach

January 28: One source, multiple approaches. Xenophon’s *Ways and Means*.

Readings: Xenophon, *Ways and Means*.

Active learning: Apply Finley; the Stanford approach and NEI to Xenophon and debate the results.

January 30: Facts on the Ground

Readings: Sallares, R. (2007). “Ecology,” In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, & R. Saller (Eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*, 13-37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, Oxford, 2000, 123-152.

Active learning: Making a balance sheet of environmental impacts on ancient economic activity

February 4: Production: Understanding Greek agrarian economies: the case of archaic/classical Greece

Readings: R. Osborne, *Classical Landscape with Figures, The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside*, pp. 27-74.

Active learning: Learning to read field survey for information about Greek agriculture

Feb. 6 Production: Greek resources other than agriculture: The building trades

Readings: R. Osborne, *Demos, The Discovery of Classical Attika*, 93-126; Short article on the Erechtheion (temple on the acropolis, Athens): <https://www.ancient.eu/Erechtheion/>; Building accounts from the Erechtheion: <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/474>; <https://www.atticinscriptions.com/inscription/IGI3/476>

Schlanger, N. "The Chaine Operatoire," in *Archaeology: The Key Concepts*, eds. Refrew and Ban, 25-31; EnCAB website: a website for calculating the costs (in person-hours) of ancient construction: <https://www.encab.net/index.html>. Thoroughly read all areas of the site to understand what it's designed to do, and critiques of its methodology;
Active learning: Use the example of the Erechtheon on the Acropolis in Athens to run mock building energetics; come to class with some basic quantities noted down. You'll need to move fast!

Feb. 11 Distribution: Greek trade

Readings: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, 8-10 (<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html>); Möller, A. (2007). "Classical Greece: Distribution," In W. Scheidel, I. Morris, & R. Saller (Eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (pp. 362-384).
Active learning: Reconciling philosophical and archaeological data for trade

Feb. 13: The state: Greek taxes and tribute

Readings: Demosthenes, 42, *Against Phaenippus*;
Peter Fawcett. "'When I Squeeze You with *Eisphora*': Taxes and Tax Policy in Classical Athens." *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, vol. 85, no. 1, 2016, pp. 153–199.
Active learning: Use Demosthenes as evidence for economic activity and the state

Feb. 18: Greek credit and banking

Readings: Demosthenes, 36, *For Phormion*; E. Cohen, *Athenian Economy & Society: A Banking Perspective*, 61-90.
Active learning: Establish and defend a Greek bank in court

Feb. 20: The origins of coinage and its impact on the Greek economy (meet in the Penn museum)

Readings: Davies, Glyn, 2016, *A History of Money*, 4th ed., Cardiff, pp. 1-5, 14-19, 60-81.
Hands-on exercise in the museum
Written Assignment 1 due*

Feb. 25 Getting by: measuring poverty and inequality

Readings: I. Morris, "Economic Growth in Ancient Greece," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* (2004), 709-742; Henneberg, M., Henneberg, R., and Carter, J. C. (1992) "Health in colonial Metaponto," *National Geographic Research and Exploration* 8, 446-459.
Active learning: Parsing archaeological sources for information on poverty

Feb. 27 In-class Midterm

March 3: Roman demographics and why it matters

Readings: Scheidel, Walter. W. Scheidel, "Progress and problems in Roman demography," in: W. Scheidel, *Debating Roman Demography* (Leiden 2001) 1-82 (selected parts)
Active learning: Sources and their problems for Roman demographics

March 5: The "booty" economy and Republican Rome

Readings: Livy, *Histories*, 30.44-45

(<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0159%3Abook%3D30%3Achapter%3D44>)

Livy, 34.10-16

(<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0164%3Abook%3D34%3Achapter%3D10>): Kay, Philip. 2014. *Rome's Economic Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 1-42.

Active learning: How do we measure the economic impact of war booty?

March 10/12: No class, Spring Break

March 17: Slave and Free Labor

Readings: Cato, *On Agriculture*, 1-6

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cato/De_Agricultura/A*.html; Varro 1.17-19 (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Varro/de_Re_Rustica/1*.html); *Labor contracts from a Roman-period Egyptian archive*.

Active learning: Do our sources for labor describe economic "rationalism"?

March 19: Production: Roman agriculture

Readings: Review Cato, *On Agriculture*, 1-6

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cato/De_Agricultura/A*.html

; Columella, *On Agriculture*, preface

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Columella/de_Re_Rustica/Praefatio*.html

; Groot, Maaïke, Stijn Heeren, Laura Kooistra, and Wouter Vos. 2009. "Surplus production for the market? The agrarian economy in the non-villa landscapes of Germania Inferior." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 22 (1):231-253.

Active learning: Parsing primary and archaeological sources for agriculture: primitive or profit maximizing?

March 24: Consumption: TBA

March 26: No class

March 31: Measuring production and technology

Readings: Wilson, Andrew. 2002. "Machines, power and the ancient economy." *Journal of Roman Studies* 92:1-32; McConnell, Joseph R., et al., 2018. "Lead pollution recorded in

Greenland ice indicates European emissions tracked plagues, wars, and imperial expansion during antiquity." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115 (22):5726-5731
Active learning: Parsing the pollution data for ancient production activities

April 2: Distribution: Roman trade

Readings: Shipwrecks database:

http://oxrep.classics.ox.ac.uk/databases/shipwrecks_database/

Wilson A., Erdkamp, P., Morely N, "A Forum on Trade, in *Cambridge Handbook of the Roman Economy*, 287-31.

Active Learning: Parsing shipwreck data as proxy for economic activity

****Written Assignment 2 due****

April 7: The Roman state: taxation and fiscality

Readings: Hopkins, Keith. 1980. "Taxes and trade in the Roman empire (200 B.C.-A.D. 400)." *Journal of Roman Studies* 70:101-125.

Active learning: Making sense of Hopkin's model

April 9: The state: in search of Roman GDP

Readings: Temin, Peter. 2006, "Estimating GDP in the early Roman empire." In *Innovazione tecnica e progresso economico nel mondo romano*, edited by Elio Lo Cascio, 31-54; Lo Cascio, Elio, and Paolo Malanima. 2014. "Ancient and pre-modern economies. GDP in the Roman empire and early modern Europe." In *Quantifying the Greco-Roman Economy and Beyond*, edited by François de Callatay,; 201-219.

Active learning: evaluating ancient GDP calculations

April 14: Inequality and poverty

Readings. Scheidel, Walter, and Steven Friesen. 2009. "The size of the economy and the distribution of income in the Roman Empire." *Journal of Roman Studies* 99:61-91.

Active learning: evaluating proxy data for inequality and growth

April 16: How did Roman coins work? Hands-on in the Penn Museum

Readings:

April 21: Decline of the Mediterranean System (?) 1: The third century monetary crisis (?)

Readings: ***papyri data; K. Verboven, "Demise and Fall of the Augustan Monetary System," in Hekster, Olivier, et al. *Crises and the Roman Empire; Diocletian's Edict on Maximum Prices* (pp. 1-8, and skim the rest).

Active learning: Debate on the impact of inflation

April 23: Decline of the Mediterranean System (?) 2: Data from Italy

Christie, N. (2006). *From Constantine to Charlemagne. An Archaeology of Italy, AD 300-800*. Aldershot, selections.

April 28: Decline of the Mediterranean System (?) 3: What does the data mean?

*****Final data analysis paper and PPT presentation due******