

CLST 0019: Town and Countryside in Ancient Greece
Freshman Seminar • Fall 2022
Course Prospectus
(Note: this is not a syllabus– that will come later)

Monday and Wednesday, 3:30–4:59 PM

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

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?

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:** Presuming that the semester will be fully in-person, the Monday and Wednesday 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.
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.
3. **Quizzes and discussion posts:** Once per week, after you've done the reading, you'll 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 one or more museum exercises focused on these collections, which you will need to complete by visiting the Museum on your own.

Tentative Course Requirements/Evaluation:

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