

AncH 0101 Ancient Greece
McInerney
Fall, 2023

Draft Syllabus

Can we learn lessons from history? Does the past teach us anything about the future? Possibly, but not certainly. Even so, during times of dramatic change, it is imperative more than ever to learn more about our own culture. We ought, as the Greeks would say, to know ourselves. To do that we have to know our history, not just in the 19th or 20th centuries, but our ancient history as well.

In this class we shall encounter the Greeks, a people whose culture has a special significance for us. The ties between us are not casual, but deeply meaningful. When a doctor takes the Hippocratic Oath, for example, she is testifying to the importance of Greek medical practice in her own training: diagnosis and prognosis are Greek words that were used 2500 years ago as Greek doctors struggled to standardize the treatment of diseases, observing **symptoms** such as **diarrhea** and **tachycardia** (all Greek terms). Similarly, architects are expected to know the canons of classical architecture, the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian orders, whether they employ them, modify, or reject them. One can repeat this pattern of derivation and connection in unlimited numbers of fields of human endeavour. Our earliest examples of forensic oratory, a tradition that includes the Scopes trial? The speeches written around 400 BC for the Athenian law courts, such as Lysias' speech "On the Killing of Erasthenes the Seducer." The first sit-coms? Written by Menander around 310 BC. The first tragedies? Written 2000 years before Shakespeare by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The basic tenets of geometry: Euclid's axioms. Atomic theory? Democritus and Leucippus, 440 BC. It has been famously observed that all Western philosophy consists of footnotes to Plato, a relationship that applies in many other fields as well, not the least of which is politics: the oldest democracy may be in Iceland, and the biggest may be in India, but the first was in Greece.

The relationship, however, between the Greeks and us is not straightforward. Democracy is a Greek invention, but it in no way resembled what we call democracy, since it was direct and fully participatory. More significantly, the Greeks practiced a form of state religion, yet rarely concerned themselves with people's private beliefs, (Socrates being a notable exception). The role of religion in the life of the community was therefore quite different. Because of these differences, studying the

Greeks is not simply a matter of finding the first instances of some familiar institution. It is also a matter of studying what makes the ancient Greeks alien to us. Since the Greeks were themselves so influenced by the great and older cultures of the Ancient Near East, our exploration will take us right back to the tragic divide, when the *oikoumene*, or commonwealth, of the Eastern Mediterranean was split into the divided world of Greeks and Barbarians.

In this class we will cover the period from the Late Bronze Age, c. 1500 BC, down to the time of Alexander the Great, who died in 323 BC, concentrating on the two hundred year interval from 600-400 BC. The lectures will proceed chronologically. Each week the lectures will be delivered live, but older versions will also be available as video files in Panopto, uploaded to Canvas. These will be presented in 10-15 minute chunks, making it possible for you to view them at your own pace. Recitation discussions will take place in person and will focus on a discussion of primary sources. In recitations you are encouraged to thrash out your ideas about the Greeks and their society, so please keep up with the assigned readings. To help you keep on top of lecture topics, recitation readings and course requirements we will aggregate all materials in modules on Canvas.

My office is located at 264 Cohen Hall, ph. no. 898-8619. My office hours will be Wednesdays, 3:00-5:00. My e-mail address is jmcinern@sas.upenn.edu. The Teaching Assistants for the class are Maddalena Scarperi (mscarp@sas.upenn.edu), Helen Wong (hcwong@sas.upenn.edu), Angel Bustamante (angelbus@sas.upenn.edu) and Peter Satterthwaite (psatter@sas.upenn.edu).

COVID-related and other policies: Penn no longer requires students to wear masks in the classroom and for our large class meetings you may wear a mask or not. However, in recitations, TAs will set their own policies. Should your TA require that you wear a mask, do so. We do not take attendance at lectures, and I will make videos available of earlier version of the lectures recorded at the beginning of the pandemic. If you have to miss lecture because of illness these are a great way of catching up on lecture material. They are also a terrific way of reviewing work. The heart and soul of the class are the recitations. You must attend these. Students who miss **three** recitations, including recitations during the add/drop period, will fail the class. If you join the class late or miss a recitation for any reason, you must speak to your TA and write a make-up assignment. Students with a disability on record with the office of Students' Disabilities Services should discuss their needs with their TA and must provide documentation from SDS prior to the mid-term break. I do not accept

late work. If you get ill on the day a paper is due you will need a doctor's note. If an outside situation impacts your ability to perform you'll need a note from a dean. Because of travel demands, student athletes are strongly encouraged to register for Thursday, not Friday recitations.

More important than all these policies is this: we are here to help. If you find yourself falling behind or succumbing to the pressure of this class or to any other anxieties please, please reach out to your TA or to the instructor. We sincerely want you to succeed.

Requirements for the class are as follows:

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| 1. Map exercise and Museum exercise (compulsory, no grade) | |
| 2. Quizzes x 2 | 10% |
| 3. Recitation Participation | 10% |
| 4. Midterm | 30% |
| 5. Term paper (8-10 pages) | 30% |
| 6. Final | 20% |

Required Books

1. J. McInerney, *Ancient Greece. A New History*. Thames and Hudson, 2018.
2. Euripides, *Medea*, translated by Sheila Murnaghan. Norton Critical Edition.
3. Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Emily Wilson. Norton Edition.
4. Dillon and Garland, *Ancient Greece. Social and Historical Documents*. (Available on Canvas)

The first three books are available as a packet, at a reduced price, from the Bookstore. You are, of course, free to look for them online or second hand. Dillon and Garland's volume of primary source documents is available on the courses Canvas site.

Lecture and recitation schedule

Week 1 (Note: **Do** attend recitation!)

| Topic | Readings |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Lecture: Why study the Greeks? | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> . 15-31 |

Recitation: Course Introduction

For discussion: Do the Greeks deserve a privileged position in our understanding of history and culture? In thinking about this issue try to ask how historical consciousness is formed, and how we shape our views of the past in order to reinforce our views of the present.

Week 2 (Note: **Do** attend recitation!)

| Topic | Readings |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Lecture: Land and Geography | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> . 33-37 |

Recitation: Homer, *Odyssey* 1-8

For discussion: Compare the treatment of Telemachus at the court of Nestor of Pylos with the way he is treated by Menelaus. Also look at the treatment of, and behaviour of Odysseus, in the court of Alcinous. What do these episodes suggest about the Greek conception of *xenia*? What is the significance of the poem's attention to Telemachus?

Week 3

| Topic | Readings |
|--------------------------|--|
| Lectures: The Bronze Age | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> . 38-83 |

Recitation: Homer, *Odyssey* 9-15

For discussion: Some scholars speak of the ethnographic imagination in Homer. How are we to read the fantastic tales of the Lotus-Eaters, Laestrygonians, Cyclopes, and the Descent into the Underworld? They are entertaining episodes; are they also encounters with Monsters?

Week 4

| Topic | Readings |
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Lectures: Troy and Homer

McInerney, *Ancient Greece*. 83-108, 121-23

Recitation:

Homer, *Odyssey* 16-24

For discussion: How are we to explain the emphasis in the *Odyssey* on deception? Does Odysseus represent a conception of the hero that is alien to us? Why does Penelope test Odysseus? And following the death of the Suitors, how does the *Odyssey* end? And where, exactly does it end? Is the ending satisfactory?

Week 5

Topic

Reading

Lectures: Diaspora and Olympics

McInerney, *Ancient Greece* 108-120

Recitation:

Dillon and Garland, ch. 1

For discussion: What elements recur in the Greeks' stories of their colonial foundations? When one compares the Foundation Decree from Cyrene with the account in Herodotus is it possible to find alternative readings or discrepancies? How reliable, in the end, are the foundation stories of the Greek colonial experience?

Week 6

Fall Break. No recitations

Topic

Readings

Lectures: Archaic Athens and Sparta

McInerney, *Ancient Greece* 125-169

Week 7

Midterm in class

Topic

Readings

Lecture: Persia

McInerney, *Ancient Greece* 171-193

Recitation:

Dillon and Garland, ch. 6

For discussion: Sparta's victory over the Messenians and the creation of a servile class of hoplites has sometimes been called an example of 'internal colonization'. Does the enslavement of the neighbouring region help to explain the peculiar direction of Sparta's development in the Archaic period? In the light of Sparta's concern with *eunomia* how should we interpret the Rhetra?

Week 8

| Topic | Readings |
|---|---|
| Lectures: Persian Wars and Empire | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 195-8, 206-217 |
| Recitation: | Dillon and Garland, ch. 8 |
| For discussion: Over the course of the 5 th century the Delian league was transformed into an Athenian empire. How can this transformation be charted in the documentary sources of the time? What transformations were taking place within Athens at the same time? | |

Week 9

| Topic | Readings |
|--|---|
| Lectures: Democracy: Theory and Practice | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 164-169; 194-206 |
| Recitation: | Dillon and Garland, ch. 10 |
| For discussion: In the documentary sources that deal with the workings of the Athenian democracy which institutions or practices seem to have been central to the Athenian understanding of democracy? Is there a theory of democracy at work here? Is the Athenians community in any way different from the Athenian democracy? | |

Week 10

| Topic | Readings |
|--|--|
| Lectures: Exclusion (Gender and Slavery) | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 234-242 |
| Recitation: | Euripides, <i>Medea</i> |
| For discussion: Euripides, <i>Medea</i> is often seen as an impassioned denunciation of the position of women in Athenian society. How do you account for an Athenian playwright expecting his male audience to sympathize with Medea's predicament? | |

Week 11

| Topic | Readings |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Lectures: Religion and Sacrifice | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 247-260, 268-271 |
| Recitation: | Dillon and Garland, ch. 12. |

For discussion: The concept of 'polis-religion' is sometimes used to explain Athenian society. Can religion be divorced from Greek life or is the phenomenon embedded in Greek society?

Week 12

| Topic | Readings |
|---|--|
| Lectures: The Peloponnesian War. i and ii | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 273-295 |
| Recitation: | Thuc. 2-5 pdf (Canvas Materials). |

For discussion: "By the time the tiny island of Melos, a Spartan colony, refused to become part of Athens' alliance, in 416, the Athenians no longer felt any compunction about punishing civilians. For many historians, Melos marks a watershed in Athens' moral decline." When one reads the Melian Dialogue can it be juxtaposed to the Funeral Oration of Pericles?

Week 13 **Thanksgiving Week; no Wednesday lecture**

| Topic | Readings |
|---------------------------|--|
| Lecture: Athens in Defeat | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 297-299 |

Recitation: Museum Visit. Penn operates on a modified schedule this week. Thursday and Friday classes are moved to Tuesday and Wednesday. We will hold these recitations in the Museum but these sessions are not obligatory. A Museum assignment is due after Thanksgiving but you can complete this on your own.

Week 14

| Topic | Readings |
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| Lectures: Socrates and the 4 th century | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 299-309 |
| Recitation: | Dillon and Garland, ch. 11 |

For discussion: It has been argued that Greek civilization was only possible because of slavery. Were direct participatory democracy and slavery functionally linked? If so, how?

Week 15

| Topic | Readings |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Lectures: Philip and Alexander | McInerney, <i>Ancient Greece</i> 309-348 |

Recitation: Do the careers of Philip and Alexander show that the *polis* was an evolutionary dead-end?
Can the culture of the *polis* flourish in the context of a kingdom?

Week 16

Exam Review