

HIST 301: Classical Greece
Fall Semester, 2020
ONLINE COURSE



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COURSE RATIONALE:

Well over two and a half millennia ago, a cluster of people scattered around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea embarked on a series of grand experiments. With a common language—Greek—and a common alphabet (borrowed from their Phoenician neighbors), they proceeded to cobble together a common heritage whose influence is still with us today.

The Greeks developed their identity in conversation with the many civilizations they encountered, from Persia and Mesopotamia to Phoenicia and North Africa. Among the traditions they confronted was the idea that only a chosen few—great kings and heroes—had special access to the gods, and because of this, they alone had the right to tell lesser mortals (i.e., the rest of us) what to do. The Ancient Greeks are famous for rejecting this idea; and they spent centuries developing alternatives to the “divinely-ordained monarch” approach to civil society.

Sadly, these efforts would ultimately fail; by the 4th century BC they were forced to surrender their hard-won wisdom to a man—King Alexander III of Macedon—who openly embraced the idea of his divine authority. And yet, even when reduced to subservience, the Greek tradition of questioning authority, even questioning the gods themselves, endured. For they had posed questions which still seem revolutionary today: what makes the best society? What values should that society have? How should it be organized? And how do we know what to do, if there are no god-given laws to guide us?

This semester, we will follow the Greeks’ story from the caves of the Paleolithic Era to the “Golden Age” of Athens in the 5th Century BC and beyond, focusing on the interplay between the Greek tradition of intellectual inquiry and the hard realities of economics, politics, and war. We will pass from the Greeks’ early struggles against the Hittite and Persian empires to their own hard-scrabble triumphs, their efforts to create more perfect societies, and we will end with the legacy of a ‘divine king’ who sought to reshape the entire known world into an imperial, international Greek culture.

In this course we’ll see just how rich and complex the Greek legacy is. It has the power to appall as well as to inspire; but, as the twenty-first century rolls on, the Greeks remain good to think about, and with.

Now, about that meme: To break the ice I chose a goofy image for our cover: the sculptor Myron’s famous discus thrower trying and failing—miserably—to load the dishwasher (you’ll also see him on p. 253 of our textbook, minus the dishwasher). It’s silly, but it reminds us that it’s a bad idea to assume the Ancient Greeks are like us, and that all we need to do is to follow the Greek example. As we see in the news every day our relationship with the past is constantly changing; each new generation comes to the Greeks with a different life-experience and a completely different set of questions. So as we go through the semester keep in mind: I’m not here to tell you what to think about the Greeks. My job is to enable you to come to your own conclusions, and empower you to raise new questions about their legacy. Any resemblance between events today and back then are purely coincidental.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Sarah B. Pomeroy, Stanley M. Burstein, Walter Donlan, Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, David W. Tandy with Georgia Tsouvala. *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*. Oxford University Press, 4th ed., 2018. [LCCN-2016059031] = cited from here on as P & Co.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Each Week, in addition to chapter readings from our textbook, I will also provide you with primary source materials – there will be some weeks when primary sources will be the only assigned reading. These sources are designed to reflect upon the week’s readings, and provide first-hand perspectives on the issues we will be discussing.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By taking this course, you will:

- Acquire and retain specific knowledge about a crucial period in human history. You will, for example, learn how the building blocks of democracy first appeared in ancient Greece, how Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, and why the Greeks have had—and, moreover, continue to have—such a profound impact on the way we think about science, politics, art, and a whole range of other topics.
- Consider how your knowledge of ancient Greek history and historiography to better understand both current events and other periods of history.
- Recognize the importance of understanding historical events in context.
- Develop the ability to find, evaluate, and use both primary and secondary sources.
- Develop critical thinking skills.
- Develop the ability to communicate effectively in both formal and informal online contexts.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS: OVERVIEW AND EXPECTATIONS

Expectations: This course consists of readings, online lectures, links to videos/articles, written assignments, and online discussion. Each of these parts is integral to the course as a whole. Accordingly, you will need to engage with all of them throughout the semester.

Participation: Your thoughtful, engaged participation is necessary, especially in an online environment! There are many ways to participate, so please reflect on your current approach and challenge yourself to experiment. Some possibilities are listed below:

- Read, carefully and thoroughly, all of our assignments.
(HINT: Watch the introductory lectures for each week, to help you get started.)
- In your weekly notes—see specifics below—be sure to offer your opinion of the readings, along with your summary of the more important points they raise.
- Discussions will be centered primarily on the week’s primary source material. Your participation in discussion groups will be in two phases: 1) your initial answer to the question I have posed for the week, including a specific citation from the primary sources, and 2) your response to someone else’s opinion (e.g., agreeing/supporting, elaborating, asking for clarification, or expressing a different point of view), again referring to primary sources to reinforce your response.
- Discussion Boards are an excellent place to ask your own questions – especially if there is something from the readings that has confused, perplexed, fascinated, or disturbed you.
All questions are valid and necessary, never hesitate to ask.
- When responding to classmates, read their remarks carefully—try not to jump to conclusions, and remember that the conversation would go very differently if we were talking in person.

- Finally, respect your classmates. Discussions thrive on a diversity of viewpoints, but they must be offered, criticized, and debated respectfully.

Please note that *weekly notes and discussions will constitute your participation grade*; timely participation in both cases are essential—so do your best to keep up with our schedule!

OPTIONAL LIVE DISCUSSIONS

In addition to socially-distanced gatherings outside at coffee shops near campus, I will conduct weekly live discussions—a space where we can talk more informally about the material, about current events, about what it's like as we wait for COVID-19 to stop ruling our daily lives. These sessions will be on Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, and will be easy to access through the course website. For those who can't join us, I will post links to recordings of these live session each week.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Here is a summary of the written work I will expect from each of you during the semester:

#1: Introductory Essay: Because we have such a large class, the best way to get to know you is for you to write a brief essay, 1+ pages (double-spaced) will do, about your heritage, and what interests you about Ancient Greece. [NOTE: I grade this assignment solely for completion; speak freely!] Upload your essay onto Blackboard as a Word or PDF file. *I will read, grade and respond to your essay, so look for those blue flags!*

#2: Brief Notes for Each Weekly Reading, Posted on Blackboard: As mentioned above, each week I will expect you to write—briefly, *no more than 3-5 full paragraphs*—about our assigned readings. [NOTE: I grade these assignments mainly for completion; respond to the readings as you see fit.] This is your chance to start thinking independently about the textbook and primary sources, to help you raise questions about them. *I will read, grade, and respond to your notes each week.*

In each of your weekly responses, I need you to write in complete sentences (no bullets!) about both. Consider:

- The important points from each reading—what the authors are trying to say;
- For primary sources especially, give me your impression of the author's point of view—what they know (or *think* they know), as well as when and where they are writing. Who is the writer's target audience, and what effect do they hope to have? To inform? To entertain? To inspire?
- How does this source affect your understanding of the events they describe, the events they were a part of?
- *Notes for each week's assignments must be in Word/PDF form and uploaded onto Blackboard.*
Remember: Responses are graded for completion.

#'s 3 & 4: Mid-Term, and End-of-Semester Essays (4-6 Pages Total, Double-Spaced, Uploaded on Blackboard): Because I'm not a big fan of binge-and-purge exams—and because whenever historians write, they *always* keep their sources handy—you will have two opportunities, at the mid-point and the end of our semester, to write a series of brief essays about the material we have covered. I will give you a menu of possible topics to choose from; and I invite you to write about what interests or concerns you the most. NOTE: for each essay, I will need you to look up at least one peer-reviewed source from the JSTOR database (available online through GMU's library site) to complement the materials we have already covered together. *Make sure your answers are based on specific citations from our readings*; and use these essays to think further about what we are reading, what those readings say about the

history and culture of Ancient Greece, and its relevance to current events.

Mid-Term Essays are due October 11, End-of-Semester Essays will be due December 14.

#5: Research Paper: (7-10 Pages, Double-Spaced, Uploaded on Blackboard). Within the first few weeks, you and I will agree on a research topic related to Ancient Greece—the topic will be entirely up to you. You will then go to GMU’s online databases, identify relevant articles/books, and by mid-semester, October 11, I expect you submit an Annotated Bibliography with at least five (5) articles on your topic. You will then read the articles and try to get a sense of the ongoing conversation about the topic you have chosen. Then offer your own insights – what do these scholars seem to get right? Do they agree or disagree with each other? Where do you stand on the questions raised by their work? Is there anything they missed, anything that needs to be considered more deeply? The dates for your Research Paper are as follows: email me your topic by September 13, submit an Annotated Bibliography on Blackboard by October 11, and upload your Final Draft on November 22.

The resulting paper should consist of: Title page, followed by 7-10 pages of text, followed by bibliography.

GRADING ELEMENTS:

<u>Task or Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>
Introductory Essay:	10
Weekly Notes & Discussion	40
Mid-Term Essays	15
Final Essays	15
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>20</u>
Total:	100%

A STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACISM:

As a member of the Department of History and Art History, I will always work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive standards of excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the often-subtle ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural expressions of racism contribute to inequality and injustice, against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color—in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities.

Although we are online this semester, I want this to be a place where we can still break bread together, and work in the spirit of mutual respect and openness to new ideas, new experiences. I believe that the work of anti-racism, of creating a truly civil society, starts with each of us. I sincerely hope that together, we will build a body of knowledge which will empower all of us to take actions rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that we will carry with us throughout our lives.

HIST 301 - WEEKLY SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

WEEK & DATES	TOPICS	Readings:
Week 1: 8/24 - 8/30/20	Early Greece & the Bronze Age	P & Co. Chapter 1 Franchthi Cave Website
Week 2: 8/31 - 9/6/20	The Early Iron Age, <i>circa</i> 1200-750/700 BC	P & Co. Chapter 2 Homer, <i>Iliad</i> Book 1 & <i>Odyssey</i> Book 2; Thucydides <i>Peloponnesian War</i> , 1:1-21
Week 3: 9/7 - 9/13/20	Archaic Greece, 750/700-480 BC	P & Co. Chapter 3 Hesiod, <i>Works & Days</i> (excerpts), Sappho & the Lyric Poets
Week 4: 9/14 - 9/20/20	Sparta	P & Co. Chapter 4 Xenophon, "The Spartan Constitution," "The Great Rhetra," Tyrtaeus Fragments, Plutarch, "Sayings of Spartan Women," Herodotus <i>Histories</i> , (excerpts)
Week 5: 9/21 - 9/27/20	The Growth of Athens & the Persian Wars	P & Co. Chapter 5 Plutarch, <i>Life of Solon</i> Herodotus, <i>Histories</i> , (excerpts) Aeschylus, <i>Persians</i> , (excerpts)
Week 6: 9/28 - 10/4/20	Rivalries of the Greek City-States & the Growth of Athenian Democracy	P & Co. Chapter 6 Perictione, "Treatises on Women" Berard: "The Order of Women" Plutarch, <i>Life of Themistocles</i>
Week 7: 10/5 - 10/11/20	Greece on the Eve of the Peloponnesian War	P & Co. Chapter 7 The Brea Decree Gorgias, <i>Encomion on Helen</i> Aristotle: <i>Poetics</i> (excerpts)
Week 8: 10/12 - 10/18/20	The Peloponnesian War	P & Co. Chapter 8 Euripides, <i>Medea</i> , <i>Trojan Women</i> , <i>Helen</i> (excerpts)
Week 9: 10/19 - 10/25/20	Primary Sources: Philosophy & Attic Comedy	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> (excerpts) Aristophanes, <i>The Clouds</i> (excerpts)
Week 10: 10/26 - 11/1/20	The Greek World of the Early Fourth Century	P & Co. Chapter 9 "Decree of Aristoteles" Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> (excerpts) Plato, <i>Laws</i> , <i>Statesman</i> (excerpts)
Week 11: 11/2 - 11/8/20	Farewell to Tragedy & Comedy	Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i> (excerpts) Aristophanes, <i>The Frogs</i> (excerpts)
Week 12: 11/9 - 11/15/20	Philip II & Macedonian Supremacy	P & Co. Chapter 10 Demosthenes (excerpts)

		Andocides (excerpt) Isocrates (excerpts) Plutarch, <i>Life of Demosthenes</i>
Week 13: 11/16 – 11/22/20	Alexander the Great	P & Co. Chapter 11 Plutarch, <i>Fortune of Alexander</i> (excerpts) Arrian, <i>Anabasis</i> (excerpts) Diodorus, <i>Library of History</i> (excerpts)
Week 14: 11/23 – 11/29/20	Alexander's Successors & the Cosmopolis	P & Co. Chapter 12 The Parian Marble Menander, <i>The Grouch</i> (excerpts) Diogenes Laertius, <i>Epicurus</i> (excerpts) Euclid, <i>Elements of Geometry</i> (excerpts) Apollonius, <i>Conic Sections</i> (excerpts)
Week 15: 11/30 – 12/6/20	Epilogue: Rome & Byzantium	P & Co. Epilogue Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> (excerpt) Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i> (excerpt) Marcus Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> (excerpt) <i>Book of Maccabees, Book of John</i> (excerpts)
Week 16: 12/7 – 12/13/20	Final Essays Due December 14 !!	

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Communications: All electronic communications will be via Mason email accounts or Blackboard.

Writing Support: The Writing Center is a free service dedicated to helping members of the Mason community develop more effective strategies at every stage in the writing process. I would highly recommend that you arrange for a one-on-one consultation in preparation for your first paper. For more information, please visit <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/> or contact the writing center directly (Robinson Hall B, Room 213; 703-993-1200; wcenter@gmu.edu).

The Honor Code: I must remind you about the Mason Honor Code, the provisions of which are laid out here: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>. Please note especially the text of the Honor Code Statement, as well as the clear definitions of key terms (i.e., cheating, plagiarism, stealing, and lying). For the purposes of this course, it is essential that students: (a) give credit where credit is due in all papers by citing sources for all quotations, paraphrased arguments, or summaries of basic evidence; and (b) refrain from copying a fellow student's responses to quizzes and exams administered in class. Students with questions should see the instructor prior to the submission of any work which might violate the Honor Code.

Accommodations: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). For further information, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> or contact ODS directly (Student Union Building 1, Suite 2500; 703.993.2474; ods@gmu.edu). Please contact ODS as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. Please also make an appointment to meet with me before the end of the second week of term. Students who wish to take part in religious observances that conflict with their

participation in the course should make an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Other Campus Resources:

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[George Mason University Libraries](#)

[Learning Services](#) (free academic coaching, workshops, and online resources)

[Patriot Pantry](#) (access to food and other basic supplies for students unable to afford them)

[Stay Mason Student Support Fund](#) (support for students at risk of dropping out due to financial distress)

[Student Support and Advocacy Center](#)