

HIST 301: CLASSICAL GREECE

Fall Semester, 2023

Thursdays, 4:30-7:10 PM

Horizon Hall Room 1012



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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.

These efforts would ultimately fail; by the 4th century BC the independent city-states surrendered their hard-won wisdom to a man—King Alexander III of Macedon—who would openly embrace 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 matter most? How should a society 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, to 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 in any way 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.

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 – NOTE: there will be some weeks when primary sources will be the only assigned reading. These sources are designed to amplify the week’s readings and the events they cover, as well as 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 helps you 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 forums. 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:

- Watch each week’s lecture first – in addition to giving you the basics, it will provide information worth keeping in mind as you move onto the readings.
- Read, carefully and thoroughly, all of our assignments, both in the textbook and primary sources.
- In your weekly Brief Notes—see specifics below—be sure to offer your opinion of the lecture and readings, along with your summary of the more important points they raise.
- Required Discussion Forums (the last phase of each week’s work) will be centered primarily on the week’s primary source material. Your participation in your discussion group 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 post (e.g., agreeing/supporting, elaborating, asking for clarification, or expressing a different point of view), again referring to primary sources to reinforce your response.
- Remember: When responding to classmates, read their remarks carefully—try not to jump to conclusions, keep in mind, the conversation would go *very* differently if we were talking in person.
- Finally, respect your classmates. Discussions thrive on a diversity of viewpoints, but your responses must always be offered respectfully.

Please note that Brief Notes and Required Discussion Forums will constitute a substantial part of your final grade; timely participation in both cases is essential—so do your best to keep up with our schedule!

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 background, and what interests you about Ancient Greece. [NOTE: I grade this assignment solely for completion; speak freely!] Upload your essay onto Blackboard, under the “Writing Assignments” tab, as a Word or PDF file. *Be sure to look for my comments!* 100 Points—think of it as your first “A” in this class.

#2: Brief Notes on Lecture, Chapter & Primary Source Readings (Submitted under “Our Weekly Work”). Once each week, I expect you to write briefly about what you have learned, and about the questions you have from what we have read together. These Brief Notes should include material from a) lecture, b) from the textbook reading, and c) from the Primary Sources Dossier. Keep it short and sweet, use complete sentences – no bullet points! I won’t need more than 4-5 paragraphs, but this is your golden opportunity to think independently of the material, and develop your own personal approach to history.

Upload each “Brief Notes” assignment as a Word/PDF file. 20 points per week, 300 pts. total.

In your posts I need you to write *in complete sentences* about the following:

- The most important points from lecture and the readings (at least 3-5 things);
- The most surprising things you learned (things you didn’t know before—at least one!);
- And, last but not least, the things you want to discuss, or learn more about.

#3: Required Discussion Forums, 1 for Each of our 15 Units (Submitted under “Our Weekly Work”). I will create required, but informal, discussion forums for each Unit in this course—the online equivalent of the time during in-class lecture when I write a question on the board, and you break into groups to talk things over. I will divide the class into several groups, and will regularly post questions for your smaller circle to discuss. Remember—this is designed for just you and your classmates. I just need to see you talking together about the material, no need to get things “right.” This is also a great place to post observations that don’t make it into your Brief Notes. 6 points per week, 90 pts. total.

#’s 4 & 5: Mid-Term and End of Semester Essays (Submitted under “Writing Assignments”).

Instead of exams, at the mid-point and the end of our time together I will give you an opportunity to focus on the topics that interest you the most, and write brief essays on them. These essays will also give you a chance to think more deeply about how the history of western civilization impacts you.

For both the Mid-Term and Final Essays, I will give you a Menu of questions to choose from, broken into two categories. You will select one essay question from each of these two (2) categories, which means you will write two (2) short essays total. For each essay, I will need you to look up at least one peer-reviewed article from the George Mason University Library databases (JSTOR, GALE, EBSCO, etc.) in addition to the textbook material you cite. *Upload the Mid-Term Essays as a single file, in Word/PDF format; do the same for the End of Semester Essays as well.* 150 points each, 300 pts. total.

#6: Research Paper: (7-10 Pages, Double-Spaced, Uploaded on Blackboard; Submitted under “Writing Assignments”). Within the first two weeks (by September 6), 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, Sunday, October 9, 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?

Your Research Paper will occur in Three (3) stages:

- ✓ First, you will submit your Research Topic. Try to keep your research question narrow, and I'll advise you if I think it's too broad. Due Wednesday, September 6. 20 points.
- ✓ Second, you will submit your Annotated Bibliography—telling me which articles you will read, and why you chose them. Due Sunday, October 8. 20 points.
- ✓ Third, you will submit your Research Paper, on Sunday, November 19. (160 points).

The resulting paper should consist of: Title page, followed by 7-10 pages of text, followed by a separate bibliography page. Footnotes/in-text citations are required, using the citation method of your choice.

GRADING ELEMENTS:

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<u>Task or Assignment</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Introductory Essay:	100
Brief Notes	300 (20/Week)
Required Discussion Forum	90 (6/Week)
Mid-Term Essays	150
Final Essays	150
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>200 (20 + 20 + 160)</u>
Total:	990 Points

GRADING SCALE:

90-100%	A	Outstanding
	A+	97 – 100 (960--990 points)
	A	93-96.9 (920-959 points)
	A-	90-92.9 (891-919 points)
80-89%	B	Above Average
	B+	87-89.9 (861-890 points)
	B	83-86.9 (821-860 points)
	B-	80-82.9 (792-820 points)
70-79%	C	Average
	C+	77-79.9 (762-791 points)
	C	73-76.9 (722-761 points)
	C-	70-72.9 (693-721 points)
60-69%	D	Below Average (594-692 points)
59%-Below	F	Failure (no credit for the course) (593 points & Below)

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: 8/24/23	Early Greece & the Bronze Age	P & Co. Chapter 1 Franchthi Cave Website
Week 2: 8/31/23	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: 9/7/23	Archaic Greece, 750/700-480 BC	P & Co. Chapter 3 Hesiod, <i>Works & Days</i> (excerpts), Sappho & the Lyric Poets RESEARCH TOPIC DUE 9/6
Week 4: 9/14/23	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: 9/21/23	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: 9/28/23	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: 10/5/23	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) ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
Week 8: 10/12/23	The Peloponnesian War	P & Co. Chapter 8 Euripides, <i>Medea</i>, <i>Trojan Women</i>, <i>Helen</i> (excerpts) MID-TERM ESSAYS DUE 10/15

Week 9: 10/19/23	Primary Sources: Philosophy & Attic Comedy	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> (excerpts) Aristophanes, <i>The Clouds</i> (excerpts)
Week 10: 10/26/23	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: 11/2/23	Farewell to Tragedy & Comedy	Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i> (excerpts) Aristophanes, <i>The Frogs</i> (excerpts)
Week 12: 11/9/23	Philip II & Macedonian Supremacy	P & Co. Chapter 10 Demosthenes (excerpts) Andocides (excerpt) Isocrates (excerpts) Plutarch, <i>Life of Demosthenes</i>
Week 13: 11/16/23	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: AT HOME: No Class on November 23 Thanksgiving Recess!!	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) RESEARCH PAPER DUE 11/19
Week 15: 11/30/23	Epilogue: Rome, Byzantium & Christianity	P & Co. Epilogue Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> (excerpt) Plotinus, <i>Enneads</i> (excerpt) Marcus Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> (excerpt) <i>Book of Maccabees</i>, <i>Book of John</i> (excerpts)
EXAM WEEK: 12/12/23, 4:30 to 7:15 PM	POT-LUCK & MOVIES INSTEAD OF EXAMS !!	FINAL ESSAYS DUE DECEMBER 7 !!

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](#)