



CLST 181SK

Greek Civilization: the Origins of Western Culture

Fall 2014

Dates / contact hours: 300 contact minutes per week for seven weeks

Academic Credit: 1 course

Areas of Knowledge: **CZ**

Modes of Inquiry: **CCI**

Course format: (e.g. lecture, lecture + discussion sections, lecture + lab, seminar) seminar

Instructor's Information

William A. Johnson, william.johnson@duke.edu, 919-684-2082

Prerequisite(s), if applicable

None

Course Description

Ancient Greece boasts a breathtaking array of "beginnings" in the course of western civilization, including the alphabet, the western ideas of "history" (historiography), formal logic and philosophy, staged drama (tragedy and comedy), democracy, "realistic" sculpture— and much else. From Greece there also derives literature, art, and architecture of exceptional quality and influence.

The principal goals of the course are: (1) a foundational introduction to the literature, history, and material culture of ancient Greece, (2) a critical and systematic exploration of strategies for interpreting the cultural artefacts of western antiquity, (3) thoughtful interrogation of the narratives that inform typical ways of constructing cultural "beginnings" in the West.

The course is taught topically and as a seminar, rotating among assignments that focus on the textbook narrative (from a standard western civilization textbook by OUP), primary texts (Homer,

Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles, Euripides), and visual resources focusing on art and archaeology. There are routine brief written assignments, two mid-term exams, and a final.

For course outline, schedule, and resources, see: http://people.duke.edu/~wj25/Greek_Originals

Course Goals / Objectives

The principal goals of the course are: (1) a foundational introduction to the literature, history, and material culture of ancient Greece, (2) a critical and systematic exploration of strategies for interpreting the cultural artefacts of western antiquity, (3) thoughtful interrogation of the narratives that inform typical ways of constructing cultural "beginnings" in the West.

Required Text(s)/Resources

S. Pomeroy et al. *A Brief History of Ancient Greece: Politics, Society, and Culture*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0195372359

Robert Fagles, trans. *Homer, The Iliad*. Penguin Classic. ISBN 978-0140275360

M. I. Finley, *The Portable Greek Historians*. Viking. ISBN 978-0140150650

D. Grene, R. Lattimore, trans. *Greek Tragedies vol. 1*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN 978-0226307909

B. Jowett, trans. rev. H. Pelliccia. *Selected Dialogues of Plato*. Modern Library. ISBN 9780375758409

Visuals, maps, study guides provided online: http://people.duke.edu/~wj25/Greek_Originals

Recommended Text(s)/Resources

None

Additional Materials (optional)

None

Course Requirements / Key Evidences

Course requirements: There will be routine, brief written and/or oral assignments by way of summing up or exploring further, roughly every week or two. Classroom discussion will be thoughtful, respectable, vigorous, exciting. There will be two one-hour examinations, and a final exam that includes as a take-home component a substantial essay. Examinations will test your command of factual information, your knowledge of the primary texts we read in translation, and your ability to put these materials together into an informed narrative or analytic essay. You are expected to come to every class, and to come well prepared; this is a seminar in which your daily contribution is an essential component of our learning and your grade.

Graded material will be weighted as follows:

Class work, short papers, presentations	30%
One-hour examinations (2)	40%
Final examination	30%

Technology Considerations, if applicable

Necessary equipment are a seminar room and an overhead digital projector.

Assessment Information / Grading Procedures

Exams will be evaluated both for factual content, knowledge of primary texts and objects, and the ability to deploy factual content in an analytic capacity. Written assignments will be evaluated for writing competence as well as for knowledge-set and creative or analytic content.

Diversity and Intercultural Learning (see Principles of DKU Liberal Arts Education)

This course will be of particular interest to Chinese and other international students for at least two reasons: (1) it is broadly informative about early cultural traditions widely taken as formative in the West; (2) it implicitly invites comparison with early cultural traditions in the East, and will raise interesting discussion and interrogation of western narratives having to do with the "origins" of various components of western intellectual thought, literature, art, politics, and social formation. (Wherever possible, this implicit comparison between "East" and "West" will be exposed in group discussion.)

Course Policies and Guidelines

Students are expected to come to every class; this is a seminar in which each student's daily contribution is an essential component of our learning and your grade. The Duke Academic Integrity Policy of course applies in every particular: see <http://trinity.duke.edu/academic-requirements?p=academic-integrity>.

Tentative Course Outline or Schedule

The full (if also still developing) course syllable, schedule, and resources can be found at: http://people.duke.edu/~wj25/Greek_Originals

Course Outline

Introduction: Greeks and other peoples around the Mediterranean

1. The Invention of the Alphabet (week 1)

Typology of writing systems

Writing systems and cognition

In what sense was the alphabet “invented”?

Readings: Pomeroy on the early Mediterranean; Powell on early scripts and the alphabet; Olson on writing systems and cognition.

2. The Creation of Literary Culture (weeks 2 & 3)

Early Greece: poetry and society

The Iliad as a poetic text

The Iliad and Personal Identity, Greek Identity: how poetry constructs culture

The Iliad and the Meaning of Life

Readings: Pomeroy on Bronze Age, Dark Age; Hesiod, selections; *Odyssey* book 8; *Iliad*

3. The Making of History (week 4)

From mythos to logos: what is “History”?

Herodotus, the “Father of History”

Herodotus and Thucydides

Readings: Pomeroy on archaic to classical Greece; substantial selections from Herodotus and Thucydides.

4. The Rise of Democracy: Pericles, Athens, and Empire (week 5)

Democracy, Empire, and War

The “Classical Moment”: Art, Intellectualism, and Empire

Limits of Empire; Victims of War

Readings: Pomeroy on Athenian Democracy and the Peloponnesian War; Thucydides, selections; Pollitt on Athenian art and architecture; Euripides, *Trojan Women*

5. The Birth of Drama (week 6)
Tragedy and the Polis
Elites and intellectualism

Readings: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*; Sophocles, *Antigone*; Euripides, *Hippolytus*

6. Socrates and the Origins of Western Philosophy (week 7)
The Idea of Philosophy
Philosophy and sexuality
Popular views of intellectuals and intellectualism

Readings: Parmenides, selection; Plato, *Ion*, *Apology*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and selections;
Ormand on Greek sexuality; Aristophanes, *Clouds*

Note: the division into weeks in this outline is approximate: some units will take a bit more, some a bit less. Midterm exams will fall at the end of Units 2 and 4.

Bibliography (optional)

Post / course codes
18 February 2014