

HSTR 351: Democracy: Ancient to Modern

Instructor: Scott Lawin Arcenas (scott.arcenas@umontana.edu)

Class time: MWF, 12:00 – 12:50

Location: LA 205

Office hours (LA 263): Wed, 1:30 – 3:00; and by appointment

Course Description

During the 6th century BCE, the Greeks invented a new form of government they called *demokratia* (“power of the people”), whose defining characteristics were equality among and meaningful participation by all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status. In this course, we will explore this historically distinctive form of government, discuss the impact of Greek democracy on the development of modern political thought, and use our knowledge of democratic history to think through the many challenges that face democratic societies today.

Key questions we will discuss include the following: What are the essential features of Greek democracy? Why did the Greeks believe that elections were undemocratic? To what extent did Greek democracy rely on the exploitation of slaves, women, and foreigners? How and why did Greek democracy differ from modern democracy? Is Greek democracy democratic, as we currently understand the term? Is modern democracy democratic, as Greeks understood the term?

Learning Outcomes:

By taking this class, you will:

- Acquire and retain specific knowledge about the history of democracy. You will, for example, learn how Greek democracy worked, with particular attention to democratic institutions, ideologies, and practices; what it was like to live in an ancient Greek democracy; what historical circumstances led the Greeks to develop such a peculiar form of government; and how Greek democracy has influenced the development of modern political thought;
- Use your knowledge of ancient Greek democracy 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 write in clear (i.e., well-organized, properly punctuated, grammatically and syntactically correct) prose.

Requirements

Expectations:

This course comprises four parts: readings, lectures, written assignments, and in-class exercises (including discussion, debates, etc.). Each of the four parts is integral to the course as a whole. Accordingly, you will need to engage with all of them throughout the semester. As both lectures and in-class exercises will presuppose familiarity with the readings, please be sure to complete *all* readings *prior to* the relevant class.

Participation (in class):

Your attendance and thoughtful, engaged participation are mandatory. There are many ways to participate in a history course. Please reflect on your current approach and challenge yourself to experiment with alternatives. Some possibilities are listed below:

- Show up for class prepared (i.e., having done the required reading and/or assignment, with a copy of the relevant text(s) in hand).
- Offer your opinion of the readings.
- Respond to someone else's opinion (e.g., agreeing/supporting, elaborating, asking for clarification, or expressing a different point of view).
- Ask a question – either a discussion question or merely something from the readings that confused/perplexed/fascinated you.
- Help get the discussion back on track.
- Play devil's advocate.
- Listen– yes, this is also participating! Above all, you must be an active listener.
- Finally, respect your classmates. Discussions thrive on a diversity of viewpoints, but they must be offered, criticized, and debated respectfully.

Participation (exercises):

Occasional before- and in-class exercises will also contribute to your participation grade, and you will not be able to turn in these exercises after the end of the relevant class. Accordingly, repeated absences will have a magnified impact on your overall grade for the course.

Reading responses:

Once or twice a week, you will complete a short (c. 100-500 word) reading response or other written assignment designed to help solidify your understanding of the topics under consideration and promote engagement with interpretive issues. Relatively minor responses are indicated on the syllabus with a lower-case letter (e.g., 1a), while more significant responses are indicated with an upper-case letter (e.g., 2B). Most responses will be evaluated according to rubrics that will be distributed in advance and/or clearly indicated on the associated Moodle assignments; the only exceptions will be credit/no credit.

Notecard assignments:

Roughly once per week, you will be asked to complete a short (c. 5-min) notecard assignment in class. These assignments, which are designed to assess your understanding of major topics discussed in the readings and/or in class, will ask you to briefly (4-5 bullet points) respond to one of a selection of prompts that I will provide at the start of class.

Take-home assessments:

You will complete two take-home tests over the course of the term. The provisional due dates are Sunday, March 10, and Friday, May 10. We will discuss the tests at greater length 1-2 weeks before they are due, and a study guide will be provided.

We will discuss each take-home test at greater length the week before it is due. Please note, however, that you will be free to use your notes, books, etc.; and that you will not need to do any additional reading. In other words, you will be able to complete the tests based entirely on the assigned readings and material covered in class.

Schedule of Classes

Weeks 1-2: Introduction

1. Fri, Jan 19: General Introduction

No reading for today

Assignment 1a: introductory survey

2. Mon, Jan 22: Concepts 1 (modern)

R. Dahl, *On Democracy* (Yale UP, 1998), [pp. 1-25, 35-43](#).

As you read, take a look at these [guiding questions](#).

Assignment 2a: What is democracy?

3. Wed, Jan 24: Context

I. Morris and B. Powell, *The Greeks*, 2nd ed. (Pearson, 2010): [pp. 1-10](#).

[The Behistun Inscription](#)

M. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes* (Oklahoma, 1999): [pp. 1-3](#).

Assignment 2a: three most important things

4. Fri, Jan 26: Concepts 2 (ancient)

Herodotus, *The Histories*, [3.80-83](#)

Polybius, *The Histories*, [6.1, 3-10](#)

Close reading [handout](#)

Week 3: Homer and the beginnings of Greek political thought

5. Mon, Jan 29

Homer, *Iliad*, 1.1-305, 2.1-400 ([week 3 readings](#) combined)

Assignment 3a: Iliad key passages

6. Wed, Jan 31

No new reading; review with particular attention to discussion questions (on the document linked above)

Take a look at these [examples](#) from assignment 3a (thanks to everyone who agreed to let me use their writing!)

7. Fri, Feb 2

Homer, *Odyssey*, 2.1-259

[Assignment 3b: Odyssey key passages](#)

Week 4: The rise of democracy in the archaic period (values)

8. Mon, Feb 5

Selections from I. Morris 1996, "[The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy](#)."

Background reading (optional): S. Pomeroy et al. 2014, *A Brief History of Ancient Greece*, [pp. 41-58](#)

9. Wed, Feb 7

Selections from Tyrtaios ([fragments 10-12](#))

Selections from Hesiod ([Theogony, 2.81-97, Works and Days, 2.213-69](#))

[Assignment 4a: key passages OR 3 important things](#)

10. Fri, Feb 9

Herodotus on Solon (1.29-34)

Selections from Solon (fragments 4, 6, 15, 33, and 37)

[combined readings](#)

[Assignment 4b: key passages OR 3 important things](#)

Week 5: The rise of democracy in the archaic period (events, institutions)

11. Mon, Feb 12

[Aristotle] on Solon ([Constitution of the Athenians, 5-12](#))

S. Pomeroy et al. 2014, [pp. 121-136](#)

12. Wed, Feb 14

[Herodotus on Peisistratos](#) (1.59-64, 5.62-65) and 508/7 (66.78)

[\[Aristotle\] on Peisistratos](#) (*Constitution of the Athenians*, 15-16)

[Assignment 5: key passage analysis](#)

13. Fri, Feb 16

[Ober 1989: The Athenian Revolution of 508/7 BCE](#)

Optional: [Thucydides and \[Aristotle\]](#) on the Tyrannicides (Thuc. 6.53-59; *Constitution of the Athenians*, 18-19) and 508/7 (*Constitution of the Athenians*, 20-22)

Week 6: Athenian (democratic) history in a nutshell

14. Wed, Feb 21

Cartledge 2009, *Ancient Greece: a history in eleven cities*, ch. 9: Athens ([pp. 62-79](#)).

2 (very) brief overviews of Athenian democracy in popular historical sources: [World History Encyclopedia](#), [History.com](#)

Ober 1989, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens*, [pp. 3-10](#).

Start Friday readings (longer and more difficult than the ones for today; I'd recommend reading at least the first 15-20 pages)

15. Fri, Feb 23

Hansen 1999, *Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes*, pp. [27-54](#)

Cartledge 2016, *Democracy: a life*, [pp. 105-122](#)

[Assignment 6: three important things](#)

These readings have been chosen to give you an overview of Athenian democratic institutions, as well as Athenian constitutional development to the fourth century. As you read, please try to keep your eye on the big picture (i.e., the overall structure of Athenian democracy, a basic sense of how things worked, and a rudimentary understanding of the most important events/institutions) and avoid getting bogged down in extraneous details. You will have an opportunity to ask questions in class both Wednesday and Friday, so please keep a running list of

questions that you think will help you (and your classmates) understand the central issues at hand.

Weeks 7-8: Democratic Institutions, Democratic Values

16. Mon, Feb 26

All groups: Review sections of earlier readings (e.g., Cartledge, history.com) on your assigned institution.

Group A: Read the Hansen chapter on the [Assembly](#), with particular attention to the [guiding questions](#).

Group B: Read the Hansen chapter on the [courts](#), with particular attention to the [guiding questions](#).

Group C: Read the Hansen chapters on the [magistrates](#) and the [Council of 500](#), with particular attention to the [guiding questions](#). For Monday, please focus primarily on the Council, which will be your primary topic of conversation in class; you'll have a chance to talk about the (other) magistracies on Wednesday.

17. Wed, Feb 28

All groups: Review the Hansen chapter on your first (major) political institution and continue preparing for your presentations and reading responses.

Group A: Read Hansen chapter on the [laws and the nomothetai](#), keeping guiding questions in mind.

Group B: Read Hansen chapter on the [Council of the Areopagus](#), keeping the guiding questions in mind

Group C: Reread Hansen chapter on the Magistrates, keeping the guiding questions in mind.

18. Fri, Mar 1

Finish preparation for presentations

- 10 mins max + 5 mins for questions
- Focus on your major institution
- Make sure you cover the basics; after that, feel free to address any of the experiential or "bigger picture" questions that you think are particularly important
- Make sure to provide your classmates with a 1-page handout that includes all of the essentials

Assignment 7: response to one of the 'big picture' questions (or other approved topic; we will discuss this in class)

19. Mon, Mar 4

Hansen 1999, ch. 11: [the political leaders](#)

20. Wed, Mar 6

Strauss 1996: [The Athenian Trireme: School of Democracy](#)

21. Fri, Mar 8

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, [2.34-46, 59-65](#) (Funeral Oration and eulogy of Pericles)

Assignment 8: [3&1 reading response](#)

Week 9: The Oligarchs Strike Back

22. Mon, Mar 11

Old Oligarch, [Constitution of the Athenians](#)

Take a look at [this list](#) of potential questions and passages for the midterm and come to class with any questions

23. Wed, Mar 13

Review Old Oligarch

Morris & Powell 2010: [The Peloponnesian War and its aftermath](#)

24. Fri, Mar 15

No new reading; review for midterm. For example:

- Read the midterm [rubric](#)
- Index your notes
- Develop preliminary outlines for enough questions and passages to be confident that you will be able to answer at least one of the prompts you receive.
- Remember that the test is open note!

Week 10: Critics of Democracy

25. Mon, Mar 25

[Ober, Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule, selections](#)

Review the Old Oligarch in light of the selections from Ober

26. Wed, Mar 27

[Plato, Apology](#)

Please read alongside these [notes](#) (which correspond to the endnotes on the pdf) and remember to look at the [guiding questions](#).

27. Fri, Mar 29

[Lysias, Against Eratosthenes](#)

Weeks 11-12: Subaltern studies

28. Mon, Apr 1

[Lysias, On the Death of Eratosthenes](#) (not *that* Eratosthenes?)

[Selected images \(from various Athenian pots\) and short passages](#)

Review Thucydides, 2.45 (from Pericles' [funeral oration](#))

Remember to check the [guiding questions](#)

29. Wed, Apr 3

[Antiphon, Against the Stepmother](#)

30. Fri, Apr 5

[D. Cohen, Separation, and the Status of Women in Classical Athens](#)

Key passage analysis (from one of the ancient sources)

31. Mon, Apr 8

[Osborne 1995, The Economics and Politics of Slavery at Athens](#)

[Aristotle, Politics, selections](#)

Start Friday reading, if you have a bit of spare time.

32. Wed, Apr 10

Review passages on slavery from the readings we've already done, focusing especially on the following

- Lysias, On the Murder of Eratosthenes, esp. 18-21 (cf. 11, 23-24)
- Antiphon, Against the Stepmother, esp. 6-12; and be sure to factor in as well the fact that Philoneus' mistress may also be a slave.
- Old Oligarch, 1.11-12

[Demosthenes, For Phormion, selections](#)

33. Fri, Apr 12 (no class; meet in small groups)

[Aristophanes, Assemblywomen](#)

In lieu of your regular reading response, I am asking you to meet with your group (preferably, but not necessarily, during our regular class time) with an eye to the following tasks:

- Discuss the play as a whole, with particular attention to what it tells us about major topics of the course (e.g., the Assembly, dissent, the status of women in ancient democracies)
- Identify three sections of the play (these can be longer than key passages but should still be limited to a few pages) that you would like to discuss in class.
- Create an outline of talking points and/or discussion questions (bulletpoints are fine) that you would use to lead discussion in class.

The ultimate goal of this exercise is to give us a blueprint for class on Monday; in an ideal world, I will simply choose one section identified by each group and ask you to lead discussion.

33. Mon, Apr 15

Re-read Assemblywomen, focusing on your key passages and taking into account the [notes](#) (sorry for neglecting these the first time around)

Come to class with your bullet-points for class discussion, based on your discussion in small groups on Friday

34. Wed, Apr 17

[Ober 1998: Power and Rhetoric in Democratic Athens](#)

Please be sure to take a look at the [guiding document](#) before you start.

Weeks 13-15: Ancient to Modern

35. Fri, Apr 19

Review Dahl reading (from Week 2), with particular attention to his criteria for democracy
Familiarize yourself with the Global State of Democracy (GSoD) [indices](#), [criteria](#), and current report for the [US](#)

Complete your reading response (your passage should be from Assemblywomen; important things can be from Ober, Assemblywomen, or GSoD)

Start to think about how you might use Dahl's Criteria and GSoD to evaluate Athenian democracy

36. Mon, Apr 22

Read selections from Roberts, [Athens on Trial](#): preface, introduction, and chapter 7 only (you will read chapter 9 for Wednesday)

Continue to evaluate Athenian democracy using Dahl's criteria, compare Athenian democracy to American democracy vis-a-vis Dahl's criteria, and think about whether you would change, modify, or reject any of his criteria

37. Wed, Apr 24

Finish Roberts reading

Review GSoD criteria and continue to think about how you would evaluate Athens vis-a-vis the three remaining Dahl criteria, as well as the GSod

[Close-read The Federalist #s 9, 10, and 38](#)

38. Fri, Apr 26

Review selections from The Federalist

Read [B Constant \(1816\) Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns](#)

Before you read, take a look at the [guiding questions](#) and read these (very short) introductions to [The Federalist](#) and [Benjamin Constant](#) (be sure to click the "read more" button)

3&1 assignment

39. Mon, Apr 29

Selections from Brennan 2017, [Against Democracy](#) (first 27 pages required; you'll find directions for what to do with the other 22 pages when you get to the end of the required section)

40. Wed, May 1

No new reading

Assignment 15: [end-of-semester reflection](#)

41. Fri, May 3

Take a look at the list of [potential exam questions and passages](#)

Start to review relevant readings in preparation for the take-home exam

We will use our class time to wrap up the semester and review for the exam