

Eugene Lang College
The New School for Social Research
Fall 1994

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First-Year Seminar 6140:

CULTURE AND POLITICS IN ANCIENT GREECE

Graduate Faculty Room 304
Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3:40 pm
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:45-4:30 pm and by appointment

This seminar will introduce students to the study of politics and philosophy by means of an investigation of law, democracy, and philosophy in ancient Greece. We will begin with a brief survey of the history and founding myths of the ancient Greek peoples. Then we will turn to a close examination of the problems and promise of democracy in classical Athens. Finally, we will investigate the difficult relationship between politics and Platonic philosophy. The course will aim both to familiarize students with ancient Greek political culture and to give them experience in addressing some fundamental political and philosophical problems.

Course meetings will consist largely of discussion, though there will be a few short lectures on factual material. Students who enroll in this course should plan to read carefully, attend class consistently and punctually, and participate in the discussions regularly. As to the readings: in most cases they are not long, and some are really quite amusing or dramatic, though a few are dry and difficult. All the readings will require work to ferret out their deeper meanings. Students will be expected to have read the assignments before class and then be prepared to discuss them in a civil manner. When possible, the readings themselves should be brought to class. From time to time, students may be assigned a role in preparing or leading class discussion. Attendance will be noted, and participation graded. If it becomes obvious that students are not keeping up with the reading, a midterm or final examination may be added to the requirements.

Course requirements include the following, in addition to the above. Students should plan to write three short papers, one of which will be a philosophical dialogue. Each student should be prepared to explain and defend his or her dialogue to a jury drawn from the class at the end of the semester. There will also be two or more short, in-class writing assignments. Papers are to be typewritten, double-spaced, and annotated in accordance with accepted norms of scholarship. Papers will be downgraded one step per day late.

The readings will be classical works almost exclusively, including mythological writings, tragedies, histories, and comedies, as well as philosophical dialogues. The following books contain most of the required readings, and they are or will be available for purchase at Barnes & Noble. Discussion will be easier with the specific translations and editions below, but if you already own a different translation or edition, buying another is not necessary.

University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, Vol. 1: The Greek Polis, eds. Adkins and White
(Chicago, 1986)

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, tr. Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics, 1984)

Thucydides, *On Justice, Power and Human Nature*, tr. Paul Woodruff (Hackett, 1993)

Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. Donald J. Zeyl (Hackett, 1986)

_____, *The Republic*, rev. ed., tr. H. Desmond Lee (Penguin Classics, 1955)

_____, *Symposium*, trs. Woodruff and Nehamas (Hackett, 1989)

To the extent possible, copies of these and other course readings have been placed on reserve at Fogelman Library. Photocopies of readings marked by asterisks on the following schedule have been copied and placed in comb binders, which are on reserve at Fogelman and in the Lang College Reading Room.

SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

* Indicates readings in comb binders on reserve at Fogelman Library and in the Lang Reading Room

1. WEEKS 1-4: FROM THE LAW OF MYTHOS TO THE LAW OF LOGOS

- Thurs., 8 Sept. Introduction: Ancient Greece and Political Philosophy
No reading.
- Tues., 13 Sept. What are laws? What is reason?
*Homer, selections in *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, Vol. 1: The Polis*, pp. 6-21.
*Hesiod, *Theogony*, tr. Norman O. Brown, pp. 53-87.
- Thurs., 15 Sept. HOLIDAY--YOM KIPPUR
- Tues., 20 Sept. Who were the Greeks?
*Marvin Perry, et al, *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics & Society*, pp. 45-56.
*Plutarch, "Lycurgus," in *Plutarch's Lives*, pp. 32-48.
*Herodotus, selections in *Chicago Readings*, pp. 35-46.
- Thurs., 22 Sept. Laws and Orders of the Polis
*Andrewes, *The Greeks*, pp. 76-146.
- Tues., 27 Sept. Conflicts of the Polis
Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* in *Oresteia*, tr. Fagles, pp. 103-226.
FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED
- Thurs., 29 Sept. The Founding of Justice
Aeschylus, *The Eumenides* in *Oresteia*, pp. 231-277.
*Perry, *Western Civilization*, pp. 56-59.

2. WEEKS 5-8: DEMOCRACY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

- Tues., 4 Oct. Wars and Democracy
Thucydides, *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, pp. TBA.
FIRST PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
- Thurs., 6 Oct. Household and Politics: A Balance?
*Sophocles, *Antigone*, in *The Complete Plays of Sophocles*, pp. 115-147.
- Tues., 11 Oct. Is Democracy Possible (1)?
The Old Oligarch, "The Athenian Constitution" and Aristophanes, *The Wasps*,
in *Chicago Readings*, pp. 47-157.
- Thurs., 13 Oct. Is Democracy Possible (2)?
Thucydides, *On Justice, Power and Human Nature*, selections TBA.
*Perry, *Western Civilization*, pp. 59-64.
- Tues., 18 Oct. READING DAY--NO CLASS

- Thurs., 20 Oct. The Polis and the Other
*Euripedes, *Medea*, in *Ten Plays*, pp. 31-63.
- Tues., 25 Oct. What Is Philosophy?
Plato, *The Apology*, in *Chicago Readings*, pp. 181-206.
SECOND PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED
- Thurs., 27 Oct. On the Law and Virtue
Plato, *Crito*, in *Chicago Readings*, pp. 206-217.

3. WEEKS 9-13: ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

- Tues., 1 Nov. What Is Truth?
*Antiphon, "On Truth," fragments A and B.
Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 1-50.
SECOND PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
- Thurs., 3 Nov. What Is Sophism?
Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 51-113.
- Fri., 4 Nov. Dialogue Day
Writing assignment to be given in class.
- Tues., 8 Nov. The Trial of Democracy
Plato, *Republic*, Part 1, pp. 61-114.
- Thurs., 10 Nov. Polis Reason-Speech
Plato, *Republic*, Parts 2-4, pp. 115-195.
- Tues., 15 Nov. Justice and the Household
Plato, *Republic*, Parts 5-6, pp. 196-259.
- Thurs., 17 Nov. Metaphysics and Education
Plato, *Republic*, Parts 7-8, pp. 260-355.
- Tues., 22 Nov. Political Order and Myth
Plato, *Republic*, Parts 9-11, pp. 356-455.
THIRD PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED
- Thurs., 24 Nov. THANKSGIVING--NO CLASS
- Tues., 29 Oct. Dialogue Day
Writing assignment to be given in class.
- Thurs., 1 Dec. Is Philosophy Serious?
*Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, in *Three Comedies*, ed. William Arrowsmith, pp. 11-113.

4. WEEKS 14-16: AFTER DEMOCRACY

- Tues., 6 Dec. Extensions and Amendments
Aristotle, *Politics*, selections in *Chicago Readings*, pp. 278-319.
THIRD PAPER DUE
- Thurs., 8 Dec. Epilogue: The Love of Truth
Plato, *Symposium*, pp. TBA.
- Tues., 13 Dec. Is Philosophy a Consolation?
Plato, *Symposium*, pp. TBA.
- Thurs., 15 Dec. Conclusions/Debate-Trials
No reading. Student presentations.
- Tues., 20 Dec. Debate-Trials
Continued student presentations, if necessary.