

Elementary Greek 101

Fall 2007

MW 12:00-12:50, Barret Library 216

TR 3:30-4:30, Barret Library 216

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Office hours: Thursday 2:30-4:00; Fri. 3:00-5:00 (or by appointment)

Overview

Athenaze first appeared in England in 1980 and represents an attempt to bring instruction in ancient Greek more closely in line with recent advances in the study of how people acquire languages. In 2003, a second edition appeared. It is a “reading” course, which refers to the primary means of experiencing and acquiring the language. We will use the text as the foundation for this course. This semester, we will begin to work through the exercises and readings provided in *Athenaze*, most of which are written in the style of classical Attic Greek (i.e. the dialect of the Athenians of the fifth and fourth centuries) by two modern authors, Maurice Balme and Gilbert Lawall. Some readings, however, are “adapted” from real ancient Greek sources (i.e. adapted to novice Greek readers), whereas others are “authentic” ancient Greek (e.g., selections from the Gospel of Luke).

Objectives

The overall goal of this course is for you to develop the ability to read, understand, and respond to texts written in Greek during the classical period, which began in the early fifth century B.C.E. and came to a close with the rise of Macedonian power during the last half of the fourth century. The skills you develop this semester are foundational, as they will allow you to recognize and understand the following important elements necessary for acquiring ancient Greek:

- the morphology of all Greek nouns and articles and most adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns
- the morphology of active and middle verb forms in the present tense, the future active and middle, the 1st and 2nd aorist, impersonal verbs, infinitives in the active and middle voices and in the present, future, and aorist tenses, and participles in the active and middle voices and in the present, future, and aorist tenses
- accents of all Greek words
- the syntax of Greek sentences, including the concepts of case, voice, agreement; the use of prepositions, particles, and definite articles; and word order
- mastering a basic Greek vocabulary of 350 word families and approximately 150 word families of production vocabulary
- Pronunciation and Conversation

Because language is a cultural artifact, acquiring ancient Greek will also require you to become

familiar with Greek civilization; as the great German poet Goethe says, “Whoever wants to understand the poet must travel into the poet’s land.” As we work through *Athenaze* and the other materials in the course, you will become familiar with the society of ancient Greece through the fictional lives of Dicaeopolis and his family, which are based loosely on characters that appear in the *Acaradians*, a comic play by the fifth-century Athenian Aristophanes.

Course Requirements

Attendance. Your success in this course greatly depends on your daily attendance in class. Therefore, ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY! I allow THREE unexcused absences for the semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a decrease of two whole points from your overall grade. **N.B.** Excused absences entail providing documentation of a prior commitment (e.g., jury duty) or personal or family emergency (e.g., illness). Such absences are subject to the instructor’s approval. Please keep track of all your absences (note the specific days you missed class) in your journal (see below), for at the end of the semester you must pledge your attendance record. Chronic tardiness will not be tolerated.

Journal. Working through the readings and assignments on a **regular, daily** basis is also fundamental to success in this course. Do not get in the habit of devoting six hours to your Greek on Sunday and not doing any work outside of class for the rest of the week. Plan on spending time every day on your Greek. Keep in mind, too, that you do not need to devote a large, continuous block of time to Greek. Acquiring any language is a process that you can effectively fit conveniently into modest amounts of time between other activities and commitments as long as you concentrate and focus on the task. To make your language study more effective and to document your work in this course you will need to keep a journal. The information you record will serve three crucial functions. First, it will help structure your study sessions and make the time you spend with the language more productive. Second, it will provide crucial documentation about your interaction with the language. Finally, your journal will help guide our work in class to address aspects of the language that require further explanation and practice. Your journals should contain the following information in the entries, which you are free to organize as you wish:

- The date and time when you begin your study sessions and the time when you end. (As noted below, you will complete any written assignments in your notebook, and we will review them in class. Consequently, the information about the date and time of your study will determine whether you have completed your assignments when they are due.) You will also be responsible for recording your attendance in class.
- Take notes on vocabulary. As you become more fluent in the language, you will spend less and less time looking up words and taking notes. Nevertheless, taking notes about certain vocabulary items, particularly those not included among the basic recognition vocabulary, can help improve your reading comprehension and help you review passages. By all means record any items that are causing difficulty, so we can discuss them during our next meeting.
- Note any unusual grammatical constructions or passages that prove problematic even when you are confident about the meanings of the words. We will discuss these in class. At the end of your session, write a summary of the passage. Often we spend so much time working through individual passages that we lose sense of what is happening in the

narrative. Writing a summary will help ensure that you are reaching an appropriate level of comprehension.

- All written assignments and exercises must be completed in your journal. We will review the assignments in class so you can make notes and corrections if you wish, but these must be made in different color ink. If you don't do the written assignments in your notebook, you won't get credit for your work.

Tests, Exams, and Quizzes. After we complete a chapter, you will receive a test to complete outside of class. These will evaluate how well you have mastered the reading selections, the morphological elements, the syntactical constructions, and the vocabulary presented in each chapter. These tests are designed with the assumption that you have read and studied each of the selections numerous times (4 to 5 times at least).

There will be two examinations during the semester (midterm and final). These are designed both to give you a clear idea about your progress and to give you the opportunity to work with the language in a constructive and informative manner. I will be very explicit about the nature of the examinations and the material they will cover, but suffice it to say these will consist of Greek "at sight," that is, Greek you have never seen before. In scope and format, the final examination will resemble the midterm examination given during the semester.

There are no regularly scheduled in-class quizzes. However, on occasion I may administer short vocabulary pop quizzes to promote the building of your word power.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows (A = 100-93; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-88; B = 87-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-78; C = 77-73; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-68; D = 67-63; D- = 62-60; F = 59 and below):

Quizzes: 10%

Journal: 25%

Tests: 40%

Midterm: 10%

Final: 15%

No make-up tests, exams, and quizzes will be arranged for unexcused absences.

General Policies

As mentioned above, I am a stickler for regular attendance and coming to class prepared. These policies are designed to help not only improve *your* Greek skills but also those of your classmates. When you come to class unprepared and/or unwilling to participate, much of the onus unfairly falls on the rest of the class to translate the readings, to answer and ask questions, and to do in-class exercises. Please respect yourself and your classmates.

Please do not write in your textbooks. All translation work and textual notes should be put in your journals. When you come to class, you should have read the assigned passage enough times so that you do not have to consult your notes or translation.

I do not offer extra credit assignments. However, I do give ample extra credit questions on all tests and exams. These questions will be drawn from the cultural and historical lessons of *Athenaze* and from class discussion. Thus, it is in your best interest to read the entire chapter and take notes during class.

Tips for succeeding in this course

The more time and effort you devote to this course, the more valuable the experience will be. I strongly encourage you to visit me during office hours to discuss assignments, study skills, issues raised in class, etc. A positive attitude goes a long way. In the past, all those who showed an interest and a desire to master the course material have fared well in my courses.

With regard to the process of reading itself, here are some tips:

- Before you begin reading a new passage, take time to recreate the context of your reading by going back and reviewing the material that you read in the previous session. Go through your journal entry to familiarize yourself with the vocabulary and contextual issues you confronted while reading the previous selection. Finally, read through your summary.
- As you read, try not to stop each time you encounter a word that looks unfamiliar. Develop the habit of reading entire sentences or sections before you begin looking up words. You will find that the meaning of a word you have seen before often comes back as you read further and develop a clearer sense of what is happening in the text. After you have been through a section, go back to words and phrases you do not understand. Consider their function in the sentence and try to derive meaning from the context before you begin consulting the lexicon.
- As noted above, take time to record questions you have or observations. Feel free to take notes on unusual vocabulary items that you are not likely to encounter very often. As you go back and review an entry in your journal before your next session, the unusual vocabulary items will often best remind you about the context.
- Once you have been through a selection, go back and read it through at least four or five more times before you write your summary. You will squander much of your effort if you consistently neglect to review the selection at the end of a session. The fourth and fifth times through the text are ultimately more important, because the “input” will be more comprehensible, and the internal process of acquiring the language will work more efficiently.

Course Materials

Required:

Athenaze, Volume I by Maurice Balme and Gilbert Lawall (2nd ed.)

