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HIST 311-01, The Rise and Fall of Athens, Spring 2012

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History 311: The Rise and Fall of Athens

Spring 2012

MWF 10:00: Palmer Hall 205

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Office: 404 Halliburton (843-3764)

Office hours: W 1:00-3:00, F 1:00-2:00

Overview

This course offers a comprehensive survey of one of the most fascinating epochs of European history: Athens from the age of Solon and the birth of democracy in the 6th century BCE to the tumultuous post-Peloponnesian War period (404-399), which saw the collapse of the Athenian empire, tyranny and foreign occupation, and the execution of its greatest citizen, Socrates. Significant attention will be paid to the major political, social, and cultural developments, as we try to understand the factors that contributed to the growth and decline of Athenian democracy. Two questions in particular will concern us, both of which have a positive and negative corollary: 1) why and how did the Athenians create the world's first democracy; why and how did the Athenians come to subvert and then actually dissolve their democracy?; and 2) why and how did the Athenians create an environment fertile for the development and growth of artistic and philosophical modes of expression; why and how did the Athenians come to undermine arts and philosophy, culminating in the decline of the dramatic chorus and the death of Socrates.

As is the case with all 300-level history courses, historiography will play a significant role in our quest to answer the aforementioned questions. While this course is designed as an introduction and assumes no prior experience with Greek history, there will be an emphasis on the critical use and interpretation of primary sources, both literary and archaeological. Mastering these sources will be crucial for success in the course, especially during our running of the "Reacting to the Past" simulation.

Objectives

This course aims to achieve three objectives:

- To give you a comprehensive survey of Athenian history from ca. 600 to 400 BCE with emphasis on the "Age of Pericles" (ca. 462/1-429).
- To teach you the "historian's craft," that is, the method of critically evaluating historical sources in order to understand better the period in question and to appreciate its complexities.
- To encourage you to engage in comparative historical analysis with the hope that you make valuable connections between Athenian democracy and our own.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation. You know the drill by now: come to class on a regular basis and you will do well and make your professor happy. But if you want better reasons, let me offer three. First, you get to see me, a trained historian, working through the sources critically. Class time therefore affords you the opportunity to gain the skills required to succeed in this course “modeled” for you. Second, I will often use terms and Greek words that are not always found in the course readings. I expect you to know and use these in papers and during discussion. Lastly, I expect you to participate in class, which is to say, to ask good questions, make insightful comments, and challenge your classmates and even me, the professor, about interpretations given in class. If you have to miss class for whatever reason, have the courtesy to let me know before ahead of time. I tolerate three unexcused absences. Any after that will result in a three-point deduction from your final grade.

Papers. You are required to write three (3-5 pages) source analysis essays over the course of the semester. These papers are designed to help you engage the historical sources in a critical way. For a fuller description with dues dates, please see the document “Source Analysis Paper” on the Academic Server.

Quizzes. Six pop quizzes will be given over the course of the semester covering the assigned readings. The main objective of these quizzes will be to test whether you have grasped the main argument(s)/points of one of the readings. No make-ups will be given, even if you have an excused absence. However, I will drop the lowest quiz score.

Simulation. At the end of the semester, you will participate in a running of the “Reacting to the Past” simulation called *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.* The “Reacting” series recreates the historical contexts of some of the most important moments in history, ones that are known for their social, political, and intellectual ferment. In these games, students are assigned the roles of individuals who were players in these epochs, some of whom were famous people, others less well known, but all of whom are attested in the historical sources. By assuming these personae, students are given the opportunity to engage with the historical materials in a much more direct, creative, and collaborative way. *The Threshold of Democracy* concentrates on the period directly following the end of the Peloponnesian War, when the Athenians were trying to recover from the deleterious effects of foreign occupation, tyranny, civil war, and economic stasis. As is common in such situations, the Athenians began to reflect on recent events, asking themselves: “what went wrong and where do we go from here?” Everything was on the table, even whether they should have a democracy or adopt another form of government. Such issues were debated in the assembly, and you too will debate these issues in your own assemblies held in class on four successive days. You will weigh in often, making speeches and asking questions, and you will also be responsible for introducing a major piece of legislation in keeping with the values of your persona and those of a similar ideological persuasion. For this, you will need to make a compelling and convincing speech. At the conclusion of the simulation, you will revise your oral speech and compose a formal written speech to hand in (please see the Schedule). **N.B.** To facilitate the composition of both written and oral speeches, you must read Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* Book 1, Chapter 1-8 prior to the simulation (the schedule will alert

you when you should begin your reading). There will also be a **MANDATORY** planning session for the simulation on Monday, April 9th (7:00 P.M. in TBA). Any conflicts will need to be brought to my attention no later than the end of the second week of classes. Missing this planning session without prior clearance will result in a ten-point deduction from your simulation grade.

Final Essay. You will be given a cumulative final take-home essay on the last day of class, which will be due at the end of the regularly scheduled final exam period.

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):

- Participation: 20%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Papers: 30%
- Simulation: 20%
 - Oral speech: 10%
 - Written speech: 10%
- Final Essay: 20%

Late papers will be accepted but at a loss of 1/3 letter grade for each day late (e.g., B+ becomes a B, then a B- and so on).

Course Texts

Required:

- Aristophanes and Plato. *Four Texts on Socrates* (Revised ed. Ithaca 1998). T. West and G. West (eds. and trans.).
- Aristotle, *Aristotle and Xenophon on Democracy and Oligarchy* (2nd ed. Berkeley 2010). Moore, J.M. (ed. and trans.).
- Buckley, T. *Aspects of Greek History* (2nd ed. Routledge 2010).
- Herodotus. *The Landmark Herodotus* (Pantheon Books 2007). Strassler, R. ed. and Purvis, A. trans.
- Plutarch, *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives* (Penguin paperback, 1960). Ian Scott-Kilvert (trans.).
- Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides* (Pantheon Books 1998). Strassler, R. et al. eds.