

**PG 340: Democracy and the Ancient Greeks**  
Spring 2016

Dr. Alisa Kessel, [akessel@pugetsound.edu](mailto:akessel@pugetsound.edu)  
Office: Wyatt 216  
OH: Office hours: M 2:00-3:30 & Th 3:30-4:30  
. . . and by appointment

TTh 9:30-10:50  
WY 304

**Course description**

This course in political theory explores the concepts of democracy and political education among the Athenians of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. By reading and exploring the literature of the “golden age” of Athens, students will consider the problems of democracy and the institutions and ideas that have arisen in contemporary democracies to respond to those problems. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these “new and improved” institutions and mechanisms pose their own distinct problems for democracy, so a portion of the class will be devoted to considering whether the Athenians did a better job of undertaking democracy than Americans do, whether the problems of democracy are surmountable, and whether democracy is actually a desirable form of government. This course will also include a simulation that enables students participate in an Athenian assembly, replete with speeches, votes, acts of the gods, and backroom deals.

**Course policies**

- 1) Ethical obligations: By registering for this course, students agree to abide by the Student Integrity Code, available online at: <http://www.pugetsound.edu/student-life/personal-safety/student-handbook/student-integrity-code/university-standards-of-integr/>
- 2) Special accommodations: Students must give advanced notification if they require special accommodation for class activities or exams.
- 3) Attendance: It is the student’s responsibility to attend class regularly; failure to attend class will adversely affect performance. I reserve the right to fail a student for excessive absence from class; if a student is at risk of having such action taken, the student will receive email notification from me as fair warning.
- 4) NO assignments will be accepted via email.
- 5) Laptops are not permitted in the classroom.
- 6) Texts are required in class every day.
- 7) Students must come to class alert and prepared to think, talk, and listen.

**Books for purchase (available at the Bookstore)**

Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Sinclair [ISBN: 0140444211]  
Plato, *Republic*, trans. Bloom [ISBN: 0465069347]  
Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*, trans. Tredennick [ISBN: 014044582X]  
Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Waterfield [ISBN: 0199540322]  
Reacting to the Past, *Athens: Threshold of Democracy*, game book, 4th Edition [ISBN: 0393938875]  
Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Lattimore [ISBN: 0872203948]  
\*\*All other reading available via Moodle

PLEASE NOTE: Students are expected to bring a hard copy of the text with them to class each day.

**Course requirements**

Written responses	25%
Game participation	30%
Essay #1	20%
Essay #2	25%
	100%

Written responses: Before each class, students will write a 1-2 page (double spaced) response to questions about the reading assignment, which should cite the texts directly when appropriate. The questions for these assignments are located on the syllabus for each class day. The objective of written responses is to help students think through their ideas about the reading for each class and to improve the quality of class discussion each day. At least six of these responses will be randomly collected throughout the semester and graded; the lowest grade you receive will be dropped and the remaining assignments will be averaged in a total score. These assignments will *only* be accepted via hard copy.

Game participation: Students will be evaluated on their participation in the *Athens: Threshold of Democracy* game. Details about specific assignments and expectations will be distributed before the game begins.

Essay #1: This essay will require students to undertake deep textual analysis. You will choose between two options. 5-6 pages. The formal assignment will be distributed on February 4; due February 18.

Essay #2: This essay will require students to consider the viability of Athenian and American democratic arrangements or practices. 12-15 pages. The formal assignment will be distributed on April 14. Rough draft due May 3; final draft due on May 10, 2016.

Class participation: Active participation in class discussions and activities is expected. While there is no formal grade for participation, it will be used as a subjective measure, especially for borderline grades.

### ***Course schedule***

January 19: *Athens: Threshold of Democracy*, pp. 21-53  
Ober, Josiah. "What the Ancient Greeks Can Tell Us About Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 11: 67-91 (June 2008), available on Moodle.

January 21: Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book I, sections 20-24, 67-88, 139-146  
*Written assignment: What seems to be Pericles' approach to war with Sparta? Do you think it is a wise approach?*

January 26: Thucydides, Book 2, sections 1-9, 34-46; Book 3, sections 36-50, 70-86; Book 4, sections 46-48  
*Written assignment: According to Pericles, what is Athenian democracy like? Do you think Thucydides is in favor of democracy or opposed to it? Use textual evidence to support your interpretation.*

January 28: Thucydides, Book 5, 84-116; Book 6, 6-32; Book 7, 41-87  
*Written assignment: What, if anything, is/are the connection(s) between the arguments made in the Melian dialogue and the ambitions revealed by the Sicilian expedition?*

February 2: Plato, *Republic*, Books I-III  
*Written assignment: Whose definition of justice do you find most compelling? Why?*

February 4: *Republic*, Books IV-VI; **Essay #1 assigned**  
*Written assignment: Select one of the "policies" that Socrates says is essential to a just city. Reconstruct Socrates's argument in careful detail and then explain: how would you disprove Socrates?*

February 9: *Republic*, Book VII  
*Written assignment: What does the allegory of the cave represent?*

February 11: *Republic*, Books VIII-X  
*Written assignment: What is the purpose of the myth of Er? What does it tell us about the possibility of justice?*

February 16: Aristophanes, *Clouds*, available on Moodle  
*Written assignment: Who has the better argument: Good Reason or Bad Reason?*

February 18: Read *Threshold of Democracy*, Parts 1, 3, and 4 (do NOT skip this reading before coming to class or you will not understand the discussion about game set-up); **Essay # 1 due**

February 23: *Threshold of Democracy*: session 1

February 25: *Threshold of Democracy*: session 2

March 1: *Threshold of Democracy*: session 3

March 3: *Threshold of Democracy*: session 4

March 8: *Threshold of Democracy*: session 5

March 10: *Threshold of Democracy*: session 6

### **March 14-18: Spring break**

March 22: Game debrief; Plato, *Apology* (in *The Last Days of Socrates*)  
*Written assignment: Socrates says he is the "gadfly" of Athens. Are gadflies good or bad for democracy?*

March 24: Plato, *Crito* and *Phaedo*, (in *The Last Days of Socrates*)  
*Written assignment: Is Socrates a good or a bad citizen of Athens?*

March 29: Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 3-69 (447a-486c)

*Written assignment: How does Socrates' approach to knowledge compare to the rhetorician/sophist's?*

March 31: *Gorgias*, remaining

*Written assignment: Is there a distinction between democratic arguments and (mere) rhetoric? If so, what is it? If not, what does the Gorgias tell us about persuasion and democracy?*

April 5: James Madison, *Federalist #10 & #55*, (online at <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>)  
Sheldon Wolin, "Norm and Form," available on Moodle

*Written assignment: Does Madison seem to prefer the constitutionalization that Wolin describes over democracy itself? Or is Madison a committed democrat?*

April 7: Sophocles, *Antigone*, available on Moodle, lines 1-383

*Written assignment: Why is it so important to Antigone that Polynices be buried? Why is it so important to Kreon that he be left unburied?*

April 12: *Antigone*, lines 384-end;

*Written assignment: Write two short (about one page each) defenses: one of Antigone's position and one of Kreon's.*

April 14: View *Death of a Salesman*, available on Moodle; **Essay #2 assigned.**

*Written assignment: How does Greek tragedy (exemplified by Antigone) compare to American tragedy (exemplified by Death of a Salesman)?*

April 19: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I and III

*Written assignment: Why is the polis the highest form of community?*

April 21: *Politics*, Book IV

*Written assignment: How is a good constitution created?*

April 26: *Politics*, Book VIII

*Written assignment: Is Aristotle right that education should preserve the qualities of the regime? And does it matter what those qualities are?*

April 28: Ober, Josiah. "Political Animals Revisited," *The Good Society*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2013), pp. 201-214, available on Moodle.

*Written assignment: What does Ober think an Aristotelian account of democracy looks like for us today?*

May 3: **Essay #2 draft due; peer edit**

May 10: **Essay #2 due no later than 10 a.m.**