

SSI1: AGON(IE)S OF ATHENS

MWF AT [TIME] IN [PLACE]

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Course Description

Fifth-century BCE Athens was a time of tremendous ferment, of political, cultural, and intellectual activity that has deeply affected the course of Western civilization. At the beginning of the century, the Athenians, along with several other Greek states, won a series of stunning victories against invading Persian forces; consequently, the Athenians established themselves as a dominant force in the Mediterranean. And yet, by the end of the century, the Athenians had not only turned the rest of Greece violently against them, but had raised serious questions about themselves, turned upon themselves, were even killing one another in the midst of tyranny and terror. At every turn throughout this turbulent century, the Athenians were notable for their **agonism**, for their contests with foreign powers, with their fellow Greeks, and among themselves.

In this course we will explore the many complex forms of agonism and agony that characterized life in fifth-century Athens. We will examine Athenian contests not just of war but, more importantly, of *ideas*: contests in the assembly and law courts, on the dramatic stage and in intellectual life. We will trace the rise and fall (and rise again) of Athens by examining an array of sources: history, tragedy, comedy, and philosophy. We will also put these contests of ideas into practice in a number of ways: through daily discussions, weekly debates, performances of Greek drama, and, finally, a four-week role-playing simulation of the Athenian assembly. These various activities will not only help you develop a deeper understanding of intellectual inquiry and academic argumentation, but also gain a greater grasp of the complexity of classical Athenian character and thought.

Course Objectives

As a first-semester Seminar in Scholarly Inquiry, this course has three primary objectives:

- Students will learn about primary and secondary sources and how to evaluate sources of information for biases, reliability, and appropriateness.
- Students will begin to develop the academic abilities of writing and oral argument necessary to enter into academic conversations. Specifically, students will work to frame a problem or question, to develop a thesis, to defend their thesis effectively, and to think critically about arguments – their own and those of others.
- Students will be able to see the complexity that can lie behind a seemingly simple topic, and to develop the enthusiasm for probing deeply into such subjects that will carry them into more advanced coursework.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance, Participation, Questions to Ponder	10%
2. Weekly <i>Agônes</i> (In-class debate + 1-page summary; 6 total)	10%
3. Great Dionysia	<i>kleos</i>
4. Midterm	15%
5. Papers (3) (5 pages each)	45% (= 15% each)
6. Position Papers (2) (3 pages each)	20% (= 10% each)

1. **Attendance & Participation:** Attendance is absolutely necessary. While I will not call roll, I will be keeping record of your attendance. Excessive non-attendance will result in a reduction of your grade, or, in extreme cases, you being dropped from the course. You are expected to come to class prepared to ask questions about and discuss the texts. Please bring your texts to class, as we will use them. Feel free to leave your cell phones at home, or, at the very least, turn 'em off. I realize that on rare occasions things might go horribly, terribly wrong and completing the assignment is not possible; in such cases, I would rather you come to class unprepared than not come at all, so that you may at least

listen to and participate in the discussion. If a catastrophic situation should arise and you cannot attend class, contact me as soon as possible and we can work out a reasonable solution.

1a. **Questions to Ponder:** For each reading assignment, I will give you a sheet of “Questions to Ponder” to guide you as you move through the readings. As part of your preparation for class, I ask that each of you prepare one to two (1-2) questions of your own that arise from the reading. Bring these questions to class, as we will share them and wrestle with everyone’s questions together. Don’t be afraid to ask questions both **BIG** and small.

2. **Weekly Agónes (Debates):** There will be six (6) in-class debates, so that we may cultivate our ability to evaluate sources, frame questions, voice our ideas, and express disagreement constructively. You will be asked to both prepare and argue for a position on a pre-determined question. Sometimes this will be based on close readings of the text; other times this will require basic research. For every *agôn*, you will turn in a one-page paper summarizing your position, including evidence. This will provide you an opportunity to clarify your ideas and gather evidence in preparation for the in-class debate.

3. **The Great Dionysia:** The Athenians used the performance of dramas (at festivals such as the Great Dionysia) for dramatizing multiple perspectives on an issue; thus Greek dramas feature a great deal of dialogue, debate, and deliberation. We will have our own Dionysia and perform Greek dramas in competition.

Note: **Reacting to the Past Simulation:** We will engage in a four-week game simulating the classical Athenian democracy. The game will offer you multiple occasions to practice framing problems, evaluating evidence, and proposing solutions. You will submit and respond to legislative proposals, both in written format and speeches performed in class. As part of the game you will write several short position papers (to be posted on the course blog), as well as a team-written faction paper (see **5-6: Papers** below).

4. **Midterm:** There will be a two-hour midterm exam on **October 14th** (one hour in class, one hour as a take-home essay). The exam will consist of **three sections:** (1) a section on identifications of key terms, names, places, events, etc., (2) a section in which you identify passages from the primary sources (author, text, date, context, speaker, addressee) and discuss their significance in some detail, and (3) an essay section in which you will demonstrate your ability to synthesize the information you have attained and sustain a logical argument. I do not offer separate exams (except in the most dire of circumstances), so check your schedules now.

5. **Papers:** You will write three (3) papers in this course, each five (5) pages in length. I will give you a prompt two (2) weeks before the paper is due. These first two papers will ask you to explore ideas in the primary sources we read, and will not require additional research. After you write the first two papers, you will have a paper conference with me to discuss your writing and ideas. For the final paper, you will have the opportunity to revise one of your *agôn*-responses, reframe the question, do additional research, and produce a more longer, detailed argument.

6. **Position Papers:** You will write two (2) position papers for the Reacting game, each three (3) pages in length. These papers require you to do a degree of independent research, both making sense of the materials that I have provided you and striking out on your own in search of additional information. For the second position paper, there will be an option to write a longer, collaborative faction paper detailing the faction’s plans as the game moves ahead. This will offer you an opportunity to choose how to frame your concerns and goals as you move through the game.

Additional Course Resources

Library homepage: <http://www.pugetsound.edu/library>

Getting Help in the Library: <http://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/academic-resources/collins-memorial-library/services/ask-a-librarian/>

Required Texts

Carnes, M. C. and J. Ober. (2005) *The Threshold of Democracy: Athens in 403 B.C.* Longman
Henderson, trans. (1988) *Aristophanes: Lysistrata*. Focus.
Meineck, P., trans. (1998) *Aeschylus: Oresteia*. Hackett
Meineck, P. & P. Woodruff, trans. (2000) *Sophocles: Theban Plays*. Hackett
Reeve, C.D.C., trans. (2004) *Plato: Republic*. Hackett
Reeve, C.D.C., trans. (2002) *The Trials of Socrates*. Hackett.
de Sélincourt, A., trans. (2003) *Herodotus: The Histories*. rev. J. Marincola. Penguin.
Svarlien, D. A., trans. (2007) *Euripides: Alcestis, Medea, Hippolytus*. Hackett
Thorley, J. (2004) *Athenian Democracy*. 2nd edition. Routledge.
Woodruff, P., trans. (1993) *Thucydides: On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*. Hackett.

Assignments

Week 1: Introduction

W	4 Sep	Introduction
F	6 Sep	Introduction to Sources and Source Criticism: (a) Complete the Academic Integrity Tutorial • http://alacarte.pugetsound.edu/subject-guide/6-Academic-Integrity-Puget-Sound (b) Athens Assignment: What do you know about fifth-century Athens? • Type up a list of three (3) sources. Consider the type of source. For example, what kind of media is it? What did it take to get published or made? Is the source reviewed by peers? Is this a good source or a bad source? (Try to bring in at least one good source and one bad source, and explain why you think they are ‘good’ or ‘bad’.)

Week 2: The Rise of Athens

M	9 Sep	Herodotus Book 1, 3 (selections), Thorley 1-22
W	11 Sep	Herodotus Books 5, 7 (selections)
F	13 Sep	Herodotus Books 8-9 (selections)

Agôn 1: Is Herodotus a reliable source for ‘history’?

Week 3: From Tyranny to Democracy

M	16 Sep	Aeschylus <i>Agamemnon</i>
W	18 Sep	Aeschylus <i>Libation Bearers</i> , Thorley 23-52
F	20 Sep	Aeschylus <i>Eumenides</i> , Thorley 53-60

Agôn 2: Who offers the best solution to the fall of the House of Atreus?

Week 4: Tyrants Teach Democracy

M	23 Sep	Sophocles <i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i>
W	25 Sep	Sophocles <i>Antigone</i> , Paper 1 Topic Handed Out
F	27 Sep	Euripides <i>Hippolytus</i>

Agôn 3: What is the greatest threat to the polis and which character understands this?

Week 5: Other Voices

M	30 Sep	Euripides <i>Medea</i>
W	2 Oct	Euripides <i>Alcestis</i>
F	4 Oct	Aristophanes <i>Lysistrata</i>

Agôn 4: Which character best exemplifies what it means to be a ‘citizen’?

Week 6: The Great Dionysia

M	7 Oct	Paper 1 Due, Drama Preparation
W	9 Oct	Drama Competition
F	11 Oct	Drama Competition

Week 7: The Peloponnesian War

M	14 Oct	Midterm
W	16 Oct	Thucydides Books 1-2 (selections)
F	18 Oct	Thucydides Books 3, 5 (selections)

Agôn 5: Does Thucydides think the Athenian empire is just?

Week 8: The Trials of Alcibiades

M	21 Oct	No Class: Reading Day
W	23 Oct	Thucydides 6-7 (selections), Paper 2 Topic Handed Out
F	25 Oct	Andocides <i>On the Mysteries</i>

Agôn 6: Did the Athenians (and our sources) treat Alcibiades appropriately?

Week 9: Three Socrates

M	28 Oct	Aristophanes <i>Clouds</i>
W	30 Oct	Plato <i>Euthyphro</i> , <i>Apology</i>
F	1 Nov	Plato <i>Crito</i> , <i>Phaedo</i> (death scene), Xenophon <i>Defense to the Jury</i>

Week 10: The Ideal State

M	4 Nov	Paper 2 Due, Introduction to Additional Primary & Secondary Sources
W	6 Nov	<i>Republic</i> 1-2
F	8 Nov	<i>Republic</i> 3-4

Week 11: The Ideal State, The Ideal Soul

M	11 Nov	<i>Republic</i> 5-6, **Reacting Roles Distributed**
W	13 Nov	<i>Republic</i> 7-8
F	15 Nov	<i>Republic</i> 9-10

Week 12: Reacting 1

M	18 Nov	Intro to Reacting: Carnes & Ober, Thorley 23-52 (re-read), 61-84
W	20 Nov	Faction Meetings
F	22 Nov	Assembly 1, Position Paper 1 Due

Week 13: Reacting 2

M	25 Nov	Assembly 2
W	27 Nov	No Class: Thanksgiving
F	29 Nov	No Class: Thanksgiving

Week 14: Reacting 3

M	2 Dec	Assembly 3
W	4 Dec	Assembly 4, Position Paper 2 Due (= Faction Paper)
F	6 Dec	Assembly 5, Paper 3 Topic Handed Out (= 'Revised Agony' Paper)

Week 15: Reacting 4

M	9 Dec	Assembly 6
W	11 Dec	Reflection on Athens Game & Course Skills, Evaluations
W	18 Dec	Paper 3 Due, 5 PM

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.