
CLAG 350 | The Greek Stones Speak: An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy Fall 2024

Course Instructor: Robert K. Pitt

Email: robert.pitt@cyathens.org

Office Hours Available: After class or by appointment

Course Description

Inscriptions illuminate almost every aspect of the ancient world, from the monumental public laws, decrees and royal pronouncements that announced state policies to the everyday messages and rude graffiti scratched on potsherds and marble buildings. This course takes a practical approach to the subject, in which students will learn the techniques of reading and transcribing inscriptions and how to make a professional edition of a text, as a way of gaining the skill-set needed to find and interpret the epigraphic record and utilize the relevant bibliography. We will look at the origins of written Greek and its development, examine a variety of types of inscribed material (rock-cut, standing stones, everyday objects) and read through many categories of texts (including public decrees, private dedications, funerary inscriptions, and curses).

Course Approach

Classes will cover a variety of themes from the ancient world through a seminar-style reading of a set of inscriptions which students will prepare in advance. Much of the course will be spent on sites and in museums looking at and working with inscriptions and inscribed monuments, especially at the Epigraphic Museum - the world's largest collection of Greek inscriptions. In learning to handle the epigraphic record, students will be exposed to a much wider vision of Greece than the Classical texts alone can give us; this is particularly true of the less elite groups in ancient society, those lower down the socio-economic ladder as well as non-Greek ethnic peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Read a range of ancient Greek scripts and dialects
- Analyze non-literary language
- Interpret inscribed monuments in their archaeological contexts
- Evaluate the interactions of Greek with other language groups
- Apply epigraphy to a wide range of ancient subjects

Course Requirements

As this is a dedicated higher classics/archaeology/ancient history class, students are expected to have a background in ancient languages, although students with only a semester or two of Greek are encouraged to apply as inscriptions are a great way to gain confidence in the language. As the classes all have a seminar element, students should expect to read and prepare inscriptions for the classes for a minimum of 4 hours per week.

The final grade is calculated from the following 3 assignments:

1. Creating an entry for the project **Attic Inscriptions Online** (<https://www.atticinscriptions.com/>): this is a chance to write an online publication with translation and brief commentary of an inscription that can be visited in Athens. Working with the instructor and the editors of *AIO*, you will be part of a project to open up the visible epigraphy of the city, georeferencing the monument and offering notes on its interpretation. You will present the results of your study during midterm week. (40%)
2. **Research paper:** students will write a paper of ca. 3000 words on an epigraphic subject of their choosing (in consultation with the course tutor) (40%) Deadline: Friday December 6th.

3. Class participation: as this is a seminar-style class, students will be assessed during the semester for their level of participation in discussions on the inscriptions and readings assigned for each meeting. (20%)

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office.

Academic Accommodations

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Office of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

ePolicy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Class schedule

Each class has compulsory assigned background reading and/or set texts which should be prepared in advance for the seminar discussion. Most texts are taken from the epigraphic collections Meiggs and Lewis (ML), Rhodes/Osborne (RO), or Osborne/Rhodes (RO) (see Bibliography); all texts and readings are available from the course Moodle pages. Classes are in CB-1 unless otherwise stated below.

Tuesday 10th September

1. *The origins of Greek writing and the earliest inscriptions*

The earliest appearances of Greek writing on stone and pottery; Archaic scripts and dialects; the relationship in early writing between text and object.

- Class reading: Woodhead (1981) chapter II 'The Origin and Development of the Greek Alphabet'.

Thursday 12th September

2. *How to read the stones*

Students will be guided through the processes of reading and recording inscriptions, and we will learn how to make and use squeezes (paper casts).

- Class reading: Woodhead (1981) chapter I 'Signs and Symbols'; McLean (2002) 1.1 'Editorial Sigla'.

Meet: British School at Athens.

3. Tuesday 17th September

Early Attic inscriptions I – the alphabet and dialect

This class looks at the earliest inscriptions from Athens, written in the Attic dialect and script, and traces the development of both up to the early Classical period.

- Class reading: M. K. Langdon, 'A New Greek Abecedarium,' *Kadmos* 44 (2005) 175-182.

Tuesday 24th September

4. Early Attic inscriptions II – the shepherd graffiti on Mount Hymettus

Several thousand graffiti of Archaic shepherds and goatherds have been discovered carved into the marble outcrops of Mount Hymettos and its foothills. They offer a unique insight into social history, linguistics, and religion before the coming of democracy.

- Set texts: a selection of drawings of graffiti found by M. K. Langdon (Moodle - try to make texts from the drawings).

Thursday 26th September

5. Names in Greek inscriptions: onomastics, prosopography, and history from names

Names can tell us a great deal about the backgrounds of those that bear them; we will look at why certain names were chosen for different types of people or in different areas, what they can say about social or economic standing, and how they can help us trace families through the epigraphic and literary record.

- Class reading: McLean (2002) 1.4 'The Onomastics and Prosopography of Greek Names'.

Tuesday 1st October

6. Trip to the Acropolis Museum - Dedications to the gods in Archaic Athens

The Acropolis has produced a huge collection of inscribed statue bases from the pre-Persian period, giving us information about the processes of dedicating to the gods and about the people who were setting up these expensive gifts.

- Class reading: C. M. Keesling, *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis*, Cambridge (2003) 3-35.

- Set texts: ML 18 Memorial of Kallimachos.

Meet: Acropolis Museum, Dionysiou Areopagitou St.

7. Thursday 3rd October

Trip to the Kerameikos - The epigraphy of Death

Funerary inscriptions account for the largest proportion of texts on stone to survive. We will look at what they can tell us about the commemoration of the dead, public and private.

- Class reading: McLean (2002) 2.11 'Funerary Inscriptions'; E. A. Meyer, 'Epitaphs and Citizenship in Classical Athens,' *JHS* 113 (1993) 99-121.

Meet: Kerameikos, on Ermou St.

Tuesday 8th October

8. Language of the street: graffiti and scribbled invective.

Private inscriptions constitute a large and understudied body of ancient texts: economic texts (stamps and marks on pottery), graffiti and games on buildings, Athenian ostracism.

- Class reading: C. Taylor, 'Graffiti and the Epigraphic Habit', in J. Baird and C. Taylor (eds) *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, Routledge (2011), pp. 90-109.

- Set texts: ML 21 Ostracism at Athens.

Thursday 10th October

9. Trip to the Agora – inscriptions and public space

Meet: Athenian Agora main entrance, Adrianou St.

Tuesday 15th October

10. Trip to the Kerameikos for midterm project preparation

Meet: Kerameikos, on Ermou St.

Thursday 17th October

11. Trip to the Agora storerooms: ostracism.

We will take a look at a collection of ostraca from the Agora excavations and discuss further the process of ostracism and the wealth of data it provides on not only fifth-century BC politics but also the language, spelling and dialect of ordinary Athenians.

- Class reading: J. P. Sickinger, *New Ostraka from the Athenian Agora*, *Hesperia* 86 (2017) 443-508.

Meet: Athenian Agora main entrance, Adrianou St.

Tuesday 22nd October

12. Midterm presentations

Thursday 24th October

13. Trip to the Epigraphical Museum: Inscriptions and Imperial control in the Athenian Empire I.

- Set texts: ML 45 Athenian Decree enforcing the use of Athenian Coins, Weights, and Measures.

Meet: Epigraphic Museum, Tositsa St.

Tuesday 5th November

14. Inscriptions and Imperial control in the Athenian Empire II.

The Athenian epigraphic habit explodes under the Empire, giving us inscribed records of revolts and their suppression, decrees imposing cleruchies and new constitutions on allied states, records of tribute payment to the Athenians, as well as imperial pronouncements.

- Class reading: R. S. Stroud, *The Athenian Empire on Stone*, Athens 2006.

Thursday 7th November

15. Trip: an epigraphic walking tour of the city of Athens

A walk around the city hunting for inscriptions in unlikely places and exploring spolia – the reuse of ancient stone blocks in later buildings, particularly churches.

Meet: The Arch of Hadrian.

Tuesday 19th November

16. Religion, magic, and talking to the gods.

Curse tablets and magic spells, often written on lead, were thrown down wells or buried with the dead in order to communicate the writer's wishes to the underworld. Another form of contacting the gods was through an oracle, and many such questions have survived, especially at the sanctuary of Dodona.

- Class reading: E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, & Risk among the Ancient Greeks*, Oxford 2007, chapter 7: 'Curses!', pp. 143-159.

Thursday 21st November

17. Trip to the Theatre of Dionysus - winners and losers in the public arena

Drama played an important role in Athenian social, political, and religious life. Inscriptions were set up to commemorate victorious playwrights, actors, choruses, and sponsors.

- Class reading: A. Chaniotis, 'Theatre Rituals', in P. Wilson (ed.) *The Greek Theatre and Festivals*, Oxford (2007) 48-66.

- Set texts: Decree of the Dionysiac artists (Austin no. 123).

Meet: Theatre of Dionysus, entrance opposite the Acropolis Museum, Dionysiou Areopagitou.

Friday 22nd November

18. Cities of Statues: dedications and public benefactors.

The public spaces of Greek cities and sanctuaries became filled with statues of benefactors, particularly in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Their inscribed bases and honorific decrees can tell us a great deal about negotiations of power and prestige among city elites.

- Class reading: McLean (2002) 2.9 'Honorific Decrees, Proxeny Decrees, and Honorific Inscriptions'; J. Ma, *Statues and Cities*, Oxford 2013, chapter 1 'Towards a Grammar of Honours', 15-43.

Tuesday 26th November

19. Trip to the Acropolis: piety and accountability on the Sacred Rock

The Acropolis was the most important site in the city for the display of piety to the gods, both public and private. We will discuss the types of inscribed monuments set up there, such as the Periclean building accounts, the rededication of the Parthenon to Nero, and the honorary pedestal for Agrippa.

- Set texts: OR 137, Athens' appointment of a priestess; OR 145, Building Accounts of the Parthenon.

Meet: Acropolis main west entrance.

Tuesday 3rd December

20. Democracy on stone

The Athenian democracy created a great many inscribed monuments carrying the decisions of the People: decrees of the Council and the Assembly, laws, accounts of state bodies. We will examine the anatomy of decrees and discuss the role of inscriptions in accountability.

- Class reading: McLean (2002) 2.8 'Decrees'; J. K. Davies, Accounts and Accountability in Classical Athens, in R. Osborne and S. Hornblower (edd.) *Ritual, Finance, Politics*, Oxford 1994, 201-212.

Thursday 5th December

21. Linguistic interactions: bi- and tri-lingual inscriptions

This class will look at the interplay between Greek and other languages in the epigraphic record, whether bilingual funerary inscriptions, or public messages to different audiences.

- Set texts: Selection on Moodle.

Classes **22 & 23** (to be arranged out of class time)

Trip to see the boundary markers (horoi) on the foothills of Mount Hymettos.

We will visit a series of rock-cut boundary markers on Alepovouni hill above Kaisariani.

Meet: TBA – this will need to take place outside normal class hours as it is outside the city.

Thursday 12th December

24. Final seminar discussion.

Bibliography and resources

Introductions to Epigraphy:

B. H. McLean, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine (323 B.C.-A.D. 337)*. Ann Arbor 2002. An exhaustive introduction to many aspects of the subject.

A. G. Woodhead, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions*. 2nd ed. Cambridge 1981 (although other editions available from various publishers). The course textbook.

F. Miller, 'Epigraphy', in M. H. Crawford (ed.) *Sources for Ancient History*, Cambridge 1983, 80-136.

J. Bodel (ed.) *Epigraphic Evidence. Ancient History from Inscriptions*. London/New York 2012.

Collections of texts and translations:

ML: R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, eds. *A Selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century B.C.* Rev. ed., Oxford 1988. A crucial collection of texts of the Archaic period and Fifth Century (no translations) with expert commentaries.

OR: R. Osborne & P. J. Rhodes, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478-404 BC*. Oxford 2017. An updated Meiggs & Lewis, with translations this time, and lengthy commentary.

RO: P. J. Rhodes & R. Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404-323 BC*. Oxford 2003. A continuation of Osborne & Rhodes into the Fourth Century.

P. Harding, *From the end of the Peloponnesian War to the battle of Ipsus (Translated Documents of Greece and Rome, vol 2)*, Cambridge 1985.

C. W. Fornara, *Archaic times to the end of the Peloponnesian War (Translated Documents of Greece and Rome, vol 1)*, 2nd ed. Cambridge 1983.

Epigraphic journals and bibliographies:

- F. Bérard et al. *Guide de l'épigraphiste: Bibliographie choisie des épigraphies antiques et médiévales*. 4th ed. Paris 2010. An essential guide to the principal epigraphic corpora and bibliography, updated annually online: <http://www.antiquite.ens.fr/ressources/publications-aux-p-e-n-s/guide-de-l-epigraphiste/article/overview>
- *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (SEG)*. Indispensable annual review of all publications associated with Greek epigraphy, which is always around 5 years behind the current date. Brill has an online version, which the ASCSA subscribes to.
- *Bulletin épigraphique* in the periodical *Revue des Études Grecques* is an annual review of select publications of Greek inscriptions the year after they come out; not as exhaustive as *SEG* but high quality and often lengthy reviews. It was for decades written by Jeanne and Louis Robert (those publications available also in separate bound volumes at the BSA and ASCSA), and every so often they produce volumes of indices.
- Some recent issues of the journal *Archaeological Reports* carry regional epigraphic updates: R. K. Pitt, 'Recent discoveries & resources in Athenian epigraphy,' *AR* 61 (2014-2015) 49-55; 'Recent epigraphic research in Central Greece: Euboea, Phokis & Lokris', *AR* 61 (2014-2015)65-74; Recent epigraphic research in Thasos, Aegean Thrace & Smothrace (2005-2015), *AR* 61 (2014-2015) 75-93.

Electronic resources:

- The Packard Humanities Institute Searchable Greek Inscriptions website (PHI): this project aims to make available the texts (no lemma or commentary) of all Greek inscriptions, searchable by bibliographic reference or through the Greek text: <http://noapplet.epigraphy.packhum.org/allregions>
- Lexicon of Greek Personal Names Online: the LGPN website allows for searches of all Greek names in their database, as well as searches of almost all their published volumes. The Athens volume is the only one, however, that is updated from the original publication, by one of the editors, Sean Byrne, and has much greater search facilities: <http://www.seangb.org/>
- Attic Inscriptions Online (<https://www.atticinscriptions.com/>) is a project of Steven Lambert, aiming to provide good translations of Athenian inscriptions, papers on Attic inscriptions and other resources.
- The Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents in Oxford has much of its squeeze collection scanned and available online, and provides a long list of other web resources for epigraphy: <http://www.csad.ox.ac.uk/>.
- Writing epigraphic Greek now requires a Unicode font, and one of the most popular is Donald Mastronarde's New Athena Unicode, used with the keyboard input of Greek Keys: <https://apagreekkeys.org/NAUdownload.html>.