

## **HIST 334 | Life & Death In Ancient Greece And Everything In Between: An Introduction To Athenian Society SPRING 2025**

**Course Instructor: Robert K. Pitt**  
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### **Course Description**

This course takes a sociological and anthropological approach to ancient Athenian society, focusing on the individual and examining the human journey through the rites and rituals surrounding birth, transitional phases, marriage, family and kinship, illness and death. We will examine the role of religion in all aspects of the ancient city; explore the social and political relationships that bound Athenians together; watch them participate in the life of the gymnasium and at state festivals within different age classes; see how they join the workforce in the household, factories or shops; and delve into their private lives at home. A holistic approach to all aspects of society will bring to the fore the many groups who have traditionally been marginalized in scholarship: children, women, servants, enslaved peoples, foreigners and refugees in the city. To gather evidence for this analysis of ancient life, we will visit a number of archaeological sites and museums around Athens.

### **Learning Goals**

This course will primarily teach students to:

- Analyze a variety of ancient sources, including literary evidence, inscriptions, and archaeological data
- Use methodologies and theories from anthropology and the social sciences to explain ancient rituals and behaviors
- Evaluate modern scholarship on ancient Greek society by checking sources and assumptions
- Present personal research with an oral presentation to the class

### **Course Requirements and Assessment**

#### **CYA Attendance Policy**

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential, so attendance at all scheduled meetings is required. All absences are recorded and have consequences that may affect your grade.

Students should expect to read for the classes themselves around 4 hours per week. The following assignments and assessments will make up the final grade (further details about each will be distributed):

**Class Contribution 25%** – Class Contribution includes physical and mental presence in the classroom, arriving on time, preparation, and participation in class discussions, and posting occasionally on the Moodle forum. Reading assignments are to be completed before each class session. Class contribution is one of the most important factors for determining your grade for the semester. I expect all of you to come prepared, engage in our discussions, ask questions, and voice your opinions in class. If you are extremely uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group of students, you may send your opinions or afterthoughts in writing via email. If you never participate in class and do not send any thoughts by email, your contribution grade will be low. Students will keep a record of their participation in class throughout the semester.

**Class presentation 25%** – Students will present a midterm presentation on an archaeological artifact or iconography that illuminates an aspect of ancient society.

**Article analysis 25%** – Topics and instructions will be given in advance. 4-5 pages.

**Final research paper 25%** – A paper (around 2500 words) that covers an area of ancient society discussing primary and secondary material.

#### **Policy on Assignments and Make-up Work**

Details about assignments will be given in advance. I will accept no late assignments or make-up exams unless discussed with me in advance. If you are unable to come to class, please let me know beforehand.

**CYA Policies and Regulations**

**Academic Accommodations**

Students are required to submit an official letter from the office at their school that handles academic accommodations (generally the Office of Disability Services), or to have that office send a letter. Students who have submitted such a letter to CYA should also talk to their professors individually to discuss how these accommodations will work in each specific course.

**Site Visits and Accessibility**

This course contains specific physical and spatial elements that are crucial to student learning, although modifications can be made to accommodate access.

-This course requires that students walk around 6 archaeological sites and museums; most of that walking is over uneven ground.

-This course requires students to give a verbal (group or individual) presentation in front of the class as part of their assessment. Alternative assignments can be arranged where mental health issues would prevent the student from performing as well as they would like.

**ePolicy on Original Work**

Plagiarism is literary theft. As such, it is a serious offense which will not be tolerated either at your home institution or at CYA. Plagiarism on an examination or in a paper will result in an F for the course. You must cite the author of any and all ideas that you use that is neither common knowledge nor your own idea. If you are in doubt, it is safest to cite the source. Your work should be original and reflect your own ideas and thoughts. If you are unsure about what counts as original work, please consult your professor and check the Student Handbook.

**Use of Laptops**

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is not permitted without specific permission.

**Upgrade to 400-level course**

Courses can be upgraded to a 400-level. This constitutes usually 25% additional work on the part of the student. The option to upgrade opens the second week of classes. If you are interested in this option, please talk to your professor.

**Course Content - IMPORTANT:** Intrinsic to the study of the ancient Mediterranean is the encounter with ideas, beliefs, practices, and images that students may find alien, unexpected, and disturbing. A course of this nature will, by necessity, cover sensitive and difficult topics in both its reading and discussion material. If you are highly sensitive to or do not feel comfortable reading and discussing such topics, you should consider not taking this course. All students who elect to take this course do so entirely at their own risk and with the full knowledge that we will not censor reading materials, class discussions, or passages read out loud in class, and that all students will be held responsible for all of the course readings and assignments. I will not provide alternate readings and/or assignments, nor will I provide individual content warnings for specific readings.

**Class Schedule**

Class	Date	Topic / Readings / Meeting point
<b>Jan 23-25</b>		
<b>Field Study   Delphi and Ancient Olympia</b>		
1	Mon Jan 27	<b>Introduction to the course and the syllabus; sources and methodologies.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What is the field of anthropology? Can we apply it to long dead peoples like the ancient Greeks? If so, how? <b>Reading:</b> T. H. Eriksen, <i>What Is Anthropology? Anthropology, Culture and Society</i> (London: Pluto, 2nd edition 2017), pp. 3-18: 'Why Anthropology?'
2	Wed Jan 29	<b>Introduction to ancient Athenian society: ethnicity, race, citizenship and the other.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What did it mean to be an Athenian citizen? Were the Athenians accepting of non-Athenians? What did it mean to be of a different ethnicity in the ancient world? How were foreigners integrated into the city-state of Athens and how were they kept out? <b>Reading:</b> S. Lape, <i>Race and Citizen Identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy</i> (Cambridge 2010), 1-30: 'Theorizing Citizen Identity'.
3	Mon Feb 3	<b>Childbirth and infanthood: making it past the first hurdles.</b> <b>Questions:</b> How can forensic anthropology and funerary archaeology inform our understanding of the status of newborns and babies within Greek society? <b>Reading:</b> M. A. Liston & S. I. Rotroff, 'Babies in the well: Archaeological evidence for newborn disposal in Hellenistic Greece', in J. E. Grubbs & T. Parkin eds, <i>The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World</i> (Oxford 2013), pp. 62-82.

Class	Date	Topic / Readings / Meeting point
4	Wed Feb 5	<b>Children's rites and positions in cultic activity.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What were the main Athenian festivals and cults that children took part in, what were their roles, and what stratum of society were they from if they held positions in cults? <b>Reading:</b> R. Garland, 'Children in Athenian religion, in J. E. Grubbs & T. Parkin eds, <i>The Oxford Handbook of Childhood and Education in the Classical World</i> (Oxford 2013), pp. 207-26.
5	Mon Feb 10	<b>Sport and spectacle: gym culture, athletic competition and the body beautiful.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What were gymnasia for, who used them, and how did they shape Athenian society? <b>Reading:</b> W. Petermandl, 'Growing Up with Greek Sport: Education and Athletics', in P. Christesen & D. G. Kyle eds, <i>A Companion to Sport and Spectacle in Greek and Roman Antiquity</i> (Wiley-Blackwell 2014), pp. 236-45.
6	Wed Feb 12	<b>Marriage, the family and kinship groups: familial networks and ancestral clans.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What is kinship and what does it have to do with citizenship? How do you ensure your children are citizens? What cultic functions do these groups (phratries, gene) perform? <b>Readings:</b> D. L. Kellogg, 'Population and Social Structure', and C. B. Patterson, 'The Athenian Family', in J. Neils & D. K. Rogers eds, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens</i> (Cambridge 2021), pp. 159-187.
7	Mon Feb 17	<b>TRIP: National Archaeological Museum Pottery Collection.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What can pottery tell us about different aspects of Athenian life? What methodological problems do we meet with in using pottery data? <b>Reading:</b> J. Whitely, <i>The Archaeology of Ancient Greece</i> (Cambridge 2001), pp. 3-16: 'Introduction: Classical Archaeology and its objects'. <b>Meet:</b> Steps outside the National Archaeological Museum.
<b>Feb 18-21</b>		<b>Field Study   Peloponnese</b>
8	Mon Feb 24	<b>Women in Athenian society: law, customs and realities.</b> <b>Questions:</b> How were Athenian women expected to behave, how were they controlled, what rights did citizen women have, and were the realities different from the theory? <b>Reading:</b> M. A. Liston, Reading the Bones: Interpreting the Skeletal Evidence for Women's Lives in Ancient Greece, in S. L. James & S. Dillon eds, <i>A Companion to Women in the Ancient World</i> (Blackwell 2012), pp. 125-140.
9	Wed Feb 26	<b>Women on stage.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What can Euripides' <i>Medea</i> tell us about Athenian attitudes to women, and what male anxieties can you detect in the play regarding the control of women? <b>Reading:</b> Euripides' <i>Medea</i> (take a copy out of the library).
10	Wed Mar 5	<b>TRIP: The Theatre of Dionysos.</b> <b>Reading:</b> Euripides' <i>Medea</i> . <b>Meet:</b> The Theatre of Dionysos, Dionysiou Areopagitou Street.
11	Mon Mar 10	MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS
12	Wed Mar 12	MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS
13	Mon Mar 17	<b>Sex, Sexuality &amp; Gender in the private and public spheres.</b> <b>Questions:</b> What forms of sex were regulated in ancient Athens and why? <b>Readings:</b> A. Glazebrook, 'Prostitutes, Women, and Gender in Ancient Greece,' in S. L. Budin & J. M. Turfa eds, <i>Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World</i> (London and New York 2016), 703-13; and J. J. Winkler, 'Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens,' in D. M. Halperin et al. eds, <i>Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World</i> (Princeton 1990), 171-209.
<b>Mar 18-22</b>		<b>Field Study   Northern Greece</b>
14	Mon Mar 24	<b>An Introduction to Greek Religion: Prayers, Sacrifice and the Temple.</b> <b>Reading:</b> S. Deacy, 'Famous Athens, Divine Polis: The Religious System at Athens,' in D. Ogden ed., <i>A Companion to Greek Religion</i> (Blackwell 2007), pp. 221-35.
15	Wed Mar 26	<b>TRIP: The Acropolis.</b> <b>Reading:</b> P. Valavanis, 'The Akropolis,' in J. Neils & D. K. Rogers eds, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens</i> (Cambridge 2021), pp. 63-85. <b>Meet:</b> The west entrance of the Acropolis.
16	Mon Mar 31	<b>The Panathenaia Festival: Athens on show.</b> <b>Reading:</b> M. M. Miles and J. Neils, 'Athenian festivals,' in J. Neils & D. K. Rogers eds, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens</i> (Cambridge 2021), pp. 332-44.
17	Wed Apr 2	<b>TRIP: The Acropolis Museum.</b> <b>Reading:</b> I. Jenkins, 'The Parthenon frieze and Perikles' cavalry of a thousand,' in J. M. Barringer & J. M. Hurwit eds, <i>Periklean Athens and its Legacy</i> (Austin 2005), pp. 147-61. <b>Meet:</b> The Acropolis Museum, Dionysiou Areopagitou Street.

Class	Date	Topic / Readings / Meeting point
18	Mon Apr 7	<b>Private religion and healing gods.</b> <b>Questions:</b> How did an Athenian seek divine help for illness, where might they go and to which gods did they pray? <b>Reading:</b> F. Graf, 'Healing,' in E. Eidinow & J. Kindt eds, <i>The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion</i> (Oxford 2015), pp. 505–518.
19	Wed Apr 9	<b>Priestesses in Athenian cults.</b> <b>Questions:</b> Who could become a priestess in Athens and what did their roles entail? <b>Reading:</b> J. B. Connelly, 'Introduction,' in <i>Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece</i> (Princeton 2007), pp. 1-25.
	<b>Apr 11-21</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
20	Wed Apr 23	<b>Death and burial rites in Athens.</b> <b>Reading:</b> T. Shea, 'The Archaic and Classical Cemeteries,' in J. Neils & D. K. Rogers eds, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens</i> (Cambridge 2021), pp. 140-55.
21	Mon Apr 28	<b>TRIP: The Kerameikos.</b> <b>Reading:</b> D. Felton, 'The Dead,' in D. Ogden ed., <i>A Companion to Greek Religion</i> (Blackwell 2007), pp. 86-99. <b>Meet:</b> The Kerameikos, Ermou Street.
22	Wed Apr 30	<b>TRIP: Ancient Agora: Trade, manufacturing and the economy.</b> <b>Reading:</b> J. McK. Camp II, 'The Agora: Public Life and Administration,' in J. Neils & D. K. Rogers eds, <i>The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens</i> (Cambridge 2021), pp. 86-97. <b>Meet:</b> Ancient Agora, Adrianou Street.
23	Mon May 5	<b>The Eleusinian Mysteries: secrets for a better afterlife.</b> <b>Reading:</b> K. Clinton, 'The Mysteries of Demeter and Kore,' in D. Ogden ed., <i>A Companion to Greek Religion</i> (Blackwell 2007), pp. 342-56.
24	Wed May 7	<b>Final seminar.</b>