HIST201: THE HISTORIAN’S CRAFT

ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

Instructor: Prof. Claire Taylor (cetaylor3@wisc.edu)
5122 Mosse Humanities Building
Office hours: Wednesday, 1-3pm
Telephone: 608 263 2339

Teaching Assistant: Grace Allen (geallen@wisc.edu)
4272 Mosse Humanities Building
Office hours: Monday 11am-1pm

Course description
The “Historian’s Craft” courses offer an opportunity to experience the excitement and
rewards of doing original historical research and conveying the results of that work to
others. Through engagement with varying source materials, the courses encourage
undergraduates to become historical detectives who can define important historical
questions, collect and analyze evidence, present original conclusions, and contribute to
ongoing discussions. These are the skills we have defined as central to the history major.

With that in mind, this course explores some key issues in the ancient practice and
modern discussion of Athenian democracy. It will examine democratic values,
institutions, rhetoric, and sociology in order to provide students with the basic tools to
understand democracy in both its ancient and modern context. It will engage with a
variety of source material (literary, archaeological, epigraphic) in order to develop
multiple skills of interpretation.

Some key questions we will seek to answer here: What are the key features of Athenian
democracy and how did it differ from modern democracy? Why did the Athenians think
voting was undemocratic? How did they reconcile citizen egalitarianism with social
inequalities? (or, why were women and slaves excluded from political power?) To what
extent did the wealthy elite support democracy? Were there social tensions between
the rich and the poor?

Goals
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be prepared to undertake
substantial historical research and writing in a variety of courses, including the HIST600
seminar. You will develop your ability to:

• Ask questions
• Find sources
• Evaluate sources
• Develop and present an argument
• Identify the contribution of an argument to existing scholarship and plan further research
• Communicate findings effectively

Reading
You will need a copy of:


Not compulsory, but recommended as quick introductions to the topic:

An indispensable guide to writing:

And in a bit more depth:

Your responsibilities
All classes are compulsory and will include lectures, discussions, and student-led group activity. The aim of classes are for you to learn, therefore you need to be active in your own learning. This means you need to come to class, do the assigned readings, and participate in class activities. If you do this, you will get much more out of the course.

In summary, your responsibilities are to:
• Attend all sessions (or email the professor in advance of any absence)
• Take notes in class and participate in class activities
• Prepare for class by doing the assigned readings
• Prepare the assignments to the best of your ability and submit them by the deadline
Class topics

Week 1: Introduction
Wed 3 Sept: Introduction
Fri 5 Sept: Athens in the classical period

Reading
Robinson 2004: introduction

Week 2: Democratic theory
Mon 8 Sept: What is democracy?
Wed 10 Sept: Democratic values and ideology
Fri 11 Sept: Seminar group 1: Pericles’ funerary speech

Seminar reading
Regardless of which seminar group you are in, you need to do the seminar reading by the Wednesday skills section of the first week in the cycle
Thucydides 2.34-46: Pericles’ funeral speech (on Learn@UW)

Weekly reading

Week 3: Democratic practice
Mon 15 Sept: Decision making in a direct democracy: the Assembly
Wed 16 Sept: Other democratic institutions
Fri 18 Sept: Seminar group 2: Pericles’ funerary speech

Weekly reading

Week 4: Democratic beginnings
Deadlines: Assignment 1 (Mon 22 Sept, 4pm)

Mon 22 Sept: Solon, Cleisthenes, Ephialtes
Wed 24 Sept: The wider Greek context
Fri 26 Sept: Seminar group 1: Cleisthenes and the beginnings of democracy
Seminar reading
Robinson 2004, ch. 2

Weekly reading

Week 5: Peoples and places
Mon 29 Sept: Demes and local democracy
Wed 1 Oct: Demagogues and leaders
Fri 3 Oct: Seminar group 2: Cleisthenes and the beginnings of democracy

Weekly reading
Aristophanes, Knights [I recommend either the Penguin edition: Aristophanes The
Birds and Other Plays, translated by D. Barrett and A.H. Sommerstein or the
most recent Loeb edition Aristophanes: Acharnians & Knights, translated by
J. Henderson]

Week 6: Anti-democratic dissent
Deadlines: Assignment 2 (Mon 6 Oct, 4pm)

Mon 6 Oct: Critics and criticism
Wed 8 Oct: Opposition in action
Fri 10 Oct: Seminar group 1: ideals

Seminar reading
Robinson 2004, ch.4

Weekly reading
Roberts, J.T. Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought.
particular attention to pp. 27-51)

Week 7: A robust democracy? A system in crisis?
Mon 13 Oct: Arginousai, Herms
Wed 15 Oct: Socrates
Fri 17 Oct: Seminar group 2: ideals
Weekly reading
Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.6.19-7.35
Plato, *Apology*
Thucydides 6.24-32, 60-1

Week 8: Laws, the law-courts and the power of persuasion
Deadlines: Draft of assignment 3 (Mon 20 Oct, 4pm)

Mon 20 Oct: The Athenian legal system
Wed 21 Oct: Approaching forensic evidence
Fri 24 Oct: Seminar group 1: Who ran democratic Athens?

Seminar reading
Robinson 2004: ch. 5

Weekly reading

Week 9: No classes
Mon 27-Fri 31 Oct: Individual meetings with instructors

Weekly reading

Week 10: Democratic participation
Deadlines: Revised assignment 3 (Mon 3 Nov, 4pm)

Mon 3 Nov: The demos
Wed 5 Nov: The wealthy
Fri 7 Nov: Seminar group 2: Who ran democratic Athens?

Weekly reading

Week 11: Equality and inequality
Deadlines: Assignment 4 (Wed 12 Nov, 4pm)

Mon 10 Nov: Democracy and slavery
Wed 12 Nov: Free non-citizens
Fri 14 Nov: **Seminar group 1:** Inclusion and exclusion

**Seminar reading**
Robinson 2004, ch. 6

**Weekly reading**

Week 12: Democracy evolving
Mon 17 Nov: Fifth- and fourth-century democracy compared
Wed 19 Nov: Fifth- and fourth-century democracy compared
Fri 21 Nov: **Seminar group 2:** Inclusion and exclusion

**Weekly reading**

Week 13: The archaeology of democracy
Mon 24 Nov: Democracy and material culture
Wed 26 Nov: No class: work on essays
Fri 28 Nov: Thanksgiving break: no class

Week 14: Evaluating ancient democracy
**Deadlines:** Assignment 5 draft (Mon 1 Dec, 4pm)

Mon 1 Dec: Hellenistic democracy
Wed 3 Dec: The reception of Athenian democracy
Fri 5 Dec: Democracy: good or bad?
Weekly reading

Week 15: No class
Deadlines: Revised assignment 5 (Fri 12 Dec)
Mon 8 Dec-Fri 12 Dec: Individual meetings with instructors

Lectures, sections and seminars
Each week you will have two lectures (Mon, Wed) followed by your section (Wed) which will focus on research skills and, depending on the week, a Friday seminar. (The class will be split into two groups for the Friday seminar – you only need attend your group’s session).

What is a seminar?
It is an advanced discussion section focussed on a specific collection of sources. In your weekly research skills classes you will, among other things, brainstorm ideas about how to research the week’s sources, think about questions and themes they raise, find bibliography for and prepare as a group for the following seminar. Together the skills section and seminar are designed to advance your research, discussion, and historical skills in order to prepare you for more advanced history courses.

Together the skills sections and seminars help you to:
• Develop your active reading skills
• Distinguish between different types of historical writing
• Identify questions, themes and problems with source material, scholarly literature and historical topics in order to evaluate them effectively
• Synthesize different viewpoints and arguments

Laptops etc
Writing emails, online shopping, checking football stats: all necessary parts of the day, but not in class. Unfortunately, too many students cannot distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate use of laptops which leads me, regrettably, to ban them from the classroom.

Please also silence phones in the classroom: it is a distraction for everyone when they ring, beep, buzz or light up.