

UW-MADISON

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

HIST200: SPARTA

Instructor: Prof. Claire Taylor (claire.taylor@wisc.edu)
Office: 5122 Mosse Humanities Building
Office hours: Wednesday 11am-1pm (or by appointment)
Seminar: Wednesday 8.50-10.45am; Memorial Library 424 (Greek & Latin Reading Room)

The ancient Greek city-state of Sparta is well known for its austere (“laconic”) lifestyle devoted to military training. Its citizen-warriors were famous across the Greek world (and beyond) for their bravery, devotion to war, and military success (see Zack Snyder’s *300* for example). In this seminar we will investigate this image: How did this picture of Sparta emerge and is there any truth behind it? What kind of society was Sparta and how did the views of other Greeks shape what we know about this place? To answer these questions we will examine the structures which shaped Spartan society: their unusual political system, their relationship with dependent populations (helots and *perioikoi*) and the problems this caused, and their place in the archaic and classical Greek world (8th-4th centuries BCE). Throughout we will explore how the “Spartan mirage” (the mythologizing representation of the Spartans) has shaped the creation of Spartan history in both the ancient and modern periods.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- understand and use appropriately the specific terminology (names, places, concepts) of archaic and early classical Spartan history
- discuss with appropriate methodological awareness conflicting views expressed in modern scholarship
- analyze problems relating to the reconstruction of historical concepts in the ancient world with reference to relevant source material
- critically read and engage with complex academic texts (both ancient sources and modern literature)
- present knowledge, ideas, and analysis orally (in classroom discussion) and in written format

Credits

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), reading, writing, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Assignments and assessment

1. Participation and discussion in class: 10%

If you need to miss class for any reason, you should email me.

Participation rubric:

Excellent (90-100)	Good (80-90)	Competent (70-80)	Inadequate (60-70)	Fail (0-60)
-Mastery over readings and previous discussion	-Knows readings well	-Basic grasp of reading	-Insufficient command of reading	-Uninvolved
-Explores questions rigorously	-Consistent preparation and involvement	-Mostly offers facts or surface-level interpretations	-Attempts to contribute facts or interpretations when called but unable to offer substance	-Unexcused absences
-Comes to class with interpretations and questions	-Offers analysis of texts in class	-Contributes when called upon but not actively engaged		-Disruptive
-Engages others				

2. Summaries of weekly readings: 20%

You will need to do **SIX** summaries, each of **250 words** of one of the **weekly scholarship readings** (not including ancient sources). Starting in week 3, you can choose which 6 you do but it is your responsibility to keep track of how many you have done. These are graded on a complete/incomplete basis. Please upload to Canvas **by 5pm on the day before the class**. The aim is to develop your skills in the comprehension of difficult texts and help you prepare for class discussion by identifying and summarizing complex arguments.

You need to:

- identify the key argument of the author
- summarize the key points the author uses to make the argument in your own words
- write in coherent English

3. Paper 1: 20%

This is a 1-2 page paper in which you will analyze an ancient source. **Due Friday 20 October, 5pm.**

4. Paper 2: 20%

This is a 1-2 page paper in which you will analyze an aspect of Sparta in popular culture. **Due Wednesday 22 November, 5pm**

5. Paper 3: 30%

Option 1: This is a 5-6 page paper where you perform your own research based on ancient sources and modern scholarship and present your work in an appropriately scholarly fashion (i.e. with references in the Chicago/MLA style and with a bibliography).

Option 2: You can also do paper 3 as an 8-10 page research paper.

Due Friday 15 December, 5pm.

Books

- (i) *Plutarch on Sparta*, trans. Richard J.A. Talbert. Penguin Classics (revised edition: 2005).
- (ii) Herodotus *The Histories* trans. A. de Sélincourt, revised with introduction and notes by John Marincola. Penguin Classics (revised edition 2003)
- (iii) Each week I will give you specific direction for readings for class discussion (both ancient sources and scholarly literature). Many of these readings will be available online via the library catalog. In cases where an online text does not exist, these will be posted on Canvas.
- (iv) If you want to buy books on Sparta, I recommend any of the following:

Cartledge, P. (2004). *The Spartans: The World of the Warrior-Heroes of Ancient Greece*. New York: Vintage Books.

Kennell, N.M. (2010) *Spartans. A New History*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Whitby, M. ed. (2002). *Sparta*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Expect to read approx. 50-80 pages per week of core readings. Suggestions will also be given for additional readings which will be useful for written assignments. It is your responsibility to catch up on the readings in the event of a missed class.

Class schedule

	Date	Topic	Deadlines
Week 1	6 Sept	Introduction	
Week 2	13 Sept	Plutarch, Lycurgus, and the invention of tradition	
Week 3	20 Sept	The Lakedaimonian state	
Week 4	27 Sept	The growth of Spartan power	
Week 5	4 Oct	Sparta and the Persian Wars	
Week 6	11 Oct	The <i>agoge</i>	
Week 7	18 Oct	Helots	<i>If you have not done any summaries yet, you have to do one a week from now on</i> Paper 1: Friday 20 Oct
Week 8	25 Oct	<i>Perioikoi</i>	
Week 9	1 Nov	Women	
Week 10	8 Nov	Spartan imperialism	
Week 11	15 Nov	Sparta in popular culture	
Week 12	22 Nov	No class: Thanksgiving	Paper 2: Wednesday 22 Nov
Week 13	29 Nov	<i>Oliganthropia</i>	
Week 14	6 Dec	What is Sparta?	
Week 15	13 Dec	Individual meetings	Paper 3: Friday 15 Dec

Grading

The following grading system will be used:

A 93-100

AB 88-92

B 83-87

BC 78-82

C 73-77

D 60-72

F 0-59

The History Lab

The History Lab is a resource center where experts (TAs) will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts—the History Lab staff are here, along with your professors and teaching assistants, to help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Sign up for a one-on-one consultation online: <http://go.wisc.edu/hlab>

Academic integrity

One of the fundamental principles of this university is that “academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system” (Wisconsin Administrative Code 14.01). By enrolling in this course you commit yourself to uphold these standards of academic integrity, to avoid plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.

Plagiarism is:

- Using someone else’s words or ideas without proper documentation.
- Copying some portion of your text from another source without proper acknowledgement of indebtedness (NB: This includes AI software such as ChatGPT).
- Borrowing another person’s ideas without documenting their source (i.e. cite where you got the idea from).
- Having another person do, correct, or revise your work (you are encouraged to talk to one another about the content of the course, but the work you submit for grades needs to be your own).
- Turning in an assignment written by another person, from an essay “service”, or from a website (including reproductions of such essays or papers).

Other resources

See the Canvas site for this course

Goals of the History Major

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.