# Honors 205: Colloquium in the History of Greek antiquity

fall quarter 2024; Meeting days & Times TBD; Room TBD

[4 credits/ACGM GUR](https://registrar.wwu.edu/purpose-gurs)

“Quite an experience to live in fear, isn’t it? That’s what it is to be a slave.” (Blade Runner, 1982)

## Instructor Information

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## Course Description

This offering of Honors 205, our Colloquium in History, focuses on the history of Greece during the Archaic and Classical Periods, spanning roughly from the late eighth century until the latter half of the fourth century BCE. The main analytical thrust of the course will be an accounting of the development of the *polis* and the *polis-*culture (no small task). In order to accomplish this task, the first few weeks of the course are dedicated to covering the fiery demise of the Bronze Age and the subsequent Dark Ages in brief (c. 1200-750 BCE); subsequently, we swiftly move to the Archaic Period in more detail (c. 750-550 BCE), with especial attention to the rise of five main players in the Classical Period: Sparta, Argos, Corinth, Thebes, and, of course, Athens. Beginning with the latter half of the sixth century and Herodotus, the course will take on the accustomed structure of a more chronological narrative focused on familiarizing students with canonical Greek political history of the fifth century and carry through to the rise of Macedonia and Philip II in the fourth century as preparation for the advent of Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Era of the eastern Mediterranean.

## Course Goals (in order of import)

1. To develop and refine critical thinking skill especially suited to the discipline of history using the *polis*-culture of Ancient Greece as our subject. The history of Ancient Greece has been put to this purpose for the last two thousand years and is remarkably well-suited for precisely this sort of exercise.
2. To render critical thought and ideas into coherent, lucid, historiographic prose. This task will form the basis for evaluated work for the course. The difficulty of this process is never to be underestimated and only improves through practice.
3. To develop a basic, chronological narrative and comprehensive vision of the Archaic and Classical Periods of Greek history within which a student can carry out further exploration into a wide variety of aspects of the Greek past as befits individual interests.
4. To derive the pleasure that only comes through the struggle to attain wisdom and learning.

## Required Texts

M.H. Hansen, *Polis* (Oxford 2006) 978-0199208500

H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Penguin 1950) 978-0140135213

Herodotus, *The Histories* (Anchor 2009) 978-1400031146

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (Oxford 2009) 978-0192821911

Xenophon, *Hellenika* (Anchor 2009) 978-1400034765

All of the aforementioned texts are (or will be) available at the university’s bookstore, as well as many other local and online retailers. Use your own discretion when deciding where to purchase your texts. With permission, other translations of the texts of our primary source material are acceptable. Students are expected to purchase these materials by the second week of the quarter with no exceptions. As such, waiting until some time into the quarter to purchase specific materials, and subsequently finding them out of stock at the university’s bookstore is not an excuse for an inability to complete assigned work.

## Summary of Assignments to be Submitted for Evaluation

Herodotus Essay **15%**

Thucydides Essay **20%**

Xenophon Essay **25%**

Final Thesis **40%**

**THERE WILL BE NO IN-CLASS MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAMINATION**

## Things to Keep in Mind

As usual, I reserve the sole right and authority to adjudicate whether or not late work will be accepted and what penalty will be imposed upon it within the [**parameters established by Western Washington University**](https://catalog.wwu.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=5653), especially under the headings “Class Attendance” and “Emergency Leaves of Absence.”Please also consult these [**additional resources**](https://syllabi.wwu.edu/); this website covers a wide range of policies meant to protect student wellbeing. Two important points: first, you must complete all of the aforementioned assignments to complete the course. Failure to complete and submit any one assignment **may** result in an F for the entire course, at my discretion. All of your assignments will be able to be submitted through Canvas. I tend to be a very compassionate human being to a fault. Please do not abuse my good faith. Think of the suitors.

## A (tentative) Guide to Course Meetings

Week One: Course Introduction

Week Two: The Bronze Age

Week Three: The Archaic Period, Part One

Week Four: The Archaic Period, Part Two

Week Five: The Classical Period, Part One

Week Six: The Classical Period, Part Two

Weeks Seven through Eight: Tour of Greece

Week Nine: Thanksgiving Break

Week Ten: The Fourth Century BCE

## A Preliminary Guide to the Essays and Final Thesis

You will be composing three Essays for this course and a Final Thesis. Each Essay will delve into one ancient author with the support of your reading in Hansen, Kitto, and lecture. Your Final Thesis will be a composite of your three Essays, dealing with all three ancient authors and your other sources to tackle an overarching question.

**IF YOU TURN IN AN ESSAY OR YOUR THESIS WITHOUT REGULARLY OCCURRING CITATIONS (ENDNOTES) TO EACH OF YOUR SOURCES, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT. I REPEAT: A ZERO. DO NOT MAKE ME STOP THIS CAR.**

For example, your Herodotus essay must include endnotes citing references to your readings in Herodotus, Hansen, and Kitto that you are using to support your interpretations and arguments. Citing lecture need not be as frequent, **but is required**. The Thucydides and Xenophon essays, *mutatis mutandis*, must abide by the same principles.

Your Final Thesis must include references in endnote form to all three ancient authors, as well as Hansen and Kitto. Again, citing lecture is also required, **so make plans to attend very regularly.**

**Herodotus Essay**

You will be investigating Herodotus’s *Histories* in an effort to determine what he felt it was about the *polis*-culture of Greece that allowed them to defeat the might of the Persian Empire. How do your other sources support Herodotus’s position? I recommend you read Herodotus in his entirety, but I expect that you will at least need to read from **Book Five onward** to succeed on this essay with aplomb.

**Thucydides Essay**

You will be scouring Thucydides’s account of the Peloponnesian War with care in order to assess what he felt it was about the *polis-*culture that made war between Athens and Sparta inevitable. How do your other sources support your analysis of Thucydides? Again, I recommend you read all of Thucydides, but the **first three to five books** seem essential. Your Thucydides text has a nice table of contents that might allow you to be more selective in your readings if used wisely (the speeches are quite useful).

**Xenophon Essay**

You are charged with puzzling out why the *poleis* continued to struggle in armed conflict well into the fourth century according to Xenophon. What was it in his account of the world of the Greek *poleis* that made it impossible for them to reach a lasting peace? How do your other sources support his treatment? Xenophon is possibly the most challenging author of the three, and I recommend you read **as much of his work** as you are able with care.

In each Essay, allow the very analytical (but sometimes difficult) structure of Hansen be your guide to arranging your thoughts on the *polis.* Hansen’s book is very good at dividing each aspect of the *polis*-culture into its own discrete subunit (maybe too good, but we need not dwell on that). Taking advantage of these subunits might be a useful way to begin mining data from the ancient authors. Thus, giving Hansen a good read through before tackling the ancient authors may be a good strategy for organizing your own thoughts and translating them into essay form.

Kitto is a very valuable resource, but in a very different manner from Hansen. *The Greeks* is a genuine goldmine of insights and ideas about Greece and the *polis*-culture. Allow Kitto to guide and inspire some of your own ideas and let his interpretations help you keep your eyes and ears open as you read the ancient authors for useful material and examples.

Finally, we shall be discussing these Essays (and the Final Thesis, which I have not dealt with fully here) and composition in general regularly throughout the course of the quarter, as well as strategies you can employ as you read in order to turn your close reading into well-written responses.

Above is the GUR Rosette, which serves to offer a visualization of the interaction of the “literacies” that a WWU committee decided form the foundation of a “Liberal Arts” education. As an indigenous person, I do have objections to the use of the term “literacies.” However, I have been instructed that I am required to display this image on my syllabus. Furthermore, the “liberal” part of the phrase “Liberal Arts,” I take as representing the Enlightenment understanding of the concept “liberal,” which has produced our strange negative liberty culture of private citizenship. Though having been raised so, I must say that I find it bizarre that I am required to place this image on my own curricular materials. Is this not an affront to my creative freedom!?

Through our investigation of human experiences in Greek antiquity, it is my hope that the “Social, Cultural, & Historical Literacies; Civic, Ethical, & Environmental Literacies; Critical & Reflective Literacies; Communicative & Interpretive Literacies; and Creative & Problem-Solving Literacies” that underpin such an investigation will reveal to us a significantly more profound relationship with the concept of “*LIBERTAS*” than that on offer by a few prominent Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century CE (largely Northwesterly) Europeans, whose legacy continues to surreptitiously lurk beneath our educational institutions.

As an Honors College foundation course, Honors 205 promotes the following Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). These Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) emphasize ways of thinking, doing, and being.

Students who earn the Honors Interdisciplinary Studies Minor will have:

1. experimented with unfamiliar modes of process, inquiry, thought, and dialogue by engaging with challenging, diverse materials in both textual and non-textual forms;
2. engaged in a praxis of communication design;
3. cultivated an appreciation for the generative potential of self-reflection, unlearning, and not-knowing, in part by undertaking willful acts of creativity, interdependence, and vulnerability in the classroom;
4. acquired substantial knowledge of the ways that the methods, tools, and discourses of academic disciplines have been developed and deployed in a variety of historical periods and geographical locations, as well as by the individuals and communities within them;
5. demonstrated fluency in the mobility of disciplinary-specific methods, tools, and discourses, especially in their generative potential when combined with the methods, tools, and discourses from other fields of inquiry;
6. undertaken sustained, rigorous, and relevant work that integrates the methods, tools, and discourses of several academic disciplines;
7. immersed themselves in a community of practice, thereby expanding their appreciation for the importance of self-reflection and accountability, ambiguity and complexity, contingency and difference;
8. engaged in regular acts of service to the communities in which they are locally embedded: the Honors community, the broader campus community, and/or communities in Whatcom County; and
9. deployed each of the above in everyday life.