

Greek Civilization

CLST 181S

T/TH 3:30-4:45pm

[Online](#)

Instructor: Alexander Karsten (alexander.karsten@duke.edu)

Office Hours: [Online](#)

W 11:00am-12:00pm; TH 2:15pm-3:15pm
and by appointment

Required Text: *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Recommended Text: *Greek Art and Archaeology*, Richard Neer, 1st ed., 2011

All other texts will be available on the class Box page in “Readings.”

The Course

Who were the ancient Greeks? What did they value? In this course, we will explore the culture, politics, and history of the ancient Greeks by examining their art, architecture, drama, philosophy, personal letters, poetry, and more. The Greeks' idea of themselves shifted over time, and so have the ways in which we study them. We will encounter the most famous Greeks and their most significant works, as well as anonymous Greeks living everyday lives. All the while, we will ask ourselves: what did it mean to be Greek, and why are they worthy of our careful attention?

Structure of the Course

Readings: Your readings will be due every Tuesday and Thursday. They come from two sources: the coursepack and translations of ancient Greek literature. The coursepack readings are brief, designed to give you all of the need-to-know facts and themes for the week. The coursepack will also include images of artifacts. We'll discuss how to read artifacts in class. The ancient literature ranges from the most famous of Plato and Homer to letters whose authors are long since forgotten. At times, these readings may seem daunting and unfamiliar, but remember that we all have different experiences and expertise that we bring—you know things that I and your classmates don't! I don't expect you to know anything about ancient Greece or any of the sources we'll look at—I just expect you to read and think carefully!

Discussion: The vast majority of class-time will be spent in thinking through the readings and objects together in the form of class discussion. Be sure to root contributions in specific passages or objects (“Iliad, Book 3, lines 121 and following..it starts on page 120”; “the Cup of Nestor in the coursepack”). Be prepared to explain yourself with close reference to evidence. Bring up passages that you do not understand (chances are someone else, myself included, is also confused!); but be prepared to describe why: “Why is Helen only now

pointing out who people are if this is the 10th year of the war?" Our job is to bring these 2000-or-more-year-old texts and objects to life in the light of the other texts and objects we've read, ideas we've developed in our leukōmata, thoughts we've floated in discussion, suggestions that we have made in class. We move forward by reading carefully, by listening to each other, and by throwing as many ideas as we can against the wall and to see what sticks. "Mistakes" are not bad, as long as we're reading carefully; on the contrary, they are essential to the day's business. Don't be shy about voicing ideas that you're not sure about.

An important note: I am your biggest supporter! If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class for any reason, come see me right away. We'll discuss what we can do to help you feel more at ease.

Writing: There are two basic goals of our reading, discussing, and writing. The first goal is to improve our knowledge and understanding of specific things about ancient Greek civilization. The second goal is to get better at building ideas. Ideas aren't something you "have" by magic. They require time, effort, and writing, writing, writing. So, starting at week 4 you will have the opportunity to engage with the readings in very brief (375 word) think pieces, which we'll call *leukōmata*. These are short, informal, meant to be raw. No detailed or developed arguments are expected. This is instead an exercise in generation of ideas, a chance to try to think by writing.

Attendance: Regular attendance is absolutely essential for your success in this class and is required. Absences will be excused only if you (a) were sick and present a STINF, or (b) were away on university business, in which case you will have to present me with a letter from a university official attesting to that fact. Please contact me in advance in person or by email if you must miss a class for any reason.

Assessment

Leukomata: 40%

Participation: 40%

Quizzes: 20%

Leukōmata (40%): You will write 10 leukōmata: 375-word response papers. Submit these to the Box Folder by 5pm EST on Fridays.

1. leukōma α: Free Write: [What was the most surprising thing that you learned about Greek civilization from one or more of our readings so far? If your roommate asked you to give an account of the coolest, weirdest, most interesting, or boring, or shocking thing you've encountered so far, what would you say? Your writing must be intelligible, but it need not be formal. The only requirement is that you type and keep typing, without pause, for 30 minutes. Then, hand in whatever comes out. You do not need to quote anything. Use this as an easy opportunity to identify things that interest you, even a way to generate ideas or questions that you'd like to raise in discussion.]

2. leukōma β: You vs Text [Identify at least two things from our readings that have struck you as interesting, surprising, odd, difficult to understand—anything that really caught your interest for any reason (you must cite specific passages). This exercise asks what seems interesting, in one or more texts, in the light of what you think or know. Feel free to circle or otherwise highlight the sentence or clause that contains the crux of your observation.]

3. leukōma γ: You vs Object [Discuss observations you made about one or more artifacts or sites in our coursepacks. It may be helpful to consider the theme of identity; what expressions of ancient identity surprised you or was there an interpretation you disagreed with? However, do not feel bound to this theme. Be sure to consider the major categories of style, material, and subject when interpreting your chosen artifacts. You may feel free to include an image with your text if you like, but it is not necessary]
4. leukōma δ: Text/Object vs Text/Object [Read at least two texts/passages or objects/object types against each other. How does the one illuminate, contradict, agree with, flesh out, etc. the other? And what does that tell you? You do not need to mount a full-bore argument; you do not need to 'discover' anything new. You simply need to have an honest thought born of careful attention to the texts that we read. Any combination of texts and objects is fine (one of each, two of one or the other).]
5. leukōma ε: Text vs Text
6. leukōma ζ: Object vs Object
7. leukōma η: Text vs Object
8. leukōma θ: Text/Object vs Context [Read this week's text or object against the semester's readings and discussions. This exercise asks what seems interesting, in one or more texts, in the light of your increasingly broad, evidence-based knowledge and understanding of Greek civilization. In so doing you are in effect asserting that a number of passages speak to some larger issue, which might not even be an ancient category of thought.]
9. leukōma ι: Text/Object vs Context
10. leukōma κ: Text/Object vs Context

Each leukōma will be assessed on a fifteen-point scale. You get 10 points just for submitting, the final five points are based on quality:

11 points: On-time delivery of 375 words. Writing shows minimal engagement with the texts and/or is so unclear as to render assessment of such impossible. [= words]

12 points: Writing is clear, shows engagement inasmuch as it recapitulates prior classroom discussion; clear but does not take ownership of an idea. [= words + alien thought]

13 points: Writing is clear and contains a good, clear, interesting observation of your own; shows clear understanding of text. [= words + own observation]

14 points: Writing is clear and contains one or more good, clear, interesting ideas based on observations; shows clear understanding of text and attempts critical engagement with it [= words + observation + analysis]

15 points: Writing is clear, compelling, well-crafted, and efficient, and shows ambitious or profound analysis of text [= words clearly show excellent intellectual engagement]

This will not generate the grade, but a figure from which to calculate it; growth and improvement count.

Note: there is a simple way to raise the mark of any one leukōma by one point. First: have one of your classmates write a brief assessment of your leukōma; a few careful sentences will suffice. Then: add your own thoughts (again, a few careful sentences will do) in response to their response. Your classmate's job is to try to put him/herself in your shoes and try to appreciate what you are trying to say; your job

is to put yourself in your classmate's shoes and try to appreciate her/his understanding. So, this is an exercise in imagining the mindset of your reader. If you both make an honest effort, the original author gets a point. Simple. If you trade (i.e. each reads and comments on the other's paper), you both get a point. Even better. This is optional.

Participation (40%): Your participation grade is broken up into three categories: daily questions, check-in and check-out, and in-class discussion.

Daily Questions: Each student will have a page in their box folder where they will submit a few questions (3 or more) at least an hour or more before class. These will help guide our discussion.

Check-in and Check-out: Classes will begin with a check-in and end with a check-out. These are open book, short answer comprehension questions graded only for completion. Any check-ins, check-outs, and quizzes missed for unexcused absences cannot be made up.

In-Class Discussion: After class each day I will record a note on your performance for the day:

- 4: you are on fire, offering a number of solid points or, possibly, a couple of really great points
- 3: you are working up a sweat, offering a few points or, possibly, a very strong one
- 2: you are warming up, offering a solid contribution to the discussion
- 1: you are on the bench, present but not contributing

Note: Like for leukōmata, this will not generate a grade, but a figure from which to calculate one; growth and improvement count. I will drop the 2 lowest days. Any unexcused absences will be recorded as 0 in the daily note. Mere presence is not satisfactory; everyone needs to weigh in.

Quizzes (20%): Over the course of the semester, there will be eleven quizzes. These quizzes will be unannounced and brief. They will take the place of either a check-in or check-out. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

Schedule

Coursepack reading listed next to week number.
Readings and leukōmata listed next to *date due*.
Leukōmata due 5pm EST.

Week 1: No Coursepack

January 21: Introduction to the Course.

Week 2: Bronze Age Archaeology

January 26: Iliad 1-3

January 28: Iliad 4-6

Week 3: Early Iron Age and Geometric Period

Feb 2: Iliad 7-9

Feb 4: Iliad 10-12

Week 4: Orientalizing and Colonization

Feb 9: Iliad 13-15

Feb 11: Iliad 16-18

Feb 12: Leukōma α

Week 5: Archaic Period I

Feb 16: Iliad 19-21

Feb 18: Iliad 22-24

Feb 19: Leukōma β

Week 6: Case Study: Olympia and Delphi

Feb 23: Lyric Poetry Excerpts I

Feb 25: Lyric Poetry Excerpts II

Feb 26: Leukōma γ

Week 7: Archaic Period II

Mar 2: Herodotus Excerpts I

Mar 4: Herodotus Excerpts II

Mar 5: Leukōma δ

Week 8: War with Persia and the Early Classical Period

Mar 9: Sophocles *Antigone* 1-626

Mar 11: Sophocles *Antigone* 627-1218

Mar 12: Leukōma ε

Week 9: Case Study: Athens

Mar 16: Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 1-597

Mar 18: *Lysistrata* 598-1215

Mar 19: Leukōma ζ

Week 10: The High Classical Period and Cyrene Case Study

Mar 23: Plato *Apology*

Mar 25: Plato *Crito*

Mar 26: Leukōma η

Week 11: Late Classical c. 400 – 323 BCE

Mar 30: Lysias *Speech 1*

Apr 1: TBD Oratory

April 2: Leukōma θ

Week 12: The Hellenistic World 323 – 100 BCE Egypt

Apr 6: Plutarch *Life of Alexander the Great* (sections 1-38)

Apr 8: Plutarch *Life of Alexander the Great* (sections 39-77)

April 9: Leukōma ι

Week 13: Paestum and the Romans in the Greek World (or *vice versa*)

Apr 13: Women's Letters from Egypt I

Apr 15: Women's Letters from Egypt II

April 16: Leukōma κ

Week 14: “The Greeks” from Byzantium-Today

Apr 20: [Only coursepack]