

# Classics 100: The Legacy of Greek Democracy and Roman Republicanism in American Politics and Culture

Fall 2018  
MWF 12:05-12:55

## **INSTRUCTOR:**

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Office hours: MW 1-3, and by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course explores the classical Greek and Roman roots of American politics and culture. We will read a wide variety of ancient authors and genres, including poets (Sophocles, Homer), philosophers (Plato, Aristotle), historians (Xenophon, Livy), and statesmen (Pericles, Cicero). Periodically, we will bring our knowledge of the ancient world into dialogue with the political thought of various early American figures (e.g. John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington) as well as with the political and educational thought of Alexander Meiklejohn, Professor (1927-32) and founder of UW-Madison's "Experimental College." In so doing, we will grapple with all sorts of phenomena common to both ancient and modern politics— matters both theoretical (e.g. justice, types of constitutions, the "common good") and practical (elections, free speech, etc.).

## **COURSE CREDIT INFORMATION:**

This class is 3 credits. It meets for three 50-minute class period each week over the fall semester and expects that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing) for about 2 hours out of classroom for every class period.

## **COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

By the end of this course, students will:

- Gain knowledge of the broad strokes of ancient Greek and Roman culture and the big questions surrounding its historical interpretation and reception.
- Develop critical reading skills, especially the ability to engage in source criticism.
- Develop written and oral communication skills.
- Learn how to apply ancient thought to enduring questions of contemporary politics and political communities.
- Gain insight into their own sociocultural background, life experiences, and worldview by means of the historical and humanistic perspective offered by study of the classical world.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Alexander, C. (2016). *The Iliad. A New Translation*. Ecco.

Reeve, C. D. C. (2004). *Plato. Republic*. Hackett.

Woodruff, P. (2001). *Sophocles. Antigone*. Hackett.

Coursepack. On **Canvas** (canvas.wisc.edu). Note that it is necessary for you to bring either a digital or a paper version of the assigned reading to each class.

### **READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

In general, there is a reading assignment for each class. The length of these assignments varies, though I have sought to assign longer readings for Mondays and relatively shorter ones for Wednesdays and Fridays. See "Tentative Schedule" below for specific assignments.

### **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

The prompts for the writing assignments have been posted to **Canvas**. Each essay is due by the date and time listed on the assignment and will be submitted via the "Dropbox" option. Late essays will be penalized by an automatic loss of 25%. If the late paper is not received within 24 hours, the grade will become an automatic zero. Exceptions to these policies will be made only in cases of stringent and well-documented circumstances such as a religious observation, university-sanctioned commitment, or a major medical emergency.

These essays are intended to be scholarly communications between student and instructor, both of whom are familiar with the material being covered. Therefore, there is no need for extensive summaries of plot or other types of background information. Quotations should be brief and used only in support of specific points. The assignments themselves contain instructions on how to write citations. If you have any questions about content or format, please consult with me before handing in an essay. Resolving these questions early, along with careful proofreading, will allow me to focus on your thesis and arguments, which will result in the most constructive feedback and, in the end, the best possible grade.

### **POLICIES:**

**Attendance:** Regular attendance is not only required and graded, but it's also essential for success in this course. Note that the essays will be based on the material assigned and discussed in class.

**Computer Usage Policy:** Students will be allowed to use computers under the following conditions: 1.) students will use their computers solely for the purpose of taking notes and/or consulting the day's assignment; and 2.) students will refrain from surfing the internet or using any other media in the course of class. Failure to abide by these guidelines will result in being asked to leave the classroom.

**McBurney Resources:** The McBurney Disability Resource Center (263-2741) provides resources for students with disabilities. You will need to provide documentation to them in order to receive official university services and accommodations. If you need accommodations, please see me as soon as possible.

**Academic Misconduct or Plagiarism:** Plagiarism means presenting the words or ideas of others without giving credit. You should know the principles of plagiarism and the correct rules for citing sources. In general, if your paper implies that you are the originator of words or ideas, they must in fact be your own.

If you use someone else's exact words, they should be enclosed in quotation marks with the exact source listed. You may put someone else's idea in your own words as long as you indicate whose idea it was (for example, "As Jane Smith points out..."). If you are unsure about the proper ways to credit sources, ask your instructor or consult the following: [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Acknowledging\\_Sources.pdf](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf).

Any part of a paper is found to be plagiarized, the student will receive a zero for that assignment and the final grade will be lowered by one letter grade in addition. A report will also be made to the Dean of Students.

## **EVALUATION AND GRADING:**

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

Essay 1 (Two pages): 10%

Essay 2 (Four pages): 15%

Essay 3 (Six pages): 20%

Final Essay (Eight pages): 35%

Brief, informal critique of modern news piece: 10%

Attendance/Participation ("QOWs"): 10%

### Grading Scale

A	93 - 100%	B	83 - 87%	C	70 - 77%	F <60%
AB	88 - 92%	BC	78 - 82%	D	60 - 69%	

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1: Introduction and Context**

Wednesday  
Sept 5                      Introductions and welcome  
Reading: None

Friday  
Sept 7                      Liberal education in the modern world; Alexander Meiklejohn  
Reading: Chapters 1, 6, and 9 of *The Experimental College*

### **Week 2: Sophocles' *Antigone***

Monday  
Sept 10                      Sophocles' *Antigone*, pt. 1  
Reading: Sophocles' *Antigone* (pp. 1-58)

Wednesday  
Sept 12                      Sophocles' *Antigone*, pt. 2  
Assignment: Write **Essay #1**

**Essay #1:** Select either Antigone or Creon and make the case for or against the proposition that s/he acts for the public good.

Friday  
Sept 14                      Sophocles' *Antigone*, pt. 3; Introduction to Homer  
Readings: Nussbaum, ch. 4 of *The Conscience of Liberty*; [article](#) in *The Atlantic*

### **Week 3: Homeric kingship...**

Monday  
Sept 17                      The *Iliad* 1-4  
Reading: *Iliad*, pp. 1-87

Wednesday  
Sept 19                      The *Iliad* 5-9  
Reading: *Iliad*, pp. 88-196

Friday  
Sept 21                      Discussion  
Reading: Selections from Thomas Jefferson's letters: 4.3, 4.7, 4.9

#### Week 4: ... and its society and politics

Monday Sept 24	The <i>Iliad</i> 16-20 Reading: <i>Iliad</i> , pp. 335-443
Wednesday Sept 26	The <i>Iliad</i> 21-24 Reading: <i>Iliad</i> , pp. 445-541
Friday Sept 28	Summing up Homer; What is a polis? Reading: Selection from John Adams' <i>A Defense of the Constitutions...</i> ; Herodotus 3.80-83; Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> 3.1-3

#### Week 5: Athenian Democracy

Monday Oct 1	Athenian democracy, pt. 1 Readings: [Aristotle], <i>Constitution of Athens</i>
Wednesday Oct 3	Athenian democracy, pt. 2; Its legacy Readings: [Xenophon], <i>Constitution of the Athenians</i> ; Selection from John Adams' <i>A Defense of the Constitutions...</i>
Friday Oct 5	Free speech in Athens and on American university campuses Readings: Ch. 1 of Alexander Meiklejohn's <i>Free Speech and its Relation to Self-Government</i> ; "The Two Clashing Meanings of 'Free Speech'" (T. M. Bejan; <i>The Atlantic</i> , December 2, 2017)

#### Week 6: "Sparta": Ancient and Modern

Monday Oct 8	Sparta, pt. 1 Reading: Plutarch, <i>Life of Lycurgus</i>
Wednesday Oct 10	Sparta, pt. 2 Readings: Xenophon, <i>Constitution of the Spartans</i> ; selection from John Adams' <i>A Defense of the Constitutions...</i> ,
Friday Oct 12	The legacy of Sparta Assignments: read " <a href="#">This is not Sparta: Why the modern romance with Sparta is a bad one</a> ," S. Bond; watch <i>300</i> and write <b>Essay #2</b>

**Essay #2:** Referring to the four works we've read, write an essay that critiques *300*.

#### Week 7: Justice and cities

Monday Oct 15	What is "justice"?; Introduction to Plato Readings: Thucydides, "The Melian Dialogue"
Wednesday Oct 17	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pt. 1 Reading: Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pp. 1-56 [=327a-376d]
Friday Oct 19	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pt. 2 Reading: Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pp. 96-135 [=412b-448e]

### **Week 8: Plato's Republic**

Monday Oct 22	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pt. 3 Reading: Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pp. 136-207 [=449a-513e]
Wednesday Oct 24	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pt. 4 Reading: Plato's <i>Republic</i> , pp. 208-75; 292-96 [=514a-576b; 588b-592b]
Friday Oct 26	The legacy of Plato's <i>Republic</i> Readings: Thomas Jefferson, 1.17, 7.7; selection from John Adams' <i>A Defense of the Constitutions...</i> ; <i>The Federalist</i> , no. 49

### **Week 9: Introduction to the Roman Republic**

Monday Oct 29	Introduction to the Roman World Reading: Livy, Book 1-2.12
Wednesday Oct 31	Livy on Regal Rome and the Beginning of the Republic Reading: Livy, Book 1-2.12
Friday Nov 2	The legacy of Roman legends: Publicola and Cincinnatus, Lucretia and Cornelia Assignment: Write <b>Essay #3</b>

**Essay #3:** Compare and contrast Romulus and Numa.

### **Week 10: Polybius on the Roman Republic**

Monday Nov 5	Polybius on the Roman Republic, pt. 1 Reading: Polybius, pp. 3-6, 371-85 [=Chs. 1.1-5, 6.1-18]
Wednesday Nov 7	Polybius on the Roman Republic, pt. 2 Reading: Polybius, pp. 385-413 [=Chs. 6.19-58]
Friday Nov 9	Remembrance in death: Funeral orations and civic virtue Readings: Pericles' Funeral Oration; Meghan McCain's <a href="#">eulogy</a> of Sen. John McCain

### **Week 11: Cicero, Cato, and Sallust on the late Republic**

Monday Nov 12	Cicero on the Roman Republic and "republicanism" Reading: Cicero's <i>De Republica</i> , pp. 1-58, 87-91 [=Books 1, 2, and 5]
Wednesday Nov 14	Cicero and Cato in defense of the Roman Republic Reading: Plutarch's <i>Life of Cato</i>
Friday Nov 16	Sallust on the Decline of the Republic; Ciceronian Americans Reading: Sallust's <i>Bellum Catilinae</i> ; Cicero's <i>Catilinarians</i> 1; Ted Cruz

### **Week 12: The rise of Roman autocracy**

Monday  
Nov 19                      *Res publica* restored? Rome's transformation into the Principate  
Readings: Tacitus' *Annales*, pp. 3-13, 153-54 [=1.1-15, 4.32-33]; selections from Augustus' *Res Gestae*

Wednesday  
Nov 21                      Class replacement activity: **Brief, informal critique** of news media

THANKSGIVING

### Week 13: Republics and empires

Monday  
Nov 26                      Questions of size and liberty; *The Federalist* papers, pt. 1  
Readings: *Brutus*, no. 1; *The Federalist*, nos. 1, 10, 23, and 39

Wednesday  
Nov 28                      *The Federalist* papers, pt. 2; Rome as a model for the American experiment  
Readings: *The Federalist*, no. 51; selections from John Adams' *A Defense of the Constitutions...*; Thomas Jefferson 3.29

Friday  
Nov 30                      Patrick Henry and George Washington  
Reading: Patrick Henry's Speech before Virginia Ratifying Committee (June 5, 1788); George Washington's Farewell Address (1796)

### Week 14: Interrogating the use and abuse of Greece and Rome in the modern world

Monday  
Dec 3                      Classics and race  
Readings: "[We condone it by our silence: confronting Classics' complicity in white supremacy](#)," R. F. Kennedy; "[Classical Slavery and Jeffersonian Racism: Charlottesville, one year later](#)," S. Teets.

Wednesday  
Dec 5                      The "value" of Classics  
Readings: Benjamin Rush and Benjamin Franklin; ch. 4 of *Classics: Why it Matters*. Neville Morley

Friday  
Dec 7                      The many "falls" of the Roman empire in the US and the "West"  
Reading: Selections from Mercy Otis Warren's *The Sack of Rome*; June 12, 2018 [op-ed](#) in Shreveport Times; "Reasons Why Rome Fell"

### Week 15: Rome in the United States of America

Monday  
Dec 10                      *Spartacus*  
Reading: A. R. Nelson's *Education and Democracy: The Meaning of Alexander Meiklejohn, 1872-1964*, pp. 329-33

Wednesday  
Dec 12                      *Gladiator*  
Assignment: Show up to watch selections of *Gladiator*

Wednesday  
Dec 21                      **Final Essay** due at 12:25pm

**Final Essay:** On the basis of your readings this semester, identify one contemporary problem in modern politics (American or otherwise), diagnose the issues that surround it, and prescribe a policy of action to mitigate or solve it.