

Ancient Greek Thought and Civilization, Part II: The Greek Enlightenment and the Golden Age of Athens (510-399 BCE).

Ayn Rand University 2025

Quarter 3 (April-June)

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Jason Rheins Email: jrheins@aynrand.org

COURSE WEBSITE

The course website is accessible through your dashboard after logging into the ARU website.

The direct link to the site is _____

Please contact university@aynrand.org if you have any issues accessing the site.

GENERAL POLICIES

Familiarize yourself with the [ARU Handbook](#) if you have not already done so. Unless specified otherwise in this syllabus, all policies in the Handbook are in effect for this course.

COMMUNICATION

- Course announcements are posted in the Announcements tab of the course website and automatically emailed to all participants. Please make sure you are receiving these emails and that they are not going to your spam folder. If you join after the start of class, be sure to check the Announcements tab for anything you may have missed.
- For questions about course content, structure or schedule, please ask during the live class or in the course channel on the ARU Discord server (see the Discord tab of the course website).
- For personal administrative issues (e.g., website problems), email university@aynrand.org.
- If you have a technical issue preventing submission of an assignment, email your assignment to the instructor and cc university@aynrand.org to troubleshoot the matter.

LIVE CLASSES, OFFICE HOURS, AND RECORDINGS

Live classes will be held every **Friday, 9:00-11:45 AM Pacific**, beginning on **April 4, 2025** and ending on **June 6**.

Dr. Rheins' **regular, recorded** office hours will be each week on **Thursdays, 10:00–1100 AM Pacific**. Additional meetings can be made by appointment

See the course website and the curriculum overview below for the schedule of live classes and the Zoom link to attend. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend classes live for the best experience. However, we are aware this is not always possible and recordings of live classes are posted on the course website and on the ARU App/ARI Campus website, usually within an hour or two after the conclusion of each live class. Contact university@aynrand.org if you have any issue accessing a recording.

If you attend class live, please turn on your camera unless you are in a setting with a distracting background or your device is not on a stable surface. It makes for a much better experience for all participants when faces are visible.

COURSE OVERVIEW

In this course we will continue our examination of key works and developments in the history, art, and literature of Ancient Greek civilization through the first century of the so-called “Classical Age” (c.490-323 BCE), from the end of the Peisistratid tyranny (510 BCE) and birth of Athenian Democracy (508/507 BCE) and the Persian Wars (499-3, 490, 480-79 BCE) down through the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE) and its immediate aftermath.

During this period, Greece’s foremost city states, Athens and Sparta, helped lead the successful defense of Greece against Persian invasions. Athens, the world’s first democracy, became the leader of the Delian League, an Anti-Persian military alliance. But the alliance soon became a maritime empire, as Athens exploited its allies and dominated the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, Sparta expanded its own league of allied, Greek city-states. Spartan society and government were as unique as Athens’, but with different and often diametrically opposed values. Where Athens was the preeminent naval power in Greece, radically democratic, relatively egalitarian, and vibrantly open to trade and ideas, Sparta was a closed, hyper-elitist and militaristic aristocracy that dominated warfare on land. At the same time, the women of Athens lived highly restricted lives, while Spartan women enjoyed a far greater degree of autonomy than was typical elsewhere in the Greek world. The opposed ambitions and ideologies of these two societies and their hegemonies would ultimately plunge the entire Greek world into the ruinous Peloponnesian war (431-421, 415-404 BCE) that would scar Greece and shatter Athens’ empire.

Yet Athens’ relatively short-lived empire was to be but a small part of her profound and enduring legacy. As her empire rose and fell it became the epicenter of one of the greatest periods of intellectual and artistic achievement in human history. Under the leadership of Pericles, Athens was the cradle of the “Greek Enlightenment”, an unprecedented burgeoning of critical thought and creative expression. Long-standing authorities and traditional conceptions of the gods, nature, and human life and society were challenged. Fundamental philosophical concepts and problems such as “Being”, “Nature v. Convention”, and the “Problem of Change” were explicitly formulated for the first time. Radically new ideals and styles of inquiry were first envisioned: Parmenides and his Eleatic school invented metaphysics, the discipline of history was pioneered by Herodotus and Thucydides, and the Hippocratic circle championed new, observation-based approaches to medicine. Rhetoric and Eristic were developed and taught by Gorgias and other so-called “sophists”, while Greek mathematicians introduced formal proofs and definitions. The great tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides explored the heights and depths of human nature, while Anaxagoras and Democritus theorized about things “up in heavens and down in the earth”. Architectural and sculptural masterpieces rose upon the Athenian acropolis while philosophers ranging from Protagoras to Socrates instructed and perhaps corrupted the sons of Athens’ “new money” and “old elite”.

This course will examine the perennially influential constitutions of Classical Athens and Sparta, survey the great events of 5th c. BCE Greece, and will explore many of the most significant and extraordinary works of art, science, and philosophy that survive to us from the “Golden Age of Athens”.

It is strongly recommended that students have taken or audited *Ancient Greek Thought and Civilization Part I. The Archaic Era* (c. 776–510 BCE) prior to this course. This course is strongly recommended for those planning to take *Ancient Greek Thought and Civilization Part III. The World and Ideas of Plato and his Contemporaries* (c. 428-347 BCE).

Required Books:

A Presocratics Reader (Second Edition). edd P. Curd and R.D. McKirahan.
 Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, trans. Robert Fagles.

Lecture Topics and Readings [All the readings below are required unless specified as recommended]

11. Herodotus, “History” and the Persian Wars (Apr. 4)

Herodotus, *Histories* (selections—see highlighted guide)
 Donald Kagan, [Lecture 13](#); [Lecture 14](#) beginning to 30:00

12. From the Archaic to the Classical – Tragedy and Transformations of Society (Apr. 11)

Aeschylus, *Oresteia*

13. Athenian Democracy (Apr. 18)

Old Oligarch (Pseudo-Xenophon), *Constitution of the Athenians*
 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, II.34-47 (“Pericles’ Funeral Oration”)
 Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution* §§20-69
 Donald Kagan, Lectures [15](#). (43:00 to end), [16](#)

Strongly Recommended:

Donald Kagan, [Lectures 10](#) (35:30-end), [11](#), [12](#) [Pre-Democratic Athens]

14. Spartan Oligarchy, Classical Art (Apr. 25)

Aristotle, *Politics* II.9
 Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaimonians*
 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, §§ 1, 28
 ———, *Spartan Institutions*
 Donald Kagan, [Lecture 9](#); [Lecture 10](#) beginning to 35:30.
 “The Classical Period” in Boardman (ed.) *The Oxford History of Classical Art*.

Recommended:

Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, §§5-30

15. Eleatic and Esoteric Philosophy (May 2)

Parmenides (Curd & McKirahan)
Zeno (Curd & McKirahan)
Derveni Papyrus (Curd & McKirahan)
Empedocles (Curd & McKirahan)

Recommended:

Melissus (Curd & McKirahan)

16. The Greek Enlightenment 1 – Tragedy and Moral Innovation (May 9)

Sophocles, *Ajax* (all); *Antigone* lines 334-375.
 Euripides, *Alcestis* (all), *Medea* lines 214-266.

17. The Greek Enlightenment 2 – Hippocratic Medicine and Natural History (May 16)

On the Sacred Disease;
On Ancient Medicine;
Human Nature up to where Galen thinks the original (‘genuine’) text ends;¹
Airs, Waters, Places §§ 1-7, 11-17, 21-24;

¹ In this translation, ‘pituita’ = phlegm, ‘atrabilis’ = black bile

The Oath
Aphorisms I.1-2

Strongly Recommended

The Law
On Regimen in Acute Diseases §§ 1-3

Recommended:

Aphorisms I.7-9, 14, 21-25
Prognostics § 25;
Of the Epidemics Bk I §§ 1, 3,, Fourteen Cases of Disease (read a few); Bk II § 1
On Regimen in Acute Diseases §§ 4, 13; Appendix §§ 15, 18, 22, 24
On the Surgery §§1-7, 10, 13, 15-6, 19-21

18. The Greek Enlightenment 3 – Natural Philosophy (May 23)

Aristophanes, *Clouds* [Begin reading for this week]
Anaxagoras (Curd & McKirahan)
Leucippus and Democritus (Curd & McKirahan)
Philolaus of Croton (Curd & McKirahan)
Diogenes of Apollonia (Curd & McKirahan)

19. The Greek Enlightenment 4 – The “Sophists” and Rhetoric (May 30)

Aristophanes, *Clouds* [Complete reading for this week]
The Sophists (Curd & McKirahan)
Dissoi Logoi [uploaded]

Recommended:

Plato, *Protagoras* 309a–328d

20. The Greek Enlightenment 5 –History of the Peloponnesian War (June 6)

Thucydides, *History* (selections);
Donald Kagan Lectures 19, 20, 21 (29:00-end)

Strongly Recommended:

Donald Kagan, Lectures 17, 18 [Lead up and causes of the Peloponnesian War]

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

- 20 % Participation
- 40 % Short Paper on Athens and Sparta – Due May 5, 5pm Pacific
- 40 % Oral Presentation/Examination on aspects of the Greek Enlightenment – Must be Completed by June 20, 5pm Pacific