SYLLABUS FOR CLASSICS 140 (#20766)
HERITAGE OF GREECE & ROME

Fall 2009 Semester, San Diego State University
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Class Hours: Th 4-6:40 PM, Classroom: WC-220
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1) COURSE DESCRIPTION

If you’re curious about your own society, you should also be curious about the ancient Greeks and Romans, because they were the inventors of western culture and you should be curious about where so much of what you take for granted comes from. It’s inherently pleasurable to trace so much of what we think and do today to their roots in ancient Greece and Rome, to make sense of their world and our own world through their world and of both worlds through their interrelationships with each other.

That is, I believe, what is most special about the study of antiquity: we find, if we look closely, so many firsts in western culture: the first epic poems, the first plays, the first histories, even the first cinema (huh?). And through the literature of ancient Greece and Rome we encounter the first expression of certain ideas like community, democracy, and imperialism and of certain emotions like courage, curiosity, and love. If tracing things back to their roots, their origins in the past, excites you, you are in the right place, because that is what I, as instructor of this course, am primarily interested in: getting back to the roots.

There is more, however. While it’s interesting to see where the things we know (or at least think we know) today have come from, it’s also somewhat surprising to discover that, not only do we find in ancient Greece and Rome the first of so many things, we also find the best of so many things. Take the epic poet Homer, for example. We’ll read passages from the Iliad and Odyssey that will blow your mind, in the same way as (or perhaps even more than), say, a modern novel or play or film or video will do.

The Greeks and Romans created their epics and tragedies and comedies and historical works not for us to study thousands of years after the fact but for their contemporaries to enjoy as selfishly and hedonistically as we enjoy the art and literature and drama and YouTube videos of today. It’s this immediacy of the works of the Greeks and Romans—in other words, their entertainment value—along with their influence on so many aspects of our own society, that I wish to explore with you in this course.

2) INTERNET COMPONENT

We’ll be making frequent use of the Internet, and in particular Blackboard and e-mail, to carry out various activities necessary for conducting this course. For that reason, to participate in it you must have access to the Internet (either on- or off-campus) and must check your e-mail at least once a day (in case I make changes or clarifications or the like) and your Blackboard account at least a few times a week or whenever an e-mail message I send you urges you to log onto it (for more on the integral role Blackboard will play in this course, see ASSIGNMENTS on page 4).

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"This course is one of nine courses that you will take in General Education Foundations. Foundations courses cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, computation, information literacy, and use of technology. They furthermore introduce you to basic concepts, theories and approaches in a variety of disciplines in order to provide the intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge gathered in your major area of study into a broader world picture."

H1-H4: "This course is one of four Foundations courses that you will take in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts. Upon completing of this area of Foundations, you will be able to:
1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;
2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;
3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance;
4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities."
3) OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE

In this course you will 1) learn about the most significant people, characters, events, ideas, monuments, and institutions of ancient Greece and Rome, 2) encounter the greatest works of art, architecture, and literature of antiquity by looking at (in the case of art and architecture) and reading (in the case of literature) the primary sources themselves rather than settling for a secondhand acquaintance with them through the filter of one or another textbook (to this end your only required reading will come directly from the minds of the ancient authors so they can speak to you on their own terms), and 3) ascertain connections between these people, characters, events, ideas, monuments, institutions, and art works and their counterparts in our own society which, after all, is a direct descendent of Greco-Roman civilization. On the three exams administered throughout the semester, you will be expected to identify with a high degree of accuracy the author, period, context, and cultural importance of the literary passages and material artifacts of ancient Greek and Roman culture you encounter in your take-home readings and classroom lectures and discussions.

4) PREREQUISITES FOR THIS COURSE

While I expect you to prepare the assigned readings before coming to class, they may not make complete sense to you until we hash them out together. Therefore, rest assured that I expect from you no knowledge whatsoever about the ancient world when you arrive on the first day of class. Granted, we'll have some fun comparing what preconceived notions you've acquired from the way the ancient world is depicted in literature, the mass media, etc., but that will only be to gain a sense of satisfaction at the end of the semester that the false clichés and stereotypes you once harbored have been dispelled by experiencing their works for yourselves. The only prerequisite for this course, then, is one thing and one thing only: a curiosity about what the ancient Greeks and Romans were all about and what we ourselves have inherited from them, for better or worse (okay, I guess that's two things). Other than that: the cleaner the slate when the course begins, the better!

5) CLASS FORMAT

We'll rely on both lectures (Powerpoint and old school) and classroom discussions to come to terms with ancient Greece and Rome and the way they continue to exert influence on our own times (vis-à-vis the latter, your input via discussion will be indispensable). I expect you to come to class prepared, which means you've already read and recorded on Blackboard answers to questions about the assignments listed in the CLASS SCHEDULE (see page 4) for a given day. So, for instance, before coming to class on September 24, you will have already completed the assignments pertaining to the passages listed under the headings “PERSIAN WARS” and “PERICLEAN ATHENS (PART I)” in the Reader.

6) REQUIRED TEXT

Although I welcome and encourage as much outside reading as you'd like to do to help you learn the material we cover in class and in our readings (for example, Wikipedia tends to do a pretty good job of providing you with background information about the figures and events we'll be encountering in our readings), you're required to purchase (unless you're reading this syllabus within the text itself, in which case you don't need to buy it again!) the following [text for this course, available only at the Cal Copy located at 5131 College Ave. (582-9949)]:

**READER FOR CLASSICS 140: HERITAGE OF GREECE & ROME**

Brett Robbins

***PLEASE BRING THIS TEXT WITH YOU EACH TIME YOU ATTEND CLASS SO YOU CAN FOLLOW ALONG WHEN WE READ AND DISCUSS TOGETHER CERTAIN PASSAGES FROM IT.***
7) GRADING

Your grade for this course will be based primarily on your ability to demonstrate a mastery of objective information you've acquired from the readings you've done and lectures you've attended and discussions you've participated in throughout the semester. Unfortunately, with 100+ people in class a more subjective approach to grading (response papers and the like) isn't feasible. Thus, while our focus in class will be on learning about the ideas and institutions of the ancient Greeks and Romans and their links to our own society in a relatively broad-based and expansive manner, your exams will reflect how good you are at recalling information I deem, for whatever reason, to be essential to know in order to come to terms with ideas and institutions of the ancient Greeks and Romans. To this end (and because I respect the desire of those who care about their GPAs to earn the best possible grade—I've been there), I'll do my best throughout the semester to make sure—especially via Blackboard assignments and study guides and word-banks—that we're all on the same page regarding what data need to be learned in order to do well on exams.

Here's the breakdown:

3 non-cumulative exams (including the Final) each requiring fill-in-the-blank and short-answer responses and each worth 25% of your total grade (determined objectively)

Weekly responses (to be completed on Blackboard before each class session; see details under ASSIGNMENTS on page 4) to questions that demonstrate an understanding of the assigned readings (and, as a bonus, help you prepare for the exams), all (taken together) worth 25% of your total grade (determined subjectively)

8) ADDENDUM (REGARDING H1N1 VIRUS [AKA SWINE FLU])

In the past I routinely included regular quizzes in this course. Because of Swine Flu, however, I've switched to regular Blackboard assignments that accomplish the same goal: provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate you've completed and understood the assigned readings.

But there's more.

Another difference between this semester and previous semesters: I've made sure you can pass the course by completing/mastering 1) the assigned readings, 2) the Blackboard assignments, 3) the Powerpoint presentations (keyed to my lectures) that I'll post weekly on Blackboard, and 4) the study guides (corresponding to each class session) that I'll post weekly on Blackboard (to which I'll often add material we talked about in class, most often what we brought up in discussion, which will probably influence the questions I come up with for the exams).

What this means, most importantly, is this:

IF YOU ARE SICK—COUGHING, SNEEZING, OR JUST PLAIN FEELING LIKE YOU'RE GETTING SICK—PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS.

The reason is simple: With over 100 people in the course it's my responsibility to minimize the chances of my students contracting this horrible, sometimes fatal, disease and passing it on to others. Does this mean you'll do just as well in this course if you miss class regularly and rely primarily or exclusively on the materials mentioned above? No, The readings and Blackboard items are meant to supplement the class lectures and discussions, not the other way around. The more often you attend class, the deeper your understanding will be about the topics and themes we cover in class, for the sake of both doing well on exams and of learning about ancient Greece and Rome in its own right. If, on the other hand, circumstances require you to miss more than a couple of days in a row, be sure to contact me through e-mail or telephone and we'll arrange to catch you up when you return.
9) ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments for this course fall under three categories:

1) EXAMS (see GRADING above for a description of the 3 required exams)

Each week you’ll be expected to complete two kinds of assignments before attending class:

2) READER: You will read the assignments specified in the syllabus for a given class session. And when I say “read” I mean read thoroughly, preferably with a highlighter and/or annotations in the (sufficiently ample) margins. I mean read thoroughly enough to be able to discuss what you’ve read in class. That’s the kind of reading I’m talking about. That’s why the reading assignments are so short: so you can savor them, give them the time and attention they deserve so they yield the meaning they have to offer and inspire you to talk about them in class.

3) BLACKBOARD: You will complete two kinds of activities within Blackboard, one time only and weekly:

a) One Time Only: on or before the day our class meets for the second time (September 10), please create a homepage within your Blackboard account for this course, upload a recognizable photograph of yourself onto it, and provide answers on this same homepage to the following three questions: 1) What is your major (or, if you’re undeclared, what do you think you’d major in if you had to pick a major today)? 2) What do you hope to get out of this course (besides 3 units and a good grade)? 3) Anything else you’d like to say about yourself? (optional)

b) Weekly (due before each class meeting [but I don’t recommend that you wait until the last minute to do this; spread out your reading throughout the week], including September 10): also within your Blackboard homepage, provide a one- or two-sentence answer to the following questions about each of the passages (that is, the selections of prose or verse, no matter how small—the shortest, for example, being the four lines of Archilochus 3 under the “ARCHAIC GREECE” section) assigned for the week: a) What is the main theme of the passage in question? b) What aspect or aspects of the passage would you find it most interesting for us to talk about in class and why?

Be sure to 1) label your responses clearly with a) the name of the corresponding passage you’re writing about and b) the particular section the passage comes from (e.g., passage: Archilochus 3, section: “ARCHAIC GREECE”) and 2) to avoid confusion, leave a few lines of space between the work you enter into your Bb homepage each week.

ALTHOUGH THE WORK YOU DO FOR THIS BLACKBOARD COMPONENT OF THE COURSE WILL BE CHECKED EACH WEEK, YOU WON’T RECEIVE A GRADE FOR IT UNTIL THE FINAL WEEK OF CLASS. SO AFTER COMPLETING YOUR ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AND ENTERING THEM INTO YOUR BLACKBOARD HOMEPAGE EACH WEEK, PLEASE KEEP THEM THERE FOR THE ENTIRE SEMESTER.

That’s it. 25% of your grade will consist of your answers to these two questions for each of the readings assigned to you for a given week (whether or not you’re able to attend class). Think of it this way: your Blackboard homepage is your reading notebook and you’re responsible for adding the aforementioned responses to it each week before class meets. For example, before we meet on September 17, I expect you to answer these questions for the passages pertaining to both “HOMER (PART II)” and “ARCHAIC GREECE” lessons, which (as you’ll see when you purchase the text) constitute each of the following: 1) Homer Iliad (Book 1, second half), 2) Callinus (his only extant poem), 3) Archilochus 3, and 4) Sappho Invocation to Aphrodite. Don’t panic: I don’t expect extensive answers to these questions; just enough to demonstrate that you’ve done the readings (as I’ve said, a short sentence or two per question per passage should be enough; if you wish to write more, feel free: it can only help you to retain the material come exam time). If you achieve this simple objective you should get an A or B for this component of your grade without a problem. Anything lower than that will mean you went out of your way to brush it off. This is an easy way to boost your grade!

1 To get started, click on the following links: 1) the “Help” icon at the top of your personal Blackboard page, 2) “Student Help,” 3) “Frequently Asked Questions,” and 4) “My instructor said I needed to create a Homepage in the course. What do I do?”
10) CLASS SCHEDULE ²

Thursday, September 3

4-5:15 PM: Introduction to the Course and to the Meaning of “Heritage”

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Overview of Greco-Roman Civilization; introduction to next week’s readings

Thursday, September 10

4-5:15 PM: Greek Prehistory (Minoan, Mycenaean)

Readings: None

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Homer (Part I); introduction to next week’s readings

Readings: “HOMER (PART I)” in Reader

Thursday, September 17

4-5:15 PM: Homer (Part II)

Readings: “HOMER (PART II)” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Archaic Greece; introduction to next week’s readings

Readings: “ARCHAIC GREECE” in Reader

Thursday, September 24

4-5:15 PM: Persian Wars

Readings: “PERSIAN WARS” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Periclean Athens (Part I); introduction to next week’s readings

Readings: PERICLEAN ATHENS (PART I)” in Reader

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² I reserve the right to change anything in this schedule—or, for that matter, in this syllabus as a whole—during the semester for whatever reason. If I do so, I’ll be sure to inform you of it via e-mail, Blackboard announcement, and in class at least twice, so you can make the appropriate changes to the hardcopy of this syllabus included in the Reader. The changes may also involve adding to or subtracting from the readings listed under the CLASS SCHEDULE, in which case any new reading material will either be available online or I’ll hand out copies to you in class. You won’t be required to purchase anything else in this course, although I will occasionally recommend outside reading.
Thursday, October 1

4-5:15 PM: Periclean Athens (Part II)
Readings: PERICLEAN ATHENS (PART II)” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Alexander the Great & Alexandria; review for Exam #1
Readings: “ALEXANDER THE GREAT & ALEXANDRIA” in Reader

Thursday, October 8

4-5:15 PM: Exam #1

Thursday, October 15

4-6:40: Viewing of film (take notes: will be discussed next week and included on exam)

Thursday, October 22

4-5:15 PM: Women in the Ancient World (Part I)
Readings: “WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (PART I)” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Augustan Rome (Part I); introduction to next week’s readings
Readings: “AUGUSTAN ROME (PART I)” in Reader

Thursday, October 29

4-5:15 PM: Augustan Rome (Part II)
Readings: “AUGUSTAN ROME (PART II)” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Pompeii/ Herculaneum (documentary: “The Last Day”); introduction to next week’s readings
Readings: None

Thursday, November 5

4-5:15 PM: Pompeii/ Herculaneum
Readings: “POMPEII/HERCULANEUM” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Women in the Ancient World (Part II); review for Exam #2
Readings: “WOMEN IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (PART II)” in Reader

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Thursday, November 12:

4:515 PM: Exam #2

Thursday, November 19:

4:515 PM: Eros in the Ancient World (Part I)
Readings: “EROS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (PART I)” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Ancient Philosophy; introduction to next week’s readings
Readings: ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Thursday, November 26:

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Thursday, December 3

4:5:15 PM: Hubris in the Ancient World
Readings: “HUBRIS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Roman Empire (Part I); introduction to next week’s readings
Readings: “ROMAN EMPIRE (PART I)” in Reader

Thursday, December 10

4:5:15 PM: Roman Empire (Part II)
Readings: “ROMAN EMPIRE (PART II)” in Reader

Fifteen minute break

5:25-6:40: Eros in the Ancient World (Part II), review for Final
Readings: “EROS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD (PART II)” in Reader

Thursday, December 17

4:6 pm: Final Exam (in WC-220)