Classics 340: Ancient Greece & Rome
(“Gods, Gladiators, and Amazons”)

Classics 340  # 20801
Spring 2016
WC-230
MW 12:00-12:50 Friday: Podcastland

Instructor
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Required Texts


Course Description and Requirements

Description: Literary, artistic, and intellectual achievements of the classic world. Temples, tragedies, and texts. Priests, prostitutes, and proconsuls. Great cultural traditions and influences.

Prerequisites: Completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for non-majors. Recommended: Rhetoric and Writing Studies 200.
A more rambling description

This is not going to be a history class, though much history will be involved in our studies of the civilizations in question. This is not going to be a literature and humanities course, though much of our assessment of these ancient people will be aided by our reading (and viewing) masterworks of literature and art. This is not going to be a mythology class, but I have a few stories to tell you. This is not going to be an anthropology class, though we will be investigating such standard anthropological categories as practices of producing food and eating, marrying, having sex, rearing children, exchanging information, establishing social hierarchy, and defining “the group.” And this will not be a sociology class, though we will occasionally be concerned with the data that qualify and quantify the broad characteristics of these societies. This class, if it is to be successful, will, I believe, have to be a combination of all manner of approaches to the study of ancient civilization.

Our course objective is this: using a variety of primary and secondary source documents, students will demonstrate the ability identify, distinguish, and delineate the various qualities, values and characteristics—trademarks, if you will—that define three great phases of classical Western civilization: 1) the “golden” age of 5th century (b.c.e.) Athens, 2) the hybrid culture of the Hellenistic era as it spread from the 3rd century (b.c.e.) Asian Minor to the Italian Peninsula and the Roman Empire (through the 1st century, c.e.), and 3) the Roman Imperial period of the first and second centuries (c.e.). Students will accomplish this through short answer responses on quizzes and tests and through longer analytical writing about places, objects, ideas, and people presented in the curriculum of the class.

To repeat, this is not a history class and our interests are not the diachronic examination of what happened in the ancient world through time. Rather, our concern is to examine what the peculiar qualities made up the culture of three different periods and places in history, all in pursuit of a synchronic understanding of classical culture. And, as I suggested above, our ultimate aim in undertaking this project is to assess how much of those civilizations lives on in our own, what has been lost, and—perhaps most important of all to us as we race forward into the 21st century—what aspects of past civilization serve as map and guide to our own vision of the future.
Course Objective

This is a block of text that SDSU wants included in the syllabus of every Explorations GE course taught:

“This is an Explorations course in the Humanities and Fine Arts. Completing this course will help you to do the following in greater depth: 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.”

You’re going to four things in this class, and each of the four things can be measured in fairly objectively: 1) demonstrate a basic comprehension of the content of reading passages by responding to fill-in-the-blank reading quizzes at Bb; 2) demonstrate facility at bringing the text to life as complex document worthy of prolonged engaging by participating in impassioned classroom discussion; 3) demonstrate analytical mastery of assigned reading by describing essential qualities of key passages from our reading texts and applying topics from class discussion to your critical interpretation of these passages (in examination and in the semester writing assignment); 4) demonstrate mastery understanding of the major facets and components of a situating an object from classical civilization in historic context by following the directions of the semester’s writing assignment.

3 Units = 3 Lecture Hours Per Week

Two of the weekly lecture hours for this course happen face to face in the lecture hall on Mondays and Wednesdays. And one hour per week happens via “podcast.” Sometimes these podcasts are just me lecturing to you, sometimes these “podcasts” are movie features I want you to watch. I try to set these podcasts up so they’re available to you on Friday morning each week, just as though you were attending Friday lecture. These podcasts are linked to the University streaming server and they’re by and large about a Gigabyte of data to download. To succeed in this class, you’ve got to have access to these audio-visual materials no less than you have
access to Bb. Make sure you’re set up with a computer that can show you .mpeg movies (.mp4 and .m4v format) and that you have a fast enough connection to the internets to make your podcast-watching smooth and enjoyable.

The content of these podcasts are exactly equivalent to in class lectures: I test on the content of this “distance content.” You are responsible to take notes on podcasts in a timely manner. You’ll hear me reference in class content on the podcast and vice versa.

The podcasts in no way substitute for Monday/Wednesday lecture content and vice versa.

**Grading**

Evaluation of each student’s progress will involve numerous Bb quizzes on reading and viewing assignments, three exams (dates below), and a writing assignment. All three exams will be short answer format in which you can demonstrate your knowledge and comprehension of the divinities, persons, concepts, places, etc., mentioned in daily lecture and well as identification of key passages from nightly reading assignments. Each of these tests will cover material from approximately five weeks of the semester. Given that the overwhelming abundance of material on the midterms and final will be taken directly from the content of daily reading and lecture, success in the class depends on your daily attendance and note taking. I occasionally give in-class quizzes to monitor for good habits of class participation.

This class is a lecture course based on my original, complex, and idiosyncratic arguments; there is no “background reader,” and there is no single text source to consult. To succeed, you must attend lecture, take copious notes, review those notes, and do the assigned readings. Missing class is more than an inconvenience to you; it is an inconvenience to your classmates on whom you will have to depend to get the notes you miss. In order to follow my lectures, you will need to familiarize yourself in advance of my lecture with the reading material which we will be discussing. I put reading quizzes on Bb to help you understand what details I want you to be familiar with from your reading.

I use Bb to post assignments, give you regular reading quizzes, leave you PowerPoint material, folders of extra photos and texts, and to score your work. You need to have adequate access to Bb throughout the course of the
I post grades to your Bb grade-book. Blackboard cannot and does not weight your grade correctly or tell you your overall standing in the course. It can show you whether your graded material has been entered correctly. At the end of the semester, I move Bb’s data to my own grading software, and then I properly weight it to calculate your grade (which I use as the final authority). You will be able to check your final grade on-line once I am finished with grading.

- Reading quizzes and Bb assignments: 20%
- First Exam: (Monday, 22 February) 20%
- Second Exam: (Wednesday, 23 April) 20%
- Third Exam: (Wednesday, 4 May) 20%
- Writing Assignment: (Wednesday 11 May 12:00 pm) 20%

Grading Scale

- A = 90%
- B = 80%
- C = 70%
- D = 60%
- F = below 60%

(I apply plusses and minuses to grades in the top and bottom 2% of each grade range.)

The New Student Disability Blurb

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

How to Communicate with me

There are three hundred students enrolled in this course. There’s one of me. Students usually send me emails to ask questions about the course, ask for clarification about when things are due, complain to me that something isn’t working on Blackboard. I get dozens of emails like that some days. I
can't possibly find the time to write back to most the queries I get. Here's what I do instead: I post announcements at Bb, I make announcements in class, and I occasionally find the time to write you back an email to say thanks for alerting me to a problem.

For matters that have to do with your own grade or standing in the class, email is the wrong format and ineffective. If you need to have problems taken care of with your grade as you see it in Bb, that requires you to come see me face to face: either before class (during office hours) or at the end of class. If your problem can't be taken care of in 2-5 minutes, schedule an appointment with me and we'll meet, or I'll give you specific instructions on what to email to me.

In any email to me, use this format:

“Joe:

I am a student in your 12:00p CLASS 340 Myth class. My RedID is XXXXXXXX. On Monday, Jan 25 at 11:58p I was taking the reading quiz (due Jan 25) and when I went to submit the quiz I got no credit. Why didn’t Bb give me credit? Thanks. See you Wednesday!

Sincerely,

Johnny Clueless”

**Intellectual Properties**

You must ask the owner of the course’s intellectual content (a.k.a. me) for permission to record the class. There is no need to cite me for any ideas of mine that you use in your papers. You must ask my permission to bring any guests to class. I reserve ownership of the class and the specific right to monitor and adjust course content (namely the reading schedule which follows) to aid student progress toward the course objectives.