



Women in Antiquity
SPRING 2025

MEETING 7

Living Unpublicly in Classical Athens

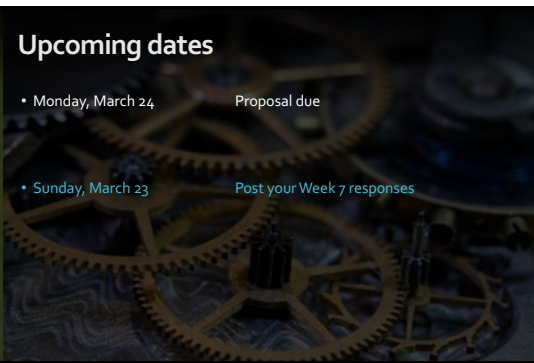
- Position Paper
- Private Athens
- Seduction, adultery, and rape
- Prostitution and hetaerae
- The Bacchae



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Upcoming dates

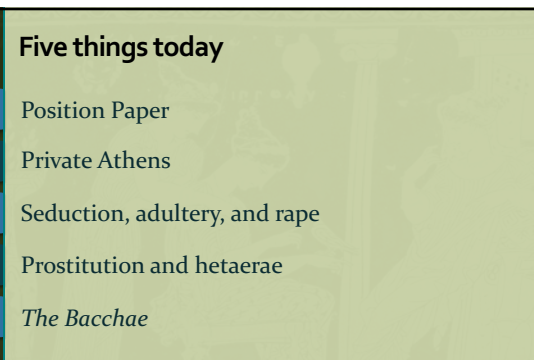
- Monday, March 24 Proposal due
- Sunday, March 23 Post your Week 7 responses



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Five things today

- 1 Position Paper
- 2 Private Athens
- 3 Seduction, adultery, and rape
- 4 Prostitution and hetaerae
- 5 *The Bacchae*



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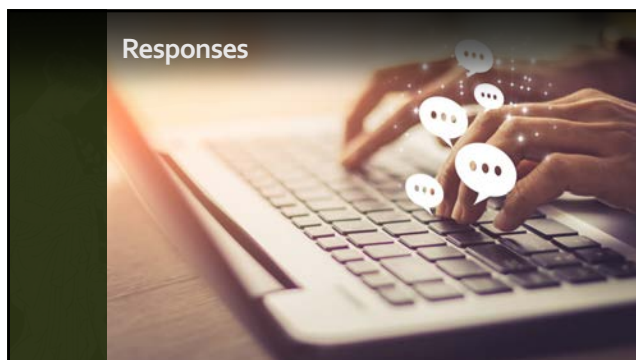
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Quiz #4: Living Unpublicly in Athens

- In The Iliad, Paris is attacked and torn to pieces by
 - the goddess Athena
 - the women of Thebes
 - wild animals
 - the vengeful Furies
- All of the following were true of the hetaira (EXCEPT):
 - They were elite courtesans, registered and taxed like all prostitutes in Athens
 - Many possessed not only physical beauty but intellectual training and artistic talents
 - They were required to be above average in height and let their hair grow to their knees
 - The most famous woman in fifth-century Athens was a hetaira
- Seclusion of women in Athens involved
 - No access being permitted to any space outside the home to any woman of any class
 - Severely clothing for women as a kind of compensation for their inaccessibility
 - Any man seeing a naked woman having to undergo a cleansing ritual in front of his kinsmen
 - Separate quarters for men and women in wealthy homes if possible
- In Classical Athens, all of the following were true about seduction (EXCEPT):
 - Seduction was considered more serious crime than rape, because it implied longer contact
 - Adultery via seduction was allowed on one day a year, on the festival of Iros
 - The aggrieved husband had the right, but not the obligation to kill the seducer
 - As with rape, the male was presumed to be the guilty party, not the female
- According to Pomeroy, the authors Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle all believed that Spartan customs regarding women were more wholesome than those of Athens because:
 - Athenian women married young, making childbirth more dangerous at an early age
 - Spartan women were kept as well fed as the men; this was less consistently true for Athenian women
 - Physical exercise for women was common in Sparta, but not in Athens
 - All of the above

EC. If you were a woman in Athens, would you rather be (a) a hetaira or (b) a married woman in a noble family? Why?

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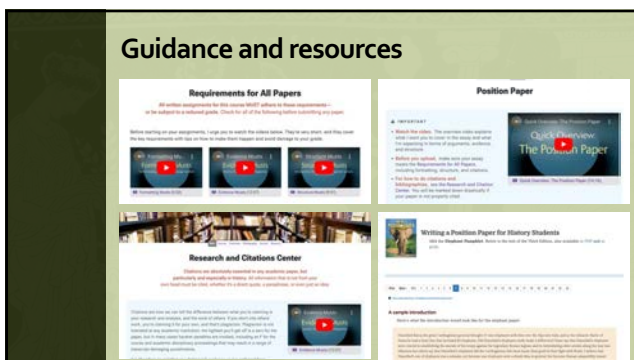
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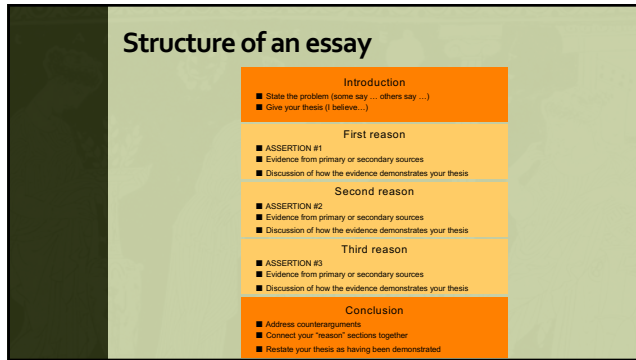
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Approaches to research

- Assigned readings
 - Relevant primary sources
 - Ancient Texts index on my website markwilson.com/page/texts.html
 - Articles assigned for class
 - Pomeroy's Goddesses, Whores...
- Search for library books
 - Lehman/CUNY OneSearch lehman.edu/library
 - Digital resources
 - Books on the shelf
 - NY Public Library browse.nypl.org
 - Worldcat worldcat.org
- Footnotes in the books you've already found
- Good ol' Prof. Wilson

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Citations and bibliography

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Cras condimentum est rhoncus lectus molestie. Maecenas quisque tincidunt luctus magna, vel molestie arcu commodo eu.¹ Integer nec molestie lacus. Morbi sagittis rutrum vehicula.² Integer a lectus sapien, in dignissim leo. Vestibulum ac urna urna. Vestibulum nunc arcu, placerat quis faucibus.

¹Smith 2007, 34.
²Smith 2007, 106.
³Zimmermann 2009, 56.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Smith, John. 2007. *This Is the Title of the Book*. New York: Important Books Press.

Thayer, Charles C. 1999. *Abingdon, Virginia and History*. Seattle, WA: Small Town Press.

Thayer, Charles C. 2003. *More Abingdon Stories*. Seattle, WA: Small Town Press.

Zimmermann, Fred. 2009. *Did You Hear the One About the Walnut?* Chicago: Nunc Press.

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TEXTS ON
SOCRATES
By Plato and Xenophon

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Private life in Athens

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Athenian female seclusion



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Private life in Athens

- We have more info about private life in Greece than for other societies
- Constantly bear in mind the limitations of our sources
 - Most of our info has to do with the upper class
 - Can be very far from pertinent to what it's like to be a peasant woman living 20 miles from Athens
 - Focus on Athens, so much less is known about what it's like in Thebes, Corinth, Naxos, etc.
 - Primary literary – fictionalized, dramatized, not narrations of ordinary life

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Housing



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Secondary Source Reading

Joan Burton

"Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World"

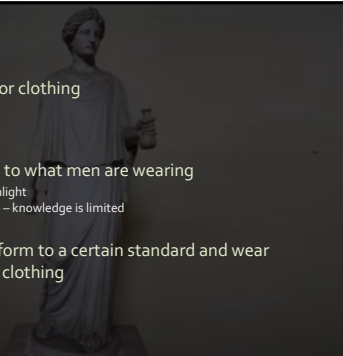
SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Dinner parties, dancing parties all male – just not true
- Participation of women expected
 - Married woman present is a demonstration of her respectability
 - You would not find a non-respectable woman at a dinner party
- Complexities of women's involvement in private gatherings
 - Any concern about a woman being susceptible to a man not of the family
 - A woman would not be left alone with a guest in the home

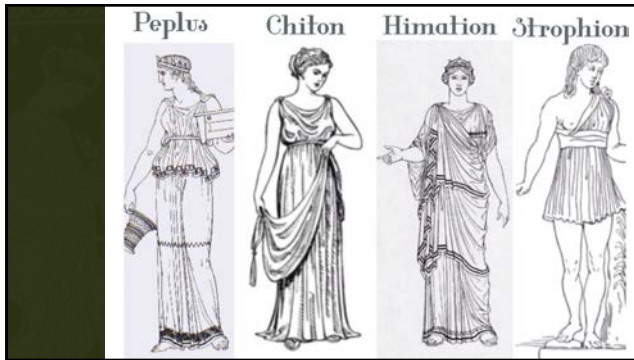
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Clothing

- Different traditions for clothing
 - Ionian
 - Dorian
- Female counterparts to what men are wearing
 - Not to obscure or to highlight
 - Practical household garb – knowledge is limited
- Still expected to conform to a certain standard and wear practical or dignified clothing



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Secondary Source Reading

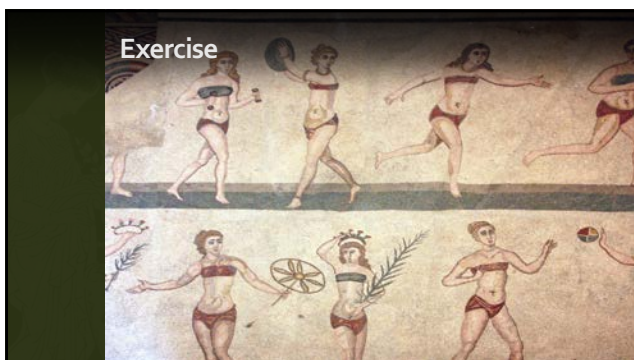
Lin Foxhall

"Women's Ritual and Men's Work in Ancient Athens"

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

- There are contributions that women make through festivals and rituals
 - Part of the way people contribute to their communities in general
- Women are doing it, men are doing it
 - Separately as genders and together as a community
- Festivals that involve women
 - Not just about women finding community among themselves
 - Part of the organic way in which all members of community contribute to health and strength of the community

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Health and folklore



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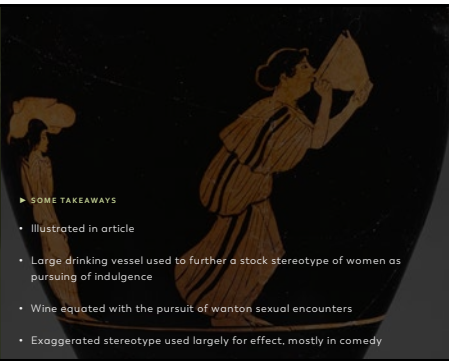
Secondary Source Reading

Marjorie Susan Venit

"Women in Their Cups"

SOME TAKEAWAYS

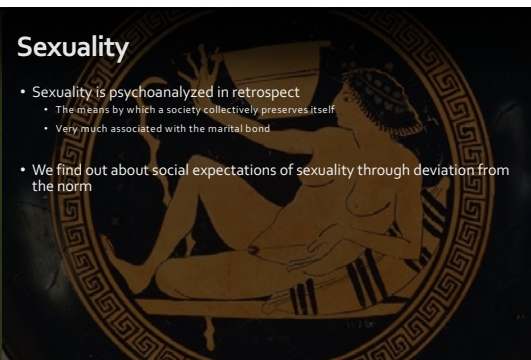
- Illustrated in article
- Large drinking vessel used to further a stock stereotype of women as pursuing indulgence
- Wine equated with the pursuit of wanton sexual encounters
- Exaggerated stereotype used largely for effect, mostly in comedy



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Sexuality

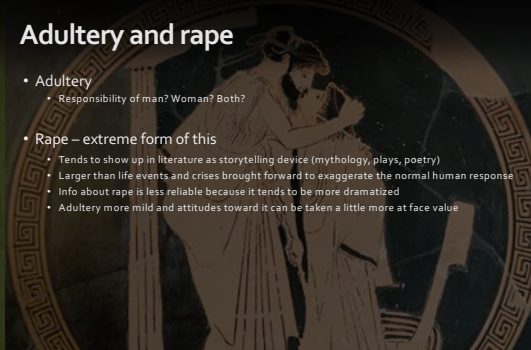
- Sexuality is psychoanalyzed in retrospect
 - The means by which a society collectively preserves itself
 - Very much associated with the marital bond
- We find out about social expectations of sexuality through deviation from the norm



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Adultery and rape

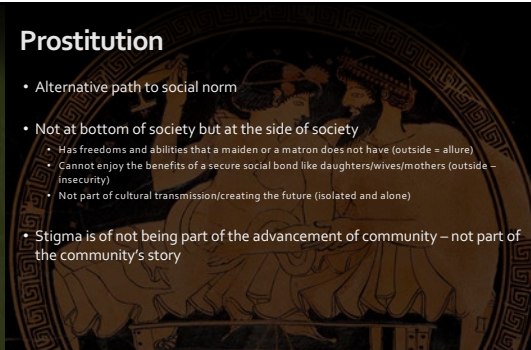
- Adultery
 - Responsibility of man? Woman? Both?
- Rape – extreme form of this
 - Tends to show up in literature as storytelling device (mythology, plays, poetry)
 - Larger than life events and crises brought forward to exaggerate the normal human response
 - Info about rape is less reliable because it tends to be more dramatized
 - Adultery more mild and attitudes toward it can be taken a little more at face value



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Prostitution

- Alternative path to social norm
- Not at bottom of society but at the side of society
 - Has freedoms and abilities that a maiden or a matron does not have (outside = allure)
 - Cannot enjoy the benefits of a secure social bond like daughters/wives/mothers (outside = insecurity)
 - Not part of cultural transmission/creating the future (isolated and alone)
- Stigma is of not being part of the advancement of community – not part of the community's story



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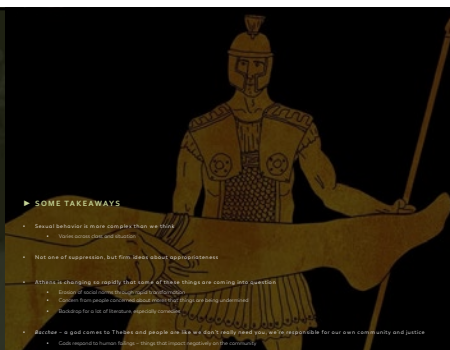
Secondary Source Reading

K. J. Dover

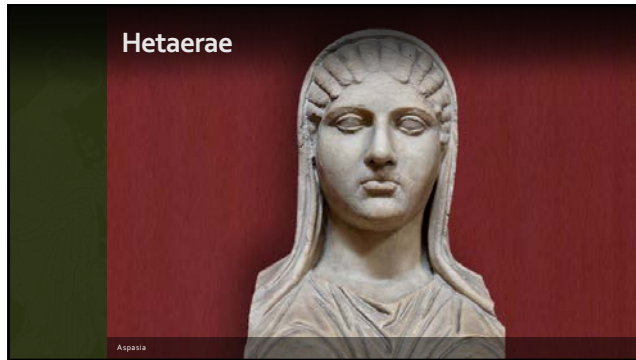
"Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behavior"

SOME TAKEAWAYS

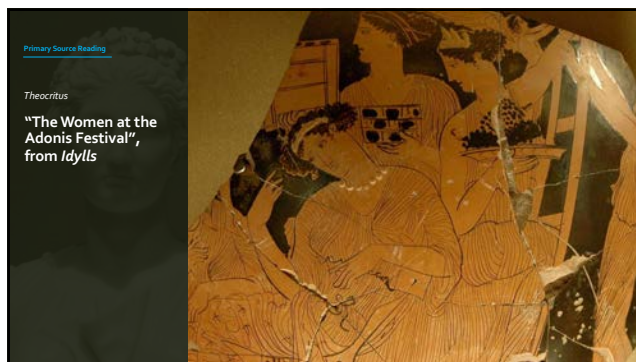
- Sexual behavior is more complex than we think
 - Views across class and location
- Not one of aggression, but firm beliefs about responsibilities
- Athenians are quick to admit that some of these things are coming into question
 - Stories of and from the city of Athens
 - Caution from people concerned about what they are doing or saying
 - Building for a lot of freedom especially common
- Rescue – a god comes to Themis and people see how we don't really need who we're responsible for our own community and justice
 - Code depends on human feelings – things that create negatively in the community



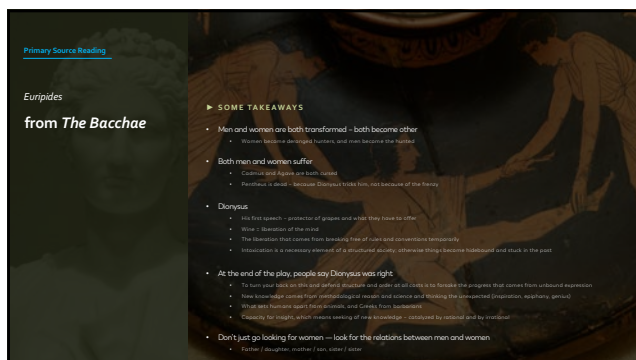
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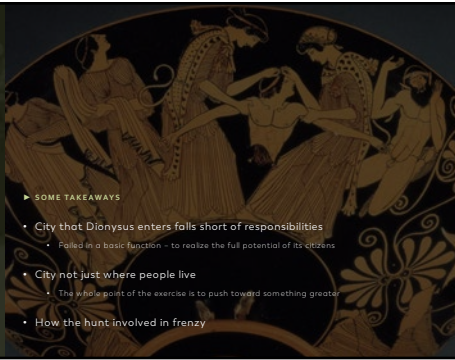
Secondary Source Reading

Charles Segal

"The Menace of Dionysus: Sex Roles and Reversals in Euripides' *The Bacchae*"

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

- City that Dionysus enters falls short of responsibilities
 - Failed in a basic function - to realize the full potential of its citizens
- City not just where people live
 - The whole point of the exercise is to push toward something greater
- How the hunt involved in frenzy



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