



The Fourth Century Crisis

History of Ancient Greece | Meeting #11

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Upcoming Dates


- Thursday, November 27
No class meeting
- Monday, December 15
Position Paper Due
- Sunday, November 16
Responses for Week 11 Due

2

Five things today

- The Peloponnesian War
- Legacies of the War
- The Fourth-Century Crisis
- Hellas in the Fourth Century
- Justice in Athens

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Responses

4

Ancient History Spring 2026



History of Ancient Rome

The foundation and development of the Roman state, including the rise and decline of the Republic and Empire, with emphasis on its political, economic, social, and cultural achievements.

Thurs 6:40-8:40 p.m.

Prof. Wilson 3 credits W/Ons interactive

HIA 321 / 721



Classical Myth and Society

A comparison of the origins and development of classical mythology and its role in ancient societies, and their adaptation in literature and art from ancient and modern through the present.

Fri 12:10-1:10 p.m. (Hybrid)

Prof. Maravall 3 credits W/Ons interactive

HIA 334 / 714



Women in Antiquity

Examination of the image, role, and status of women in Ancient Greek, Ancient Roman, and other ancient societies through the important literary works of antiquity.

Thurs 6:40-8:40 p.m.

Prof. Wilson 3 credits W/Ons interactive

HIA 311 / 750



Civilizations of the Ancient World

A survey of the Mediterranean world, tracing the development of civilization from Mesopotamia and Egypt to ancient Greece, Rome, and the Americas of the Americas.


Thurs 12:10-1:10 p.m.

Prof. Wilson 3 credits

HIS 246

5

Questions about whatever



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The Peloponnesian War

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Tension becomes war: Thucydides

- “The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable”
— Thuc. 1.23
- “ ‘You hold your empire like a tyranny now. Taking it is thought to have been criminal; letting it go would be extremely dangerous’ ”
— Thuc. 2.63

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Primary Source Reading

Thucydides Civil War in Corcyra



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Potidaean Ultimatum

- Conflict between Corcyra and Corinth
- Need to tighten control over trade routes
- Athens orders Potidaea to tear down its walls

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Megaran Decrees

- Megara allies with Corinth
- Athens accuses Megara of violating sacred land
- Megara banned from Athenian ports

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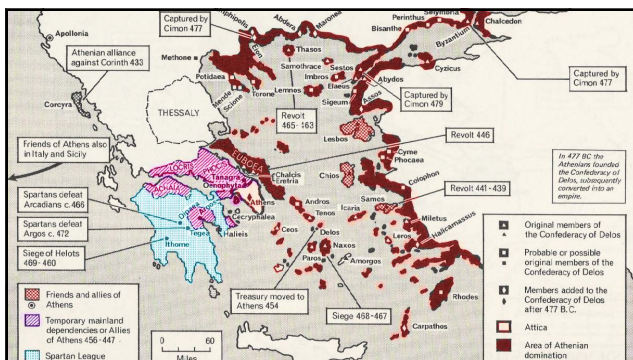
Corinth appeals to Sparta

- Corinth is allied with Sparta
- Corinth declares war
- Demands Sparta join them in doing so
- Sparta reluctant

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Strengths and weaknesses



Athens and allies

- Wealth
- Undisputed advantage at sea
 - Number and quality of ships
 - Training



Sparta and allies

- Undisputed advantage in infantry
 - Number and quality of troops
 - Training

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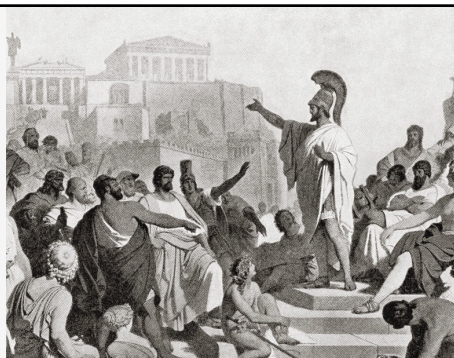
Perikles's strategy

- Sparta has the advantage on land
- Athens can't be besieged (because of the Long Walls)
- Bring everyone inside the walls of Athens

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Primary Source Reading

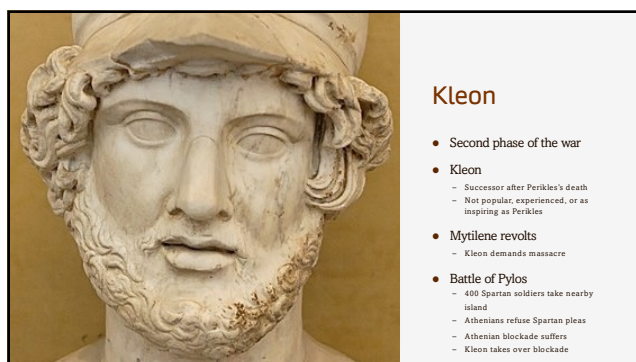
Thucydides Perikles's Funeral Oration



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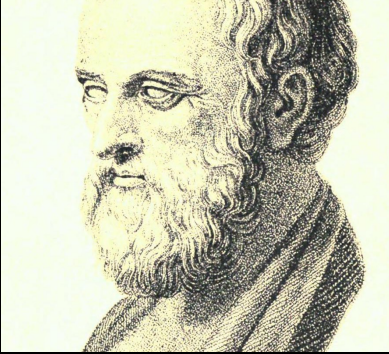
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Peace of Nikias

- Kleon and Brasidas both die
- Nikias leads pro-peace faction
- Nikias arranges a truce
 - Athenians give up captured bases
 - Sparta gives up Athenian ex-allies
 - Megara and Corinth reject treaty


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Primary Source Reading

Thucydides The Melian Dialog



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Alcibiades

- Popular and sexy
- Leader of the faction demanding defeat of Sparta
- Proposes bold expansion of war to Sicily
- Violation of the herms

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The Sicilian Expedition

- Expedition to create a second front in Sicily
 - 200 triremes
 - ~15,000 troops
- Disastrous leadership
- Disastrous tactics
- Troops and ships all lost

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Primary Source Reading

Andocides A Charge of Sacrilege



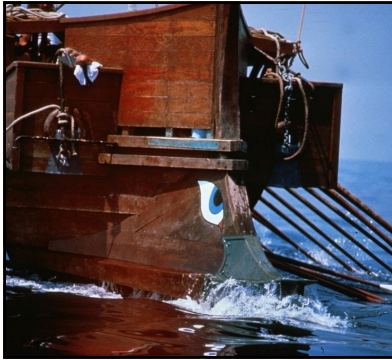
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Decelea

- Alkibiades defects to Sparta
- Advises creation of permanent Spartan base in Attica
- Minor part of Sparta's end game to win war

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Battle of Aegospotami

- Athens must be defeated by sea
- Sparta must hire a navy
- Persia agrees...
- ...in exchange for Ionia and Caria

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Post-war Athens

- Abolition of democracy
- Thirty Tyrants
- Damage to Athens
 - Loss of many men and women
 - Rancor and disillusionment
 - Huge economic cost and loss of resources
- Trial of Socrates

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Fourth Century Crisis

- Peloponnesian War solves nothing
- Followed by more decades of war

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Legacies of the War

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Post-war Athens

- Spartans abolish democracy
 - The "Thirty Tyrants"
 - Murder, confiscation, and exile of democratic leaders
 - Violence and corruption
- Oligarchs overthrown by pro-democracy insurgent uprising
 - Democracy reestablished
 - Amnesty for oligarchs except for the Thirty
 - Treaty with Sparta

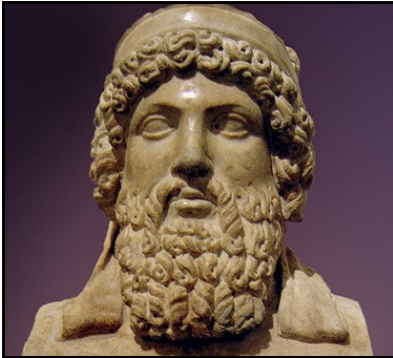
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Primary Source Reading

Plato The Death of Socrates



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Plato

- Student of Socrates
- Massively influential writings
 - Socratic dialogues
 - *Republic* (*Politeia*)
- Founder of the Platonic Academy
 - Universal truths
 - Contrast between physical and metaphysical worlds
 - Ethics: the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance)


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Primary Source Reading

Plato The Allegory of the Cave



35



Sparta after the war

- Spartan hegemony
 - Brutal and callous actions
 - Allies not rewarded
 - Horror at Spartans selling out the Ionians to the Persians
- Brewing resentment makes Spartan hegemony contentious and ephemeral

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Economic damage

- Resources
 - Ships destroyed
 - Fields ruined
- Labor
 - Farms untilled
 - Industry crippled
- Markets
 - Fewer buying
 - Less to buy with

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Peltasts and mercenaries

- Fewer men to form hoplite phalanxes
- Economic, physical, and psychological exhaustion
- Hoplites must be supplemented
 - Peltasts: Light infantry skirmishers
 - Mercenaries fighting for pay


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Disillusionment

- Reduced faith
 - in the gods
 - in the city
- More chaotic
- More polarized

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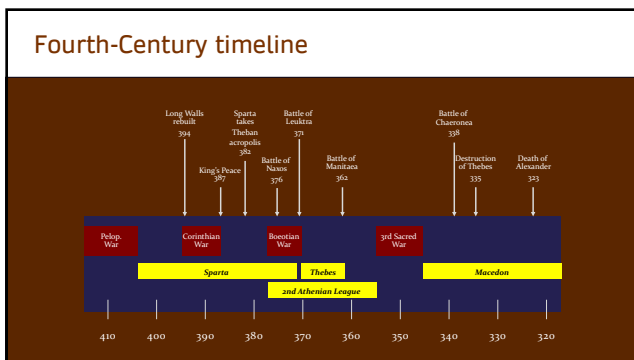
The struggle for hegemony

- Persian wars created a need
- Rival candidates divide Hellas
- Peloponnesian War fails to resolve conflict
 - Spartan hegemony ineffective and unpopular
 - Underlying conflict between the few and the many
- Fourth century wars
 - "Wars of Hegemony"
 - More candidates
 - Persian interference

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The Fourth-Century Crisis

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Spartan imperialism



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The Corinthian War (396-387)

- Sparta against a coalition of city-states
 - Thebes, Athens, Corinth and Argos
 - Allies initially backed by Persian Empire
- Inconclusive
 - Spartan successes on land
 - Allies destroy Spartan navy
 - Athens begins recapturing Delian League islands

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The King's Peace, 387

- Spartan diplomat who traveled to Susa to negotiate the terms
- Asian Greek cities belong to Persia
- All other Greek cities autonomous
- Peace enforced by threat of Persian force
- Spartans named as guarantors of the Peace

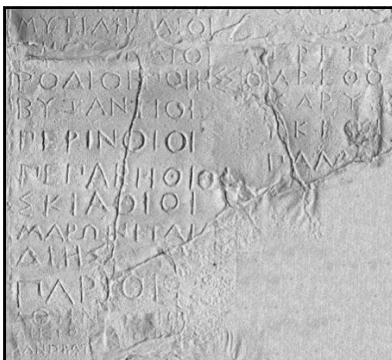
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Spartans on the Kadmeia, 382

- Spartans abuse their role as guarantors
- Passing Spartan army invades Thebes and seizes citadel
 - Anti-Spartan leader executed
 - Spartan oligarchy created
 - Spartan garrison installed
 - Violation of King's Peace
- Thebes rebels, launching new war

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Second Athenian League

- Athens recreates a multi-city naval alliance
 - 60 cities brought into confederation
- Preserve peace in Greece and counterbalance Sparta
- More inclusive and moderate in its terms than Delian League
- Thebes joins this time

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Epaminondas and the Sacred Band

- Thebes driven to counter Sparta's superiority in war
- Sacred Band
 - Elite, highly skilled soldiers
 - Bonded in pairs to protect each other in battle

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Primary Source Reading

Cornelius Nepos
On
Epaminondas



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Primary Source Reading

Xenophon
The Battle of
Leuctra



The restored surviving base of the Battle of Leuktra trophy

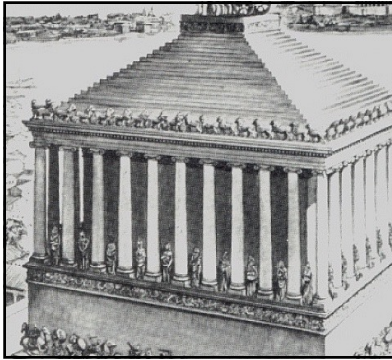
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Battle of
Mantineia, 362

- All out final battle between Thebes and Sparta
- Thebes wins, but Epaminondas is killed
 - Thebes fails to maintain hegemony without him
 - Spartans were weakened by yet another defeat
- Hellas left weakened and leaderless

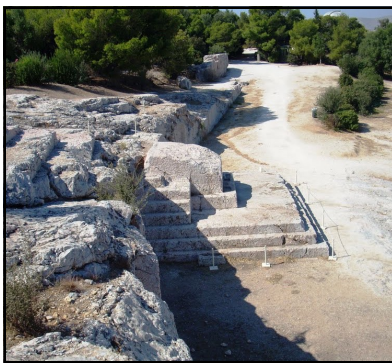
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End of the Second Athenian League

- Theban hegemony causes conflict with Athens
 - Secedes after Leuktra
- Revolts and ambition
- Social War (357–355 BC)
 - Chios, Rhodes, Kos, and Byzantium war against Athens
 - League disintegrates

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Stasis in the fourth century

- Divisions within cities
 - Leadership increasingly ineffective
 - Increased disillusion
- Civil wars add to disorder

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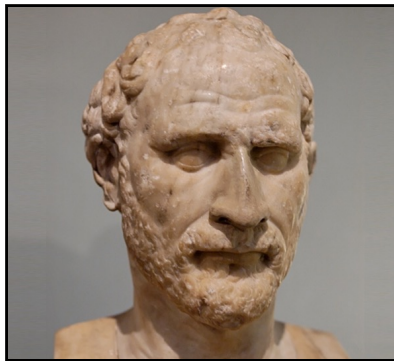
Dominion of Macedon

- Economic, cultural, and political weakness and division in Hellas
- Rise of Philip II
- Hatred of Persia
 - Aggression against Persia required Greek unity
 - A unifying leader is needed

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Hellas in the Fourth Century

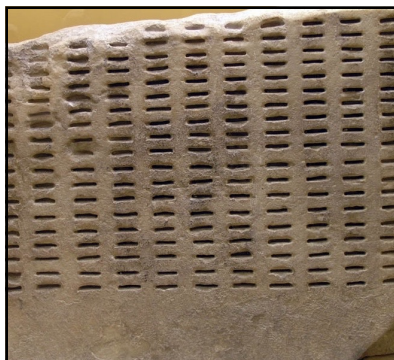
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Politician as rhētōr

- Responsibility on the part of the citizen to participation
- Participation accomplished via interaction of oratory
- Interactive
- Active responsibility to hear and engage

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The Athenian justice system

- Places where citizens gather to speak and listen
 - Assembly
 - Civil and criminal justice
 - People are sovereign, thus mechanisms reflect that
- Justice system puts problems before Athenian people
 - Not decided by judge, king, or elected officials but by the sovereign people

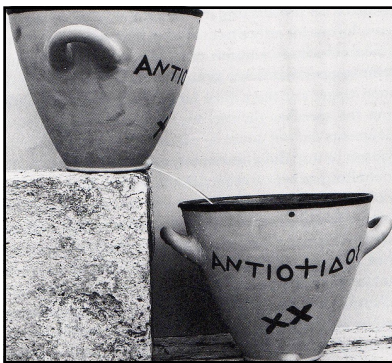
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Jurors and the Dikastēria

- Massive juries (201, 501)
 - Representative sampling chosen by lot
 - Given compensation
- Not necessarily representative
 - Old people, layabouts more available
 - Lowest class not eligible
- Ongoing efforts to prevent bribery, corruption
- Active engagement seen as similar to Spartan role of fighting and dying

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Oratory in the courts

- Oratory of advocates and processing of justice by audience
 - One of the things that makes written word inferior
- Plays and oratory are similar
 - Both exist not for speakers but for audience
- As with performance of play, oratory is interactive
 - What's most important is what the audience does

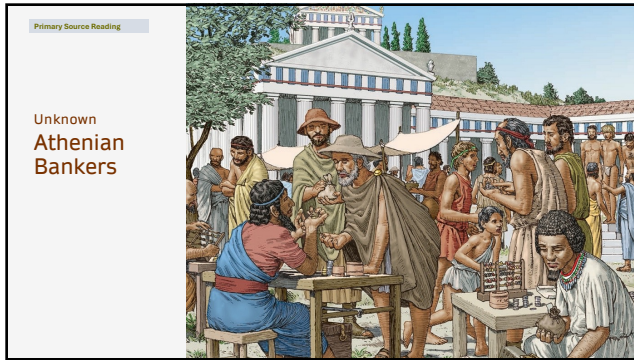
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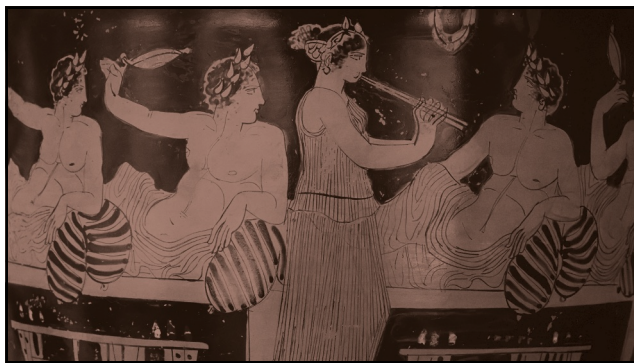
The nature of crime in Athens

- Criminal law carries down from Draco
 - Make damage that people do to each other a matter of public concern
 - Crime as it affects the community
- Murder especially to be punished
 - Community cost a life, provokes gods
- Athens itself as sacred
 - Crimes as a corruption of Athens in a sacred sense
 - Community itself as divine and special, beyond the individual mortal life

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