

# *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## *Syllabus*

### *"This is Sparta"? Sparta between history and fiction - 39007*

*Last update 09-09-2021*

*HU Credits:* 2

*Degree/Cycle:* 1st degree (Bachelor)

*Responsible Department:* History

*Academic year:* 0

*Semester:* 2nd Semester

*Teaching Languages:* Hebrew

*Campus:* Mt. Scopus

*Course/Module Coordinator:* Dr. Lee Mordechai

*Coordinator Email:* [lee.mordechai@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:lee.mordechai@mail.huji.ac.il)

*Coordinator Office Hours:*

---

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Lee Mordechai

Course/Module description:

*This class examines the Greek polis Sparta. One part of the class will cover the social, cultural and political history of Sparta in the Archaic and Classical periods (especially between the 7th-4th centuries BCE). It will combine a chronological approach examining Sparta's development over time with a thematic approach that focuses on specific topics of interest in the case of Sparta – such as education, governance, sexuality and demography in the polis. The class will also examine some of the different social groups in Sparta: the helots (the Spartan equivalent of slavery), Spartan women, and of course the warrior-citizens of the polis. In this part of the class we will critically analyze written primary sources and material culture from antiquity to better understand ancient Sparta.*

*In parallel to this analysis of Sparta in antiquity, the class will also examine the image of Sparta that authors from antiquity and modernity constructed and maintained. We will learn about the inherent difficulties we face when trying to understand historical Sparta, discuss the “Spartan mirage” – the broad gaps between fictional and historical Sparta – and examine how different authors chose to interpret Sparta's history by conveying messages relevant to their present. The analysis will also include references to Sparta in contemporary popular culture – such as the graphic novel/film 300 (and its sequel) and the recent video game Assassin's Creed: Odyssey.*

*This class requires no former knowledge. Basic knowledge about ancient Greece or Sparta would be helpful in providing a broader context, and it is warmly recommended to take the introductory class “Introduction to Ancient Greece” (#39189) in the Fall semester before this class.*

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

See Hebrew version.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

---

Course/Module Content:

See Hebrew version.

Required Reading:

A detailed reading list will be distributed in the first class. Readings will include:

- Cavanagh, W.G., ed. *Sparta and Laconia: from prehistory to premodern*. London and Athens: British School at Athens 2009.
- Kennell, N. *Spartans: A New History*. Oxford and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell Press 2010.
- Pomeroy, S.B. *Spartan Women*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002.
- Powell, A., ed. *Sparta: beyond the mirage*. Swansea and London: Classical Press of Wales: Duckworth 2002.
- Powell, A., ed. *A Companion to Sparta*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell 2018.

Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %  
Presentation 0 %  
Participation in Tutorials 10 %  
Project work 70 %  
Assignments 15 %  
Reports 0 %  
Research project 0 %  
Quizzes 0 %  
Other 5 %  
Office hours visit

Additional information: