



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

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

Last update 15-09-2024

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: History

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Lee Mordechai

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Coordinator Office Hours:

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Lee Mordechai

Course/Module description:

This class investigates the Greek polis of Sparta and is divided into three parts. The first part of the class will examine the historical Sparta by contemporary sources from the Archaic and Classical periods (7-4th centuries BCE) and will touch upon several specific issues - such as education, governance, sexuality and demography in the polis. We will also examine the different social groups in Sparta - such as helots (the Spartan version of slaves), Spartan women and of course the citizen warriors in the polis. In this part we will critically analyze contemporary written primary sources and material cultural to learn about ancient Sparta.

The second part of the class will move on to discuss the image of Sparta according to later authors, from antiquity to modern times. We will reflect on the substantial difficulties facing us as we try to understand historical Sparta, we will consider the "Spartan Mirage" - the wide gaps between imagination and reality as we deal with Sparta - and we will investigate how different authors chose to interpret Spartan history by conveying ideas and ideals relevant to their own present. The third part of the class will focus on the most famous episode in Spartan history - the battle of Thermopylae - from antiquity to popular culture in the 21st century, such as the graphic novel/film 300 and the 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 parallel to 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:

Part I

1. Introduction
2. Sparta according to Herodotus
3. Sparta according to Thucydides
4. Sparta according to Xenophon
5. Sparta according to Aristotle and others

Part II

6. Plutarch and his influence (1)
7. Plutarch and his influence (2)
8. The revisionist approach to Sparta
9. Attitudes to Sparta in Europe and North America

Part III: The battle of Thermopylae as a case study

10. The Battle of Thermopylae
11. The Battle of Thermopylae in Western memory (mid 20th c.)
12. The Battle of Thermopylae in Western memory (late 20th-early 21st c.)
13. The Battle of Thermopylae in Western memory - an alternative 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:

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 70 %
Submission assignments during the semester: Exercises / Essays / Audits / Reports / Forum / Simulation / others 15 %
Attendance / Participation in Field Excursion 10 %
Other 5 %

Additional information: