



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Individual Freedom in Athenian Democracy - 39370

Last update 16-09-2022

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. Matthias Schmidt

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Coordinator Office Hours: Mondays - 15:30-17:00

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Matthias Schmidt

Course/Module description:

The seminar will deal with the question of individual “rights” and personal freedom in democratic Athens during the 5th Century BCE. Relevant textual and visual sources of different genres (historiography, tragedies, philosophical treatments, political pamphlets, laws, inscriptions, art and architecture) will be read, contemplated, analysed and discussed in order to understand how personal freedom was achieved and implemented in an ancient developing democratic society which promoted freedom (eleutheria) as its cardinal value. Political freedom was propagated as the most important character of Athens while individual freedom rights - like freedom of speech, thought, and religious belief, equality of rights and opportunities, and the decriminalization of private conduct (Robert W. Wallace, *Personal Freedom in Greek Democracies*, 164) - were deduced from the political implementation of collective freedom. - The analysis of source texts and the discussion of a choice of research literature will identify different concepts of individual freedom and point to the interconnection between political system and individual rights in the self-understanding of the Athenian citizens, where collectivism in political freedom was seen as the best guarantee for individual freedom and the protection of individual “rights”. A comparison with the “alternative” Spartan society, a reconstruction of inner opponents to the democratic system in Athenian and a look on Athenian foreign policy will check if and how these Athenian ideas matched reality or if they were closer to an ideological construct of Athenian identity. - The findings will be confronted with modern political thinking to see if modern concepts of individual rights and freedom are rooted in ancient Athenian civilization. Present day democracies are supposed to rest on principles of individualism and individual rights, and again the view is accepted that “society should be thought of as a collection of individuals whose needs and purposes lead them to constitute society, or to continue living in a society, as a way of furthering their individual need and purposes” (John W. Danford, *Roots of Freedom*, chap. 1) - the democratic societies are turned into liberal commercial societies. We will ask the question if this modern approach is actually based on the Athenian model of individualism and collectivism, or if the historical development has deviated somewhere on its way to modernity from the original concept of the Athenians.

Course/Module aims:

The students will explore ancient Greek sources from different social-political and literary contexts of the classical period in Greek/Athenian history. Source evidence will be analysed from a comparative perspective concerning the question of the implementation of personal freedom in the early democratic society of Athens. Conceptual elements of individual/collective “rights” and obligations will be identified which were characteristic for ancient Athens and its collective identity - like freedom of speech, thought, and religious belief, equality of rights and

*opportunities, and the decriminalization of private conduct. Internal opposition to Athenian democracy as well as the alternative model of the Spartan society will function as control groups to the Athenian attitudes and self-perception. Seminar participants will understand the tension of individualism versus collectivism as an important momentum in Greek history and realize how the idea of personal freedoms and individual rights were already challenged in antiquity by hierarchy, power and subordination (Dinah Shelton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law*, Oxford 2013, 3). They will discuss the value of ancient concepts of personal freedom for the modern discourse on individual and collective rights as well as on positive and negative liberty/freedom -- in light of contemporary human rights law and its affiliated fields: the universality of human rights and human dignity; the question of natural law/rights; universalism versus particularism as well as rights and obligations in a democratic society; and the role of civil society, equality and democracy for the implementation of individual and collective freedom rights. They will develop arguments towards the positive or negative evaluation of relevant Athenian concepts for today's political discourse. During the course students will get acquainted with different models and developments of Greek political and philosophical ideas as antecedents for the creation of modern human rights concepts, but the discussion will also contribute to the understanding of the different nature and purposes of ancient and modern discourses on individual rights, human rights and collective obligations.*

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

- * understand the idea of individual freedom as a result of political and military developments in 5th century Athens towards democracy;*
- * differentiate between individual and collective freedom, rights and obligations in a democratic system;*
- * understand methods of expressions in art and literature as elements in the genesis of political identities in Athenian democracy;*
- * evaluate different concepts of individual, personal freedom in a variety of political systems in ancient Greek;*
- * analyse the correlation between individualism and collectivism in different political systems;*
- * describe the political functionalization of concepts of individualism and collectivism in times of conflict and war;*
- * determine ideas and normative concepts of individual rights and liberty/freedom expressed in ancient sources in their historical contexts;*
- * describe the elements of concepts towards individual freedom in ancient private and public statements;*
- * realize how the idea of personal freedoms and individual rights were already challenged in antiquity by hierarchy, power and subordination;*
- * evaluate the meaning and importance of Greek concepts as antecedents for modern individual rights and determine their political meaning today;*

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- * assess the variety of modern approaches towards the question of the history of individual and collective rights and their reciprocity;
 - * develop an awareness of the nature and purposes of using ancient concepts as antecedents for modern concepts of collective and individual rights and obligations;
 - * to understand in which ways the Athenian model of individualism and collectivism can be used/misused to describe modern developments towards liberal commercial societies;
 - * select and synthesize material from lectures and recommended primary and secondary sources as well as research literature to use in oral and written discussions of set topics.

Attendance requirements(%):

100%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Reading, analysis and interpretation of primary and secondary sources of different nature of historiography, philosophy, inscriptions, legislation and contracts as well as artifacts; presentation and discussion of research literature; preliminary readings for each session will be circulated and must be prepared in advance. In the seminar - lectures, power point presentations, class room discussions, group work and student presentations will alternate.

Course/Module Content:

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Definitions, Approaches, Examples - "Personal Rights" - "Personal freedom/liberties"
 - 1.1.1 Defining Normative Concepts: Positive Liberty and Negative Liberty
 - 1.1.2 Defining Normative Elements of Personal Rights and Freedoms
 - 1.2 Research Problems and Methodology
 - 1.2.1 The Existence of Personal Freedom Rights/Civil Liberties in Antiquity
 - 1.2.2 Natural Law and Natural Rights - Individualism and Collectivism - Universalism and Particularism
 - 1.2.3 Documents of Civil Liberties in Western History after Antiquity
 - 1.2.4 Civil Liberties and Human Rights
2. Prologue
 - 2.1 The Early Literature
 - 2.1.1 Authority, Individual Honor, and Collective Misfortune: Homer, Iliad, Book 1: Achilles versus the Greek Army
 - 2.2 Athenian Democracy, Political Freedom and Individual Rights
 - 2.2.1 The "Best Constitution"
 - 2.2.1.1 Collective versus Individual Rule: Herodotus, Histories III 80-83

2.2.1.2 Democracy as (possibly) the Best Constitution: Aristotle, *Politics* VI 2 (p. 1317a 39ff.)

2.2.2 The Athenian Sonderweg and its Slogans: Democracy, Freedom, Equality and Justice

2.2.2.1 The Triumph of Freedom, or: Why is Athens so important: Aischylos, *Persae* 231-243

2.2.2.2 Laws and Good Proposals: Euripides, *Suppliant Women* 382-510

2.2.2.3 Athens, an Example for Hellas: Pericles' Funeral Oration (Epitaphios): Thucydides, *Pelop. War* II 34-46

3. Personal Freedom in Democratic Athens

3.1 Reading and Discussion of a Choice of Literature ('Required Reading'+additional sources) on "Rights", Individuals and Personal Freedom in Athens and other Greek Communities

4. Opposition, Alternatives and the Real Politics of Athenian Democracy

4.1 Positive Criticism in Comedy: Aristophanes, *Ekklesiazusae*

4.2 Democracy as Collective Redistribution of Individual Wealth: Pseudo-Xenophon (*The Old Oligarch*), *Constitutions of the Athenians*

4.3 The Justification of Power in the Melian Dialog: Thucydides, *Pelop. War* V 85-113

4.4 Power and Democratic Values in the Mytilenean Debate: Thucydides, *Pelop. war* III 37-50

4.5 Sparta and its "Rules and Institutions incompatible with those of others": Thucydides, *Peloponnesian Wars* I.73; 74,1; 75-77

4.6 Sparta - The Collective Society in Antiquity

4.6.1 Xenophon, *The Spartan Constitution*

4.6.2 Aristotle, *Pol II* 6, p.1269a 39-1271b 19

5. Conclusion: Personal Freedom, Rights and Civic Liberties - Ancient and Modern

Required Reading:

The actual required reading (documents, articles, book chapters) will be determined in relation to the specific subjects of the course. All items of the required reading will be posted in due course on the moodle.page for the seminar in chronological order according to the speed of our work capacity in the seminar. The following list includes items or texts focused on the question of individual and collective rights in democratic Athens as well as more general historical surveys referring to these and related issues in the ancient Greek World.

1.1. Greece and Athens

Joseph M. Bryant, *Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece. A Sociology of Greek Ethics from Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996, chap. 4 III: *The Classical Polis: Institutions and Normative Ideals*, p. 151-168 (on moodle).

Paul Cartledge, Matt Edge, “‘Rights’, Individuals, and Communities in Ancient Greece”, in: Ryan K. Balot (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 149-163 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Paul Cartledge, “Comparative Equal”, in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 175-185 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Edward E. Cohen, *The Athenian Nation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000, chap. 3: *An Ancient Construct: The Athenian Nation*, p. 79-103 (on moodle).

Edward E. Cohen, *The Athenian Nation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000, chap. 4: *A Modern Myth: The Athenian Village*, p. 104-129 (on moodle).

W. Robert Connor, “Civil Society, Dionysiac Festival, And the Athenian Democracy”, in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 217-226 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

John W. Danford, *Roots of Freedom: A Primer on Modern Liberty*, Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2004, chap. 1: *Roots in Ancient Greece*, p.?? (on moodle).

Moses I. Finley, “The Freedom of the Citizen in the Greek World” in: *Talanta 7* (1976), p. 1-23 (repr. in: *idem.*, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. B. Shaw and R. Saller, New York: Viking, 1982, p. 77-94 (on moodle).

Robert Garland, *How to Survive in Ancient Greece*, Yorkshire: Pen&Sword History, 2020 (online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Alvin Ward Gouldner, “The War Between the Cities”, in: Bryan S. Turner, Peter Hamilton (eds.), *Citizenship. Critical Concepts*, vol. I, London-New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 331-337 (on moodle).

Mogens Herman Hansen, “The Ancient Athenian and the Modern Liberal View of Liberty as a Democratic Ideal”, in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 91-104 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Virginia Hunter, *Policing Athens: Social Control in the Attic Lawsuits, 420-320 B.C.*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2019; © 1994 (online access via Mount Scopus Library).

David Kovace, “Relativism and Pluralism in Ancient Greece”, *The Journal of*

Education Vol. 108, No. 3 Relativism and Pluralism (1998), p. 1-20 (on moodle).

Peter Liddel, "Democracy Ancient and Modern", in: Ryan K. Balot (ed.), A Companion to Greek and Roman political thought, Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 133-148 (on moodle; and> online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Philip Brook Manville, The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990, chap. 1: Introduction: What Was Athenian Citizenship? (on moodle).

Ian Morris, "The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy", in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 19-48 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Josiah Ober, "Meritocratic and Civic Dignity in Greco-Roman antiquity", in: Marcus Düwell et. al. (eds.), The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary perspectives, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 53-63 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Martin Ostwald, "Shares and Rights: 'Citizenship' Greek Style and American Style", in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 49-61 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Peter J. Rhodes, "Civic Ideology and Citizenship", in: Ryan K. Balot (ed.), A Companion to Greek and Roman political thought, Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 57-69 (on moodle; and> online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, "Athenian Equality: A Constant Surrounded by Flux", in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 187-202 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Robert W. Wallace, "Personal Freedom in Greek Democracies, Republican Rome, and Modern Liberal States", in: Ryan K. Balot (ed.), A Companion to Greek and Roman political thought, Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 164-177 (on moodle; and> online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Robert W. Wallace, "Law, Freedom, and the Concept of Citizens' Rights in Democratic Athens", in: Josiah Ober, Charlesd Hedrick (eds.), Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 105-119 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

John R. Wallach, *Democracy and Goodness. A Historicist Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, chap. 2: *Democracy and Virtue in Ancient Athens*, p. 53-94 (on moodle).

Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Demos Versus 'We, The People': Freedom and Democracy Ancient and Modern", in: Josiah Ober, Charles Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 121-137 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

1.2. Theoretical Debates: Rights, Human Rights, Individualism, Citizenship

Richard A. Baumann, "Human Rights: the Greek experience", in: idem., *Human Rights in Ancient Rome*, London-New York: Routledge, 2000, chap. 2: 10-19 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", in: idem., *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, p.118-172 (on moodle).

Richard Dagger, "Rights", in: Terence Ball, James Farr, Russel L. Hanson (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 292-308 (on moodle).

Nathan Glazer, "Individual Rights against Group Rights", in: Bryan S. Turner, Peter Hamilton (eds.), *Citizenship. Critical Concepts*, vol. II, London-New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 226-239 (on moodle).

Russell L. Hanson, "Democracy", in: Terence Ball, James Farr, Russel L. Hanson (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 68-89 (on moodle).

Louis Henkin, *The Age of Rights*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 1-5 (reprinted in: Louis Henkin, Gerald L. Neuman et. al. (eds.), *Human Rights*, New York: Foundation Press, 1999, 2-6; on moodle).

Attracta Ingram, *A Political Theory of Rights*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, chap. 9: *Rights as Political*, p. 192-214 (on moodle).

Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person. A new Genealogy of Human Rights*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013 (online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Jean Leca, "Individualism and Citizenship", in: Bryan S. Turner, Peter Hamilton (eds.), *Citizenship. Critical Concepts*, vol. I, London- New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 148-187 (on moodle).

Michael Walzer, "Citizenship", in: Terence Ball, James Farr, Russel L. Hanson (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 211-219 (on moodle).

Additional Reading Material:

The titles below are considered additional reading in the broadest sense. They include comprehensive introductions as mainly historical background information to our subject, or monographs on certain general aspects and problems. These items might be consulted if participants feel the need to refresh specific background knowledge on Greek History and Greek Political Thought in Antiquity.

2.1 General Introductions - Ancient Greece (Political History)

Simon Hornblower, *The Greek World 479-323 BC*, London - New York: Methuen, 1983.

Robin Osborne, *Greece in the Making, 1200-479 BC*, London New York: Routledge, 1996.

Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta. Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 BC*, London New York: Routledge, 2nd ed. 2001.

P. J. Rhodes, *A History of the Classical Greek World 478-323 BC*, Malden Oxford Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

2.2 General Introductions - Ancient Greece (Intellectual History)

Ryan K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Malden Oxford Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Joseph M. Bryant, *Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece. A Sociology of Greek Ethics from Homer to the Epicure and Stoics*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Moses I. Finley, *The Ancient Greeks. An Introduction to their Life and Thought*, New York: The Viking Press, 1966.

Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian. Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989.

Donald Kagan, *The Great Dialogue. History of Greek Political Thought from Homer to Polybius*, West Port, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1965.

Josiah Ober, Charles Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997 (online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Christopher Rowe, Malcolm Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Stephen Salkever (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009.

Simon Weber, "Aristotle and Respect for Persons", in: Giovanni Giorgini, Elena Irrera (eds.), *The Roots of Respect. A Historic-Philosophical Itinerary*, Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2017, p. 83-105 (on moodle).

2.3 Athens and Athenian Democracy (general)

Moses I. Finley, *Democracy - Ancient and Modern*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Christian Meier, *Athens. A Portrait of the City in its Golden Age*, New York: Metropolitan Books - Henry Holt and Company, 1998.

Josiah Ober, *The Athenian Revolution: essays on ancient Greek democracy and political theory*, Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Josiah Ober, Charles Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia - A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996 (collection of relevant articles).

Josiah Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens. Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1998.

Kurt Raaflaub, Josiah Ober, Robert W. Wallace (eds.), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2007.

J.W. Roberts *City of Sokrates. An Introduction to Classical Athens*, London New York: Routledge, 1984.

2.4 Sparta - History and Society (general)

Michael Whitby (ed.), *Sparta*, Edinburgh: Edingburgh University Press, 2002.

Paul Cartledge, *The Spartans. The World of the Warrior-Heroes of Ancient Greece, from Utopia to Crisis and Collapse*, New York: Vintage Books, 2002.

Thomas J. Figueira (ed.), *Spartan Society*, Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2004.

Moses I. Finley, "Sparta", in: idem, *The Use and Abuse of History*, London: Chatto & Windus 1975, pp. 161-177.

Stephen Hodkins, Ian Macgregor Morris (ed.), *Sparta in modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture*, Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2012.

Anton Powell, Stephen Hodkinson (eds), *Sparta - Beyond the Mirage*, London: Duckworth and the Classical Press of Wales, 2002.

Antona Powell, Stephen Hodkinson, *The Shadow of Sparta*, London New York: Routledge for the Classical Press of Wales, 1994.

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 10 %

Project work 90 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 0 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information:

In this seminar classical literature and sources are studied in English or Hebrew translations. Knowledge of Greek and Latin is not required.