



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Democracy and Freedom in Classical Athens - 39490

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. Matthias Schmidt

Coordinator Email: matthias.schmidt@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Mondays 13:00 - 14:00

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Matthias Schmidt

Course/Module description:

The exercise will deal with the nature of the democratic system in ancient Athens as source for political freedom and personal civil liberties as well as individual "rights". During the development of a democratic system from the early 6th century onwards collective and individual "freedom" was propagated as the most important character of Athens and its society. Individual freedom rights - like freedom of speech, thought, and religious belief, equality of rights and opportunities - were deduced in the various narratives of the 5th century from the political implementation of collective freedom in a democratic state. - Relevant textual and visual sources of different genres (historiography, tragedies, philosophical treatises, 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 ancient Athen's developing democratic society which promoted freedom (eleutheria) as its cardinal value and ultimate goal.

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. Participants will understand 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 a democratic society. 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 concepts of freedom.

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 collective freedom and individual rights and obligations in a democratic system and to understand their interdependence;
- * determine ideas and normative concepts of individual rights and liberty/freedom expressed in ancient sources in their historical contexts;
- * understand methods of expressions in art and literature as elements in the genesis of political identities in Athenian democracy;
- * realize how the idea of personal freedoms and individual rights were already challenged in antiquity by hierarchy, power and subordination;
- * understand that defending democracy was always understood as defending individual freedoms and vice versa;
- * evaluate the meaning and importance of Greek concepts as antecedents for modern individual rights and determine their political meaning today;
- * develop an awareness of the nature and purposes of using ancient concepts as antecedents for modern concepts of collective and individual rights and obligations;
- * 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: The reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources of different nature (historiography, philosophy, inscriptions, legislation and contracts as well as artifacts) and the discussion of a selection 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. 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. We will ask the question if the modern approach - understanding the democratic society as a way of furthering the individual need and purposes and thus having democratic societies turned into liberal commercial societies - 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. - Preliminary readings for each session will be circulated and must be prepared in advance. In the exercise - lectures, power point presentations, class room discussions, group work and student presentations will

alternate.

Course/Module Content:

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 Definitions
 - 1.1.1 Constitutional Concepts: The Circle of Political Systems (Metabole/Anakyklosis): Polybios, History 6.3-4
 - 1.1.2 Normative Concepts: From Political Participation to Collective and Individual Freedom
 - 1.1.3 Defining Normative Elements of Personal Rights and Freedoms
 - 1.2 Research Questions
 - 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

2. Democratization in Ancient Athens - Towards Collective and Individual Freedom
 - 2.1 Prologue: Authority, Individual Honor, and Collective Misfortune: Homer, Iliad, Book 1 - Achilles versus the Greek Army
 - 2.2 Steps of Democratization: Solon's Timocracy - Kleistenes' Isonomie - Themistocles' Reform of Warfare
 - 2.3 The "Best Constitution"
 - 2.3.1 Individual versus Collective Rule (Monarchy-Aristocracy-Democracy): Herodotus, Histories III 80-83
 - 2.3.2 Democracy as (possibly) the Best Constitution: Aristotle, Politics VI 2 (p. 1317a 39ff.)
 - 2.4 Athenian Democracy, Political Freedom and Individual Rights
 - 2.4.1 The Triumph of Freedom, or: Why is Athens so important: Aischylos, Persae 231-243
 - 2.4.2 Laws and Good Proposals: Euripides, Suppliant Women 382-510
 - 2.4.3 Athens, an Example for Hellas: Pericles' Funeral Oration (Epitaphios): Thucydides, Pelop. War II 34-46

3. Opposition, Alternatives and the Foreign Politics of Athenian Democracy
 - 3.1 Democracy as Collective Redistribution of Individual Wealth: Pseudo-Xenophon (The Old Oligarch), Constitutions of the Athenians
 - 3.2 Sparta and its "Rules and Institutions incompatible with those of others": Thucydides, Peloponnesian Wars I.73; 74,1; 75-77 [Aristotle, Pol II 6, p.1269a 39-1271b 19]
 - 3.3 The Justification of Power in the Melian Dialog: Thucydides, Pelop. War V 85-113
 - 3.4 Power and Democratic Values in the Mytilenean Debate: Thucydides, Pelop. war III 37-50

4. Conclusion: Democracy, Individual Rights, Human Rights 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 time on the moodle.page for the course in chronological order according to the speed of our work capacity during the term. The following list includes items or texts focused on the question of democracy and individual and collective freedom in ancient Athens as well as more general historical surveys referring to these and related issues in the ancient Greek World. - All items will also be posted in the reading material file in the moodle site under "General items" (part of the items are also available online through the Mount Scopus Library). Participants of the course do not have to read all items in advance, but it would be efficient to get familiarized with the subject matters dealt with - and perhaps to read one or two articles on more general aspects and of introductory nature.

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, pp. 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, pp. 149-163 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Paul Cartledge, "Comparative Equal", in: Josiah Ober, Charles Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 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, pp. 79-103 (on moodle).

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

John W. Danford, *Roots of Freedom: A Primer on Modern Liberty*, Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2004, chap. 1: Roots in Ancient Greece, pp. 1-10 (on moodle).

Simon Epstein, "Direct Democracy and Minority Rule: The Athenian Assembly in its Relation to the Demos", in: Gabriel Herrman (ed.), *Stability and Crisis in the Athenian Democracy*, *Historia Einzelschriften* 220, Stuttgart: Steiner Verlage, 2011, pp. 87-102 (on moodle).

Cynthia Farrar, "Power to the People", in: Kurt Raaflaub, Josiah Ober, Robert W. Wallace (eds.), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2007, 170-195 (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, pp. 77-94 (on moodle).

Dean Hammer, "Homer and Political Thought", in: Stephen Salkever (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009, pp. 15-41 (on moodle).

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

Peter Liddel, "The Performance and Presentation of Obligations", in: idem, *Civic Obligation and Individual Liberty in Ancient Athens*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 210-308 (chap. 5).

Peter Liddel, "Democracy Ancient and Modern", in: Ryan K. Balot (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman political thought*, Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 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? - pp. 3-34 (on moodle).

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

Kurt A. Raaflaub, "Democracy, Oligarchy, and the Concept of the 'Free Citizen' in Late Fifth-Century Athens", in: *Political Theory*, Nov., 1983, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Nov., 1983), pp. 517-544.

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, pp. 57-69 (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, pp. 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, Charles Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton

University Press, 1997, pp. 105-119 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

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, pp. 121-137 (on moodle; and online access via Mount Scopus Library).

Additional Reading Material:

The bibliographical items 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. *Introduction into the Study of Ancient History/Antiquity*

Herman Bengtson, *Introduction to Ancient History*, transl. by: R.I. Frank and Frank D. Gilliard, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1970 (6th ed., Reprint 2019 - from a different time, but not outdated!).

Jerry Toner, *The Ancient World: Ideas in Profile*, London: Profile Books LTD, 2015.

General Introductions - Greek History

משה עמית, תולדות יוון הקלאסית, הוצאת ספרים ע"ש י.ל. מאגנס, האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים, ירושלים 1993.

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.

General History - Athens and Sparta

Lukas de Blois, Robartus Johannes van der Spek, *An Introduction to the Ancient World*, London, New York: Routledge, 1997, - part II: Greece, chap. 10 *The Classical Period*, pp. 95-128.

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.

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

Political Theory et al.

דוד אשרי, קניין לדורות. ההיסטוריונים יוניים וכתבת ההיסטוריה ביוון וברומא, עם הקדמה מאת אוסווין מרי, ערכה דבורה גילולה, הוצאת ספרים ע"ש י.ל. מאגנס, האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים, ירושלים 2004.

אפרים דוד, הדמוקרטיה הקלסית. התהוותה, תפקודה, עקרונותיה ותלאותיה באתונה, הוצאת ספרים ע"ש י.ל. מאגנס, האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים, ירושלים 2003.

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

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

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).

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

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.

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.

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 90 %

Attendance / Participation in Field Excursion 10 %

Additional information:

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