

PLSC 24. Athenian Democracy
Freshman Seminar
Prof. Daniela Cammack
Spring 2021
One-hour, one-unit reading course

In classical Athens, ordinary citizens ruled over the political elite. That's what *demokratia*, “rule by the people,” meant. How did non-elite Athenians pull that off? In this seminar, we’ll explore two fascinating, important and in some respects baffling short texts, both titled “The Constitution of the Athenians,” one attributed to Xenophon and the other to a student of Aristotle. We’ll also look at some additional brief extracts from Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle. Though the material concerns ancient Greek politics, we’ll approach it with all our assumptions and anxieties about modern democracy in mind. How different was ancient Greek democracy from what we call democracy today—and could we manage something more like it here?

Requirements: regular attendance (maximum 2-3 absences), doing the reading, c.200-word online forum response prior to each session, and a willingness to ask questions and float ideas in class.

All readings supplied by instructor.

- Jan 20. Herodotus’ “Constitutional Debate”
- Jan 27. Thucydides: Pericles’ Funeral Oration and assessment of Pericles
- Feb 3. Ps. Xenophon
- Feb 10. Ps. Xenophon
- Feb 17. Ps. Xenophon
- Feb 24. Plato: the Beast, the Ship and the account of *demokratia*
- Mar 3. Ps. Aristotle: Solon
- Mar 10. Ps. Aristotle: Cleisthenes
- Mar 17. Ps. Aristotle: Ephialtes/Pericles
- Mar 31. Ps. Aristotle: The Four Hundred
- Apr 7. Ps. Aristotle: The Thirty and reconciliation
- Apr 14. Ps. Aristotle: Contemporary Athens I
- Apr 21. Ps. Aristotle: Contemporary Athens II
- Apr 28. Aristotle on the virtues of the multitude