

Syllabus for Fall 2017, OLLI, Classical Greece

Our text for the term and for the entire year of Greco-Roman History is the first edition of Ralph Mathisen: Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations from Prehistory to 640 CE (Oxford: 2012) A word of caution: the second edition is **far more expensive** and offers slight change and thus no reason for you to purchase.

Week 1: The Predecessors of Classical Greece: Part 1, the Minoans

Text: Chapter 4, pp, 97-103

Many of you have visited the island of Crete, so you will already know of the mysterious Minoans and their earliest of the civilizations in the west. Of great interest to us will be the discovery and “development” of a Minoan civilization in the 19th and 20th centuries and its significance for the Greeks of the future.

Week 2: The Predecessors of Classical Greece: Part 2, The Myceneans

Text: Chapter 4, pp. 103-110

Most of us hear tales of the Trojan War. Homer’s works are of course major classics, but how much do we really about Troy and its Greek invaders? This will be a discussion of the work of Schliemann and the discovery of Troy and the Myceneans who allegedly attacked it over the seduction of a beautiful queen. These Myceneans provided the first civilization in pre-classical Greece so will be of great interest to us.

Week 3: The Dark and Archaic Ages

Text: Chapter 6

The Classical Age of Greece emerged only after centuries of development, some known about only slightly, some virtually not at all. However, these lengthy periods lead directly into the classical period, so we shall describe the various characteristics and traditions that may have stemmed from the earlier time. Especially noteworthy in this regard is the evolution of the polis among the Greeks and the various governments that evolved within.

Week 4: Sparta, the Military Polis

Text, Chapter 7, pp. 180-186

Over centuries, the stories of Sparta, its character and history, have continued to fascinate. Even our language has been influenced by such words as “laconic” and “spartan”. We shall describe what is known of Sparta’s development and significance as further consider what role Sparta played in Greek and larger world affairs.

Week 5: Athens, the Center of the Classical World

Text, Chapter 7, pp. 186-194

Like Sparta, Athens was an influential Greek polis and was unique among them. Those are essentially the major similarities; otherwise, they are extremely different as each develops its own special form of government, character and relationship to both Greeks and non-Greeks. The role of Athens as the center of the intellectual development of classical civilization will be considered in the winter term.