

**Department:** Modern and Classical Languages

**Course No:** 101

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Greek Civilization

**Contact:** Roger Travis

**Content Area:** CA1-Arts and Humanities

**Catalog Copy:** 101. Greek Civilization (Formerly offered as CLAS 101.) First semester. Three credits. A knowledge of Greek is not required. Travis

A survey of classical Greece, with emphasis on literature, thought, and influence on contemporary culture.

**Course Information:** a. This course provides students with a working knowledge of Greek civilization, and with the culture that produced it. At the end of the course, students know the principle works of literature, history, and philosophy produced in Greece from 800-350 BCE, and understand how they arose from their cultures

(of which there were several); more importantly, however, they have a sense of the cultures to which those stories were important, and the enormous diversity of those cultures.

b. Tests are short answer and essay. There are two short papers on art and literature, as well. Readings are from primary sources in Greek.

c. The course proceeds through the texts of the Homeric "Iliad" to Herodotus' history, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the history of Thucydides, Aristophanic comedy, and Plato's philosophy, with lectures on the relation of these texts to one another and to the broader cultures in which they originated.

High points include Aeschylus' and Herodotus' similar takes on hubris (which does not mean arrogance!), Thucydides and Aristophanes on the breakdown of law in the wartime polity, and Plato's and the Wachowski Brothers' (auteurs of "The Matrix") different solutions to the problem of the metaphysical realm.

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed:** 2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility; The study of an ancient culture involves putting oneself in the mindset of the ancient people who needed their literature and art to understand their world. To take on another mindset, especially an ancient one, is necessarily also to broaden one's mind.

3. Acquire critical judgement; The study of classical Greek culture involves analyzing many literary texts and material artifacts to discern the ways in which they developed over time, and to perceive in that development the corresponding development of the cultures that produced them. Critical thinking is the foundation of this process.

4. Acquire moral sensitivity; To encounter the diversity of the cultures of the Ancient Mediterranean is to recognize that our own moralities are contingent upon our own cultural contexts. To recognize that contingency is necessarily to experience the claim of others to their own moral integrity, which is the foundation also of diversity.

5. Acquire awareness of their era and society; One of the hallmarks of CAMS 101 is its contextualization of ancient material in a modern framework, especially through the use of film, which is the hegemonic ideological discourse of our own age. The course has been hailed by its students for helping them appreciate the presence of classical Greek ideas, transformed, in modern culture.

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience; Nothing could be further from the truth than the prevailing wisdom that Classical culture was a culture of "dead white men." More than anything else, perhaps, the study of Greek civilization reveals the extraordinary diversity of the cultures of the ancient Greek world, by giving us a record of the imaginary struggles of those cultures with the other, the forces that were both threatening and indispensable: women, slaves, foreigners of different races.

**CA1 Criteria:** Literature and art are modes of symbolic representation.

**Role of Grad Students:** Four graduate student assistants lead discussion sections, and help in the composition and scoring of quizzes and tests, and in answering student questions and concerns.