



Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece
Professor Lowell Bowditch
Spring 2024

Site City: Athens

Language of Instruction: English

UO Credits: 4

Contact Hours: 5-8 in class per week (including site visits and excursions)

Total Hours of Student Engagement (THSE) in all course activities: 12 hours per week/120 total over ten weeks

University of Oregon: Four Credits

Gen Ed Requirements: fulfills A & L Area of Inquiry; GP Cultural Literacy

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore the construction of gender and norms of sexuality in classical antiquity, with a focus on ancient Greece. We shall consider attitudes toward the body, homo-, bi-, and heterosexuality, the household, law, politics, and religious ritual as it reflects issues of gender. Primary readings will include selections from Homer, Hesiod, Sappho, Plato, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides, Lysias, and Longus. The city of Athens provides an incredible on-site resource to discuss these literary texts in conjunction with the material archaeological evidence for issues of gender. These works evoke ancient spaces such as the Theater of Dionysus, the Parthenon, the Pnyx or ancient assembly area, as well as the visual iconography that adorns vases and other material artefacts housed in the city's museums.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Making use of both literary texts and material evidence, in museum collections and at archaeological sites, students will explore, discuss, and write about the concepts of ancient Greek gender and sexuality. The following ideas and questions will guide our inquiry as we examine the sources: In what light did the ancient Greeks regard sexual behavior? How did they define "love" and how did it manifest itself? To what extent did culturally defined gender roles determine the appropriate expression of one's sexuality? Does an essentialist view of men and women underwrite the construction of gender in these texts, both literary and material? Do the texts attempt to problematize or challenge such a view or do they in fact produce a particular "gender ideology"? In what way is the notion of gender dependent on binary oppositions: "masculine" vs. "feminine", "rational" vs. "emotional," "cerebral" vs. "sensual," etc. What is the relationship between gender and sexuality? Is the latter as much of a social construction as the former? In which respects does ancient thought on gender and sexuality differ from our current views? Finally, in what ways can we responsibly speak about classical women's subjectivity and their own sense of their place in society when we have so few documents in their own voice?

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Gain a deepened understanding of a different culture's concepts of gender and sexuality
- Develop a sense of historical specificity by studying familiar concepts in a different time period
- Understand some of the historical antecedents for contemporary cultural ideas about gender and sexuality
- Develop an appreciation for the art, literature, and archaeological sites of ancient Greece and Athens in particular
- Improve writing and discussion skills

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

This course will consist of a combination of experiential learning, lecture, and seminar discussion, with an emphasis on robust student participation for each class. Students will have questions on their readings and will be required to prepare them in advance of the day's discussion. There will be at a minimum six excursions to archaeological sites and museums over the course of the term, so that experiential learning will be a strong component of the student experience as well. Students will be responsible for writing journal entries in response to these excursions.

COURSE READINGS

Hard copy editions are listed below, but all of these works will also be made available on-line, through various websites. For secondary readings, see the course outline week-by-week for assignments.

Hesiod and Theognis, tr. D. Wender. Penguin.

Homer, *The Odyssey*, tr. Lattimore, Harper Perennial.

Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, tr. R. Fagles. Penguin.

Euripides, *The Complete Euripides: Volume 5, Medea and Other Plays* (e.g. *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Helen*), eds. Burian and Shapiro. Oxford.

Plato, *Symposium*. trans. Gill, Penguin.

Aristophanes, *The Frogs and Other Plays* [eg. *Women at the Thesmophoria*], tr. Barrett. Penguin.

Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, tr. Turner. Penguin.

Some translations of Sappho will be available as pdf documents on the Canvas course site

Readings from "Women's Life in Greece and Rome," noted as WLGR: these can be read

on-line at the following website: <https://diotima-doctafemina.org/translations/>

Secondary readings, e.g., Skinner 1998, etc. will also be available as pdf documents on Canvas

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Reading responses, journal writing, attendance, and participation: 30%

Midterm: 35% (on-line passage identifications/mini-essays and/or take-home essay)

1 Final paper or project that will make use of site-specific evidence from a museum or archaeological site (2000 word min.): 35%

HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper> (a database of Greek and Roman texts and their translations; archaeological materials; maps; encyclopedia entries for names, places, etc.)

<https://diotima-doctafemina.org> (a database on materials pertaining to women and gender in the ancient world)

<http://iam.classics.unc.edu/> (an interactive map of the ancient Mediterranean world)

COURSE OUTLINE: LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One: **Mon:** Introduction; Nature and Parameters of the Inquiry; Approaches; Sources and Evidence; Brief history of the study of gender; 19th cent. studies of “matriarc

Wed: Gender and the Cosmos;

Read: Hesiod, *Theogony*

Optional Reading: Skinner, Introduction to *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*. Available in the Module for Secondary Reading.

Week Two: **Mon:** Gender and the Greek Household. **Read:** Hesiod, *Works and Days*; Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, 6.17-10* (under the section “Private Life” at the website, WLGR)

Wed: Excursion to Mycenae (to provide archaeological background to the worldview of the ancient Mycenaean period)

Fri: the Mycenaean World: Gender and the Household.

Read: *Odyssey*, Bks. 1, 2

Week Three: **Mon:** Gender and the Household

Read: *Odyssey*, Bks. 4, 6

Excursion to the National Archaeological Museum

Wed: Goddesses vs. Mortal Women

Read: *Odyssey*, Bks. 10, 11, 12;

Fri: Gender in the Mycenaean World, conclusion

Read: *Odyssey*, Bks. 19-21, 23

Week Four: **Mon:** Archaic Age: Eros, the Bittersweet; Sappho and Alcman.

Partheneion; Public Epithalamia (marriage hymns), Lesbian Sexuality

Read: Sappho and Alcman (Canvas site and <https://diotima-doctafemina.org>)

Wed: Archaic Age: The Private Voice and Lesbian Sexuality:

Read: Sappho; J. Winkler (Canvas site)

Fri: Excursion to the Theater of Dionysus in Athens (to provide background to the ritual festival of the Great Dionysia as context for fifth-century drama)

Week Five: **Mon:** Gender Politics on the Athenian stage (Classical Period)

Read: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*; Aristotle, *Politics*, on the female role
(Canvas site)

Wed: Gender Politics on the Athenian stage

Read: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*; *Libation Bearers*;
V. Wohl or to-be-assigned (Canvas site)

Fri: Excursion to Delphi (to provide background for the opening of the *Eumenides* and the transition from systems of justice in the Archaic Age to the Classical Age)

Read: Aeschylus, *Eumenides*;

Week Six: Mon: Excursion to the Areopagus (to provide archeological background to the workings of the law in relation to gender in classical Athens)

Read: Aeschylus, *Eumenides*

Read: Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*;* Hippocrates, [“Hysteria in Virgins”] *On Virgins** (“**Medicine and Anatomy**” at the website, WLGR)

Wed: Gender and the Law in Classical Athens.

Read: “A husband’s defense”: Lysias, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*

“The Past Activities of a Courtesan”: Apollodorus, *Against Neaera*

(excerpts—both Lysias and Apollodorus in the section “**Legal Status in the Greek World**” at the website, WLGR)

Fri: no-class; consultations for midterm essay

Week Seven: Mon: Midterm

Wed: Gender, Space, and Ritual (marriage/ death):

Read: Euripides, *Alcestis*; Ioullis on Keos, “Funeral Law,”* (under the section “**Legal Status in the Greek World**” at the website, WLGR) AND Foley as secondary reading (Canvas site)

Fri: Gender, Space, and Ritual (marriage/ death):

Read: Euripides, *Helen*

Excursion to the Ancient Agora Museum (to examine material artefacts pertaining to wedding and funereal ritual)

Week Eight: Mon: Excursion to the Parthenon and the Acropolis Museum (to provide background for the Panathenaia in relation to gender and ritual in Athens); possible guest lecture

Wed: Gender, Space, and Ritual (religion): Women Alone.

Read: “The Story of Persephone:” *Homeric Hymn to Demeter** (excerpts—under the section “**Religion**” at the website, WLGR) and Aristophanes, *Women at the Thesmophoria* AND Gardner (Canvas site)

Fri: Excursion to the Pnyx (to provide archaeological background for *Women at the Thesmophoria*)

Week Nine: Mon: Gender and Philosophy: Men Alone/ the Male Body.

Read: Plato, *Symposium*

Wed: Gender and Philosophy. **Read:** *Symposium*

Read: Edmonds (Canvas site)

Fri: Excursion to National Archaeological Museum and the Museum of the Ancient Agora in Athens (to consider the depictions of pederastic sexuality in vase iconography)

Week Ten: **Mon:** Gender and Romance: The Greek Novel.
Read: Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*

Wed: Gender and Romance: **Read:** Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*.
Winkler (**Canvas site**)

Possible Excursion to the island of Lesbos

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY (for material covered in lecture and for secondary readings)

- Carson, A. 1986. *Eros the Bittersweet*. Princeton.
- Dillon, S. and S. James, eds. 2015. *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*. Hoboken.
- Foley, H. 1992. "Anodos Dramas: Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Helen*," in Hexter and Selden, eds., *Innovations of Antiquity*. New York.
- Greene, E. 1996. *Reading Sappho: Contemporary Approaches*. Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Halperin, D. 1989. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: and Other Essays on Greek Love*. New York and London.
- Pomeroy, S. 1995 [1975]. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*. New York.
- Skinner, M. 2005. *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*. Hoboken.
- Winkler, J. 1989. *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York.
- Wohl, V. 1998. *Intimate Commerce. Exchange, Gender, and Subjectivity in Greek Tragedy*. Austin.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism. You may also consult the Teaching Effectiveness Program's webpage on Academic Honesty:

<http://tep.uoregon.edu/workshops/teachertraining/learnercentered/syllabus/academicdishonesty.html>

REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

I am a student-directed employee. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see Employee Reporting Obligations on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex or gender-based violence, may seek information and resources at atsafe.uoregon.edu, respect.uoregon.edu, or investigations.uoregon.edu or contact the non-confidential Title IX office/Office of Civil Rights Compliance (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216), or call the 24-7hotline 541-346-SAFE for help. I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse. Please find more information at [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#).”