

THUCYDIDES
PLSC 329 / HUMS 263 / EP&E 372
Yale University
Fall 2022

Course Information

Time/Place: MW 2:30-3:45, WLH 210
Professor: Daniel Schillinger
Email: daniel.schillinger@yale.edu
Office: HQ 162
Office Hours: TH 1:00-2:30 and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

“War is a violent teacher,” writes Thucydides. Through his account of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, Thucydides educates his readers in the experience and fundamental problems of war. For example, what causes war? Do the causes of war reside in the necessities of “international politics?” By contrast, perhaps the causes of war are, at bottom, aspects of the human psyche such as greed, fear, honor-seeking, or vengefulness. Why, moreover, are democracies especially susceptible to demagoguery, factional conflict, corruption, and imperial expansion? In addition, who or what bears responsibility for wartime atrocities and calamities—individual leaders or soldiers, whole peoples, or war itself? Finally, having witnessed—in the pages of Thucydides, if not in our own lives—times of war and plague, what do we learn about ourselves as human beings and citizens, if anything? These are Thucydidean questions. Yet they remain vital for us. In this seminar, we will read Thucydides’ so-called *History of the Peloponnesian War* in its entirety. By immersing ourselves in Thucydides’ thought, and by working through his text in both conversation and writing, we will sharpen our capacities for textual analysis and interpretative argument. We will also engage with secondary literature on Thucydides, focusing on thinkers and critics who address ethical and political issues in the *History* and on those who examine Thucydides’ reception. In the company of Thucydides and Thucydideans, we may hope to illuminate enduring patterns of political life, even as we try to gain critical distance on our own political horizons and beliefs by studying the thought of the classical past.

Required Texts

Please purchase a copy of the text listed below—*The Landmark Thucydides*. Copies are available at the Yale University Bookstore. Should you want to buy the book online, Powell’s, Bookshop, Abe Books, and Book Depository are good options. All other readings will be posted to the course’s Canvas site or circulated via email.

- 1) Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. Edited by Robert B. Strassler. New York: Free Press, 1996.

Course Expectations and Practices

By far the most important expectation and requirement for this course is that you read the assigned texts carefully and prior to class. You should expect to read for four hours, if not longer, in preparation for each session. Read and read again! Take notes! In this course, the only way out is through—through the text with pen in hand. You should also strive to attend every session. There are no excused absences except in the event of a documented illness or emergency. Most importantly, during class, please try to discuss the texts and to engage with your classmates in a spirit of questioning, openness, and friendship. This seminar hinges on your conversation, careful study, and attention. Students who read carefully and participate enthusiastically will have every chance of success. For my part, I promise to be flexible, open, and available. Please don't hesitate to talk to me or email me about anything related to the course.

Marking Scheme

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|---|------|
| 1) Paper 1 (~7 pages, due Fri. Sep., 23) | 20 % |
| 2) Paper 2 (~7 pages, due Fri., Oct., 28) | 20 % |
| 3) Paper 3 (~7 pages, due Fri., Dec. 2) | 20 % |
| 4) Final Exam | 20 % |
| 5) Attendance and Participation | 20 % |

Essays and Assessment Criteria

Each essay that you write for this course should satisfy the following criteria:

- 1) The essay directly responds to a prompt or question.
- 2) The essay contains a clear yet appropriately complex argument.
- 3) The essay displays careful engagement with relevant texts, ideas, and questions.
- 4) The essay eschews basic errors and achieves a polished writing style.

The third criterion is most important. Even so, “A” essays will satisfy each criterion listed above by exhibiting mastery of both the texts and of the elements of the academic essay. “B” essays will fall short of mastery while attaining competence. “C” essays will satisfy these criteria to a minimal extent. “D” essays will not meet these criteria, though they will suggest some effort. “F” essays will suggest an unacceptable lack of engagement and effort. In addition, essays should be double-spaced, written in 12 pt. font, and formatted according to an accepted style of citation.

With each essay assignment, I will offer more specific advice and encourage you to involve me in your writing process, if you think that doing so would help you. I would be very glad to talk through your ideas, look at an outline, or read a draft.

Participation and “Starters”

Participation in class discussion is crucial. While participation should be consistent and energetic, it will be graded on its judiciousness and quality. I will sometimes circulate discussion questions before class meetings. Use these questions to guide your reading and to prepare to contribute to the conversation.

As a part of your participation in the course, you will be asked to initiate and guide the conversation during at least one session. You should arrive to this session with a few big questions or puzzling passages on which you would like to focus our attention. My own discussion questions can serve as models. We will establish a schedule for these “starters” during the first week of the course.

Extensions and Lateness

No extensions will be permitted in the absence of official documentation of a serious illness or an emergency submitted to me prior to the deadline. Late papers will be penalized one quarter letter grade for each day late. To be clear, a late paper that would have received an A- will receive a B+ if it is one day late, a B if it is two days late, and so on. If you anticipate that you will find it difficult to complete an assignment on time, please talk to me as soon as possible.

Honor System and Academic Integrity

I am serious about promoting academic integrity in this course; any kind of unauthorized assistance will not be tolerated. Please consult the definition of academic integrity in the Yale University Student Handbook. Of course, if you have questions about academic integrity, please ask me.

Accessibility and Religious Observance

I am committed to accessible and inclusive learning. Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact me as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams. If you will need accommodation for religious observance, please also notify me right away.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1

Wed., Aug. 31: 1.1-23

Fri., Sep. 2: 1.24-88

Week 2

Mon., Sep. 5: NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

Wed., Sep. 7: 1.89-145

Week 3

Mon., Sep. 12: 2.1-46

Wed., Sep. 14: NO CLASS (CONFERENCE IN MONTREAL)

Week 4

Mon. Sep. 19: 2.47-65

Wed., Sep. 21: 2.66-103

Week 5

Mon., Sep. 26: 3.1-49

Wed., Sep. 28: 3.50-85

Week 6

Mon., Oct. 3: 3.86-4.42

Wed., Oct. 5: 4.42-97

Week 7

Mon., Oct. 10: 4.98-5.24

Wed., Oct. 12: 5.25-84

Week 8

Mon., Oct. 17: 5.85-111

Wed., Oct. 19: NO CLASS (OCTOBER RECESS)

Week 9

Mon., Oct. 24: 6.1-32

Wed., Oct. 26: 6.33-71

Week 10

Mon., Oct. 31: 6.72-7.6

Wed., Nov. 2: 7.7-55

Week 11

Mon., Nov. 7: 7.56-87

Wed., Nov. 9: 8.1-47

Week 12

Mon., Nov. 14: 8.48-108

Wed., Nov. 16: Euripides, *Trojan Women*

Week 13

Mon., Nov. 28: Nietzsche on Thucydides

Wed., Nov. 30: Hobbes on Thucydides

Week 14

Mon., Dec. 5: Contemporary Thucydideans

Wed., Dec. 7: More contemporary Thucydideans; review for final exam