

CLST214: Dictators, Demagogues, and Decline

Course Description:

The last two hundred years of western tradition might suggest that democracy is a natural state of affairs and that people inevitably find their way to freedom. The classical world demonstrates the fallacy of this view: representative governments like that in the Roman republic and democracies like fifth-century Athens are exceedingly rare and very fragile exceptions to the norm. The writers of these exceptional societies were themselves usually members of the political elite, and so necessarily grappled with the social and political dangers that beset them. CLST 214 will study the persistent depiction of social decline in these authors, assess the validity of their analyses, and consider the great influence of their ideas upon our own society. Three guest lectures in the final week of the semester will complement the more literary material with historical analyses of two modern dictators and one modern demagogue, whom you will then assess in light of their classical precedents.

Course Goals:

In this course you will:

- Examine the perceived causes for the decline of classical Athens and Sparta, of the Hellenistic empires, and of the Roman republic and empire.
- Analyze the often contradictory explanations of social and political collapse that survive in ancient authors, both those who wrote of contemporary events and those who reflected back upon the events of preceding generations with the advantage of hindsight.
- Compare the portrayal of demagogues and dictators in ancient Greek and Roman literature to modern interpretations of twentieth century history.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the American system of government in light of its classical precursors, especially those aspects of our system that may be prone to similar decline.

Course Requirements:

You will take numerous short quizzes in this class, which will collectively be worth 20% of your grade. Quizzes will be quite short, typically about five minutes long, and easy. They are intended merely to check your preparation. You will be given several study questions at the end of each session that will guide your reading outside of class and furnish topics of discussion in the subsequent class. The quizzes will always be drawn from these questions. If you prepare and attend regularly you should receive full credit.

There will be a midterm and final, each worth 25%. They will be more rigorous and will test your ability to synthesize different ideas. Both will be cumulative. The questions in them will

include simple identification, short answers, and an essay. The midterm will require an entire class period to complete. The final will last two and one half hours.

You will also write a six page paper, worth 20% of your grade, that compares an aspect of American society or government to its precursors as described in ancient authors. The topics will be assigned, but you will be free to develop the paper in whatever direction interests you.

The five paper topics are:

- Compare the American legislature to the Roman senate
- Compare American democracy to that in fifth century Athens
- Compare American jury trials to classical Athenian courts
- Compare the American presidency to the Roman consulate
- Compare the American army to that of Sparta

In each case, you should not only describe the similarities and differences between the American institution and the classical precursor, but also evaluate them. Do you think our system is better or worse? Why so? Is our system more stable?

The several people who write a paper on each topic will collectively present a ten minute report to the rest of the class on their findings. The reports should briefly describe the similarities and differences you found and point out areas of disagreement within your group. There will also be a few minutes of discussion after each presentation. This presentation is considered part of your class participation, which represents the remaining 10% of your final grade.

PLEASE NOTE: Many of the materials for this course are primary sources, the actual speeches, biography, philosophy, and historiography of the ancient Greeks and Romans. This material can be difficult at times. I urge you to read carefully, taking notes while you read and always keeping in mind the study questions, which will guide your reading. There is far too much material to review in its original form for the exams, so thoughtful notes are essential to your performance in this class.

Class attendance is fundamental to student learning and motivation and it indicates that individuals are taking their studies seriously. The MCLL department therefore has a uniform attendance policy: with the exception of extracurricular activities, religious observances, serious illness, or other documented reasons, your final grade will be lowered one full letter grade for every four unexcused absences. Excused absences must be supported with written documentation from a physician, officer of the court, law enforcement official, or other appropriate authority. In case of absence, you are responsible for any work missed. Two late arrivals of 10 minutes or more to class will also count as an absence.

Your faculty and administration wants you to succeed at CNU. I may therefore notify the Academic Advising Center if you seem to be having problems with this course. Someone may contact you to help you to determine what help you need to succeed. You will be sent a copy of

the referral form. Do not hesitate to contact me at any time for assistance.

Ethics:

Plagiarism is the theft of someone else's writing or ideas. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing ideas without crediting your source, submitting work that has been copied or purchased from another student or some other source as your own, permitting someone else to revise or edit a paper to the extent that it is no longer your own work, and copying wording or ideas from the internet without crediting the internet source. Plagiarism is a very serious violation of the CNU Honor Code and may result in penalties that can include rewriting the entire assignment, being assigned an alternative assignment, getting a zero on the plagiarized assignment or getting an F for the course. In addition to these penalties, the instructor has the right to place a note in the student's university file, which could result in an honors council sanction such as suspension or expulsion from CNU. I expect that you will uphold the CNU Honor Code in all work submitted for this course.

Under the Honor Code of Christopher Newport University all members of the University community are expected to demonstrate honesty and integrity in their conduct. Lying, stealing or cheating are violations of the Code that will result in sanctioning. All work submitted in this course for a grade is subject to the CNU Honor Code. I encourage you to work together outside of class, and in particular to study together for the oral presentations, quizzes, and exams, but the papers, quizzes, and exams that you hand in must be entirely your own work.

Texts:

Andrewes, A. 1956. *The Greek Tyrants*. London.

Connor, W. R. 1971. *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*. Reprinted in 1992. Indianapolis.

Graves, M. 1957. *Suetonius: The Twelve Caesars*. Revised in 1997 by M. Grant. London.

Rhodes, P. J. 1984. *Aristotle: The Athenian Constitution*. London.

Rostovtzeff, M. 1963. *A History of the Ancient World: Greece*. New York.

—. 1963. *A History of the Ancient World: Rome*. New York.

Scott-Kilvert, I. 1960. *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives by Plutarch*. London.

—. 1973. *Plutarch: The Age of Alexander*. London

Online Readings:

One of the advantages to studying classical culture is that much of our evidence is available in fairly accurate translations for free online. I will place links to many of the readings online for your use outside of class. You need not print out these readings for use in class so long as you take careful notes on your reading assignments while you study.

Course Calendar:

Week 1: Course Introduction and Historical Background

Rostovtzeff, "Athens and Attica from 800 to 600 B.C.," *Greece*:81–98; Andrewes, "The Background of Tyranny," 7–19; Thucydides 1.1–1.23 (online); Rhodes, "The Athenian Constitution," 37–114

Part 1: Greece

Week 2: The Greek Tyrants

Andrewes, "The Word Tyrant," 20–30, "The Economic Factor: Solon of Athens," 78–91, and "Peisistratus and the Consolidation of Attica," 100–115; Herodotus 3.80–82, 5.91–92 (online); Solon frags. 2 & 3 (Campbell)

Week 3: The Persian Threat

Rostovtzeff, "The Persian Wars," *Greece*:121–135; Andrewes, "The Threat of Persian Conquest," 116–127; Plutarch *Themistocles* and *Aristeides*

Week 4: Democracy and Empire at Athens

Rostovtzeff, "The Athenian Empire," *Greece*:136–159; Connor; Thucydides' Melian debate: 5.84–111 (online); Plutarch *Pericles*

Week 5: "Equality" and Empire at Sparta; First Exam

Andrewes, "The Spartan Alternative to Tyranny," 66–77; Plutarch *Lycurgus* (online)

Part 2: The Hellenistic Empires

Week 6: Greek Demagogy; Second Exam

Rostovtzeff, "Greece in the Fourth Century B.C.," *Greece*:203–215; Connor; Plutarch *Alcibiades*

Week 7: Philip of Macedon and the Greek Resistance

Rostovtzeff, "Macedonia and her Struggle with Persia," *Greece*:216–228; Plutarch *Demosthenes*

Week 8: Alexander the Great

Rostovtzeff, "The World-Monarchy of Alexander the Great," *Greece*:242–257; Arrian *Anabasis*; Plutarch *Alexander*

Week 9: The Hellenistic Dynasts

Rostovtzeff, "The Greek World after Alexander: Politics, Society, and Economics," *Greece*:258–277; Plutarch *Demetrius*

Part 3: Rome

Week 10: Early Rome: Noble Example or Myth?

Rostovtzeff, "The Gracchi, and the the Beginning of Political and Social Revolution at Rome," *Rome*:95–104; Plutarch *Pyrrhus*

Week 11: Prelude to Dictatorship: The Collapse of the Late Republic

Rostovtzeff, "Beginning of Civil War; The Allies; Marius and Sulla; Pompey and Caesar; The Dictatorship of Caesar; Antony and Octavian," *Rome*:105–145; Plutarch *Marius* (online)

Week 12: Establishing a Dictatorship: Augustus and the Foundation of Empire

Rostovtzeff, "The Principate of Augustus," *Rome*:162–182; Suetonius *Augustus*

Week 13: Living (or not) with a Dictator: The High Empire

Rostovtzeff, "The Age of Enlightened Despotism: The Flavians and Antonines," 205–214, Tacitus *Annals* 1.1–1.15 and 15.48–74 (online); Suetonius *Caligula*

Week 14: Dictators and Demagogues in the 20th Century

Lectures on Mussolini, Hitler, and Huey Long by Drs. Brian Puaca, Andrew Falk, et al.

Final Exam: XXX–XXX on XXX