

Welcome to Society and Spectacle in Ancient Greek and Rome



Introductory Class Outline:

- 1) Preliminary course details
- 2) Objectives
- 3) Survey of Topics

Course Description:

From the political machinations of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus to the mysterious death of the Roman empress Agrippina; from the legendarily strange customs of Spartan men and women to the bloody gladiator and gladiatrix in the Roman arena, Classical culture provides a bounty of stories that continue to engage, surprise, and influence the modern world. In this course, we navigate the changing spaces for women and men to see and be seen as spectacles in antiquity. Specific topics include ancient combat, political intrigue, and the gendering of public and private entertainment.

Instructor / class details

Instructor: Tyson Sukava

**Office Hours: Mondays, 10.30-12.30; Thursdays, 11.00-12.00,
or by appointment)**

Office: 112 Jastak-Burgess Hall (by “Little Bob”)

Slot: T/Th 3.30-4.45

Room: 148 McDowell Hall

Email: sukava@udel.edu

Required Texts

Edwards, Catherine (trans.). 2008. *Suetonius: Lives of the Caesars*. Oxford University Press.

Freeman, Charles. 2014. *Egypt, Greece, & Rome: Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Waterfield, Robin (trans.). 2008. *Plutarch: Greek Lives*. Oxford University Press.

Evaluation

Midterm Exam: Friday, October 17

Essay Proposal: Monday, October 27

Essay: Monday, November 24

Final Exam: TBA (Dec. exam period)

Other syllabus business:

- .Take special note of the policies regarding late assignments, plagiarism, and harassment

- .E-mail is an extremely effective tool for communication. Contact your instructor as soon as difficulties or questions arise.

Course Objectives:

- 1) To better understand broad concepts of “spectacle” in Greek and Roman antiquity.
- 2) To relate instances of spectacle in antiquity to those today.
- 3) To consider the larger significance of “spectacles” upon a society through comparison with the “Other”.

This is not a History course:

- .Although historical events influence some social practices, they remain separate.
- .Not as much emphasis on specific dates.
- .Focus instead is on cultural practices and important historical figures who institute, reflect, or contrast them.

What is this Class, then?

- The concepts of “society” and “spectacle” intersect at important points
 - Society: an aggregate group of people living in (a) more or less the same place; and (b) more or less the same way
 - Spectacle: a visually striking event or display

Donald Kyle (Classicist and Sports Scholar)

“Societies need sport but empires need spectacle.”



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“Societies need sport but empires need spectacle.”



Often, spectacles can be performed by those in power (or hope to be), but the aim is similarly to affect society somehow.



Presidential Debate between Al Gore and George Bush, Jr.

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Canadian Prime minister Justin Trudeau with a Unicorn

More broadly, spectacles can also be events (good or bad) that capture a society's attention, from the absurd to the very serious.



Investigation into what a society (or a subgroup) finds “spectacular” can tell us much about its values and organization.

Scope and Methodology

Geography



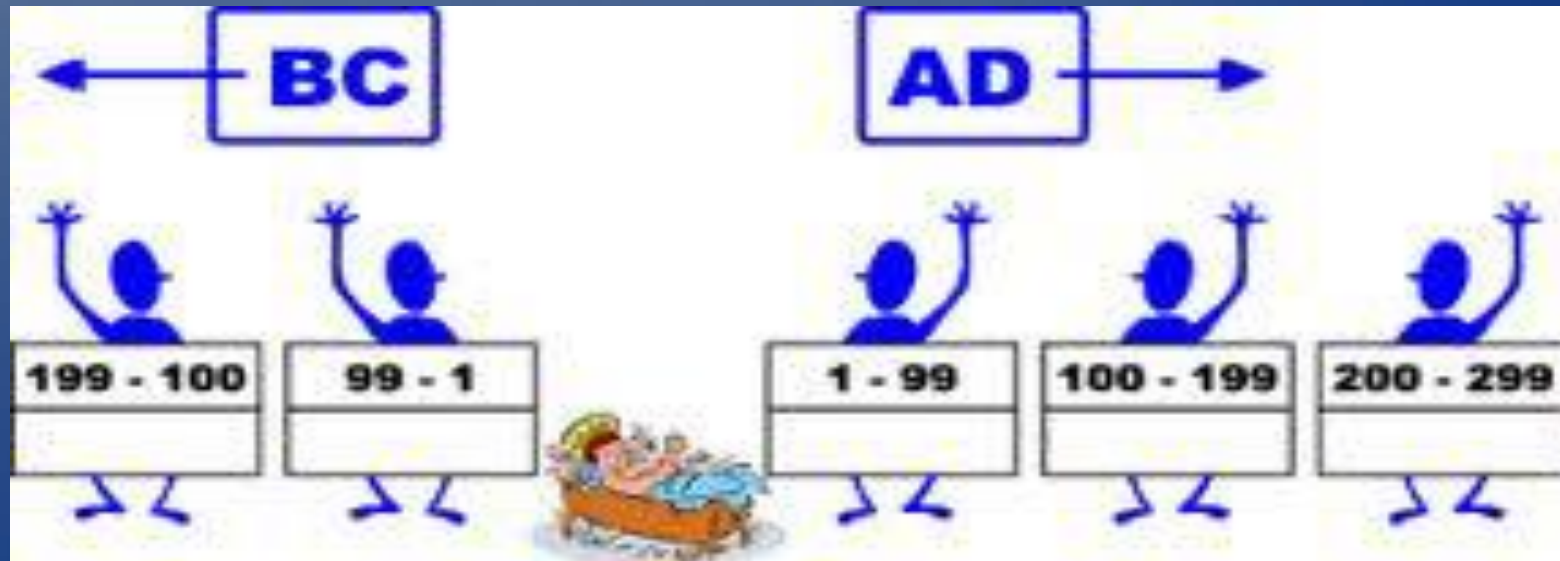
Chronology

How do we measure time?

B.C. and A.D. (old dating system)

B.C. = Before Christ

A.D. = Anno Domini ('In the year of the Lord')



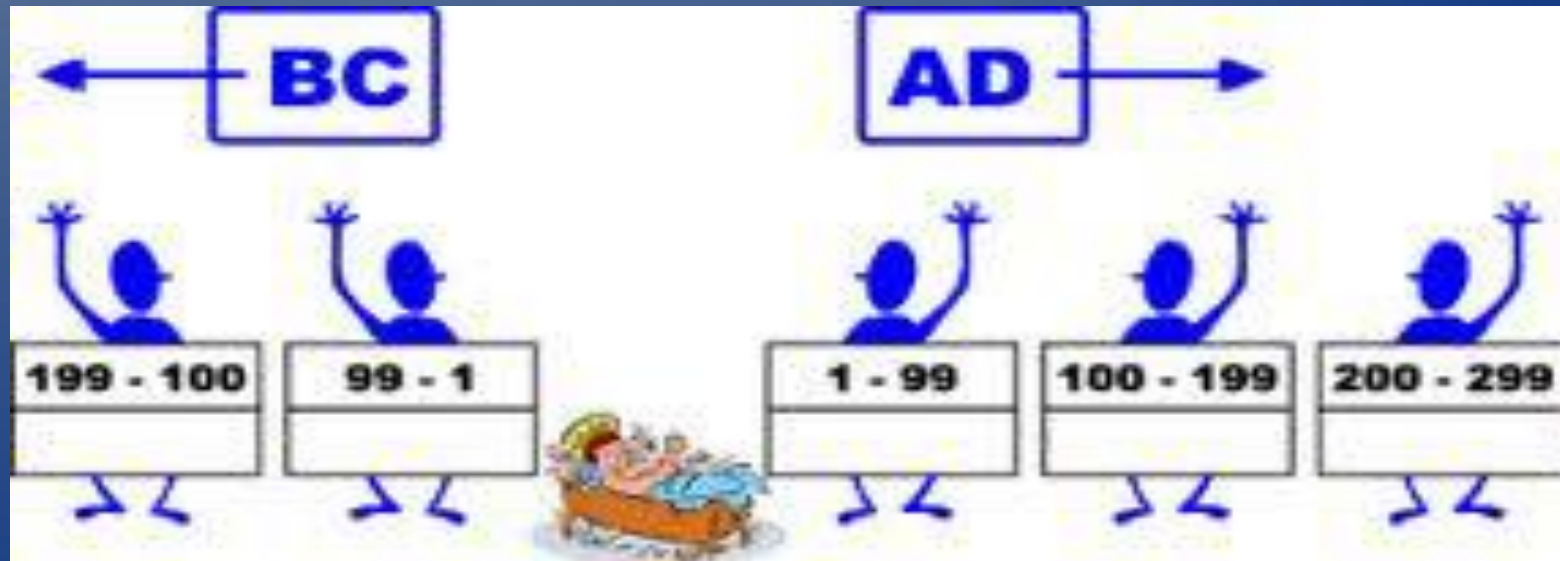
Chronology

How do we measure time?

B.C.E. and C.E. (newer dating system)

B.C.E. = Before the Common Era

C.E. = Common Era



Evidence

Three main types of evidence

1) Archaeological

Site of Olympia



Evidence

Three main types of evidence

1) Archaeological

Site of Olympia



Evidence

Three main types of evidence

1) Archaeological

Iconography

Evidence

Three main types of evidence

2) Epigraphical (Inscriptions)

Dedication Plaque

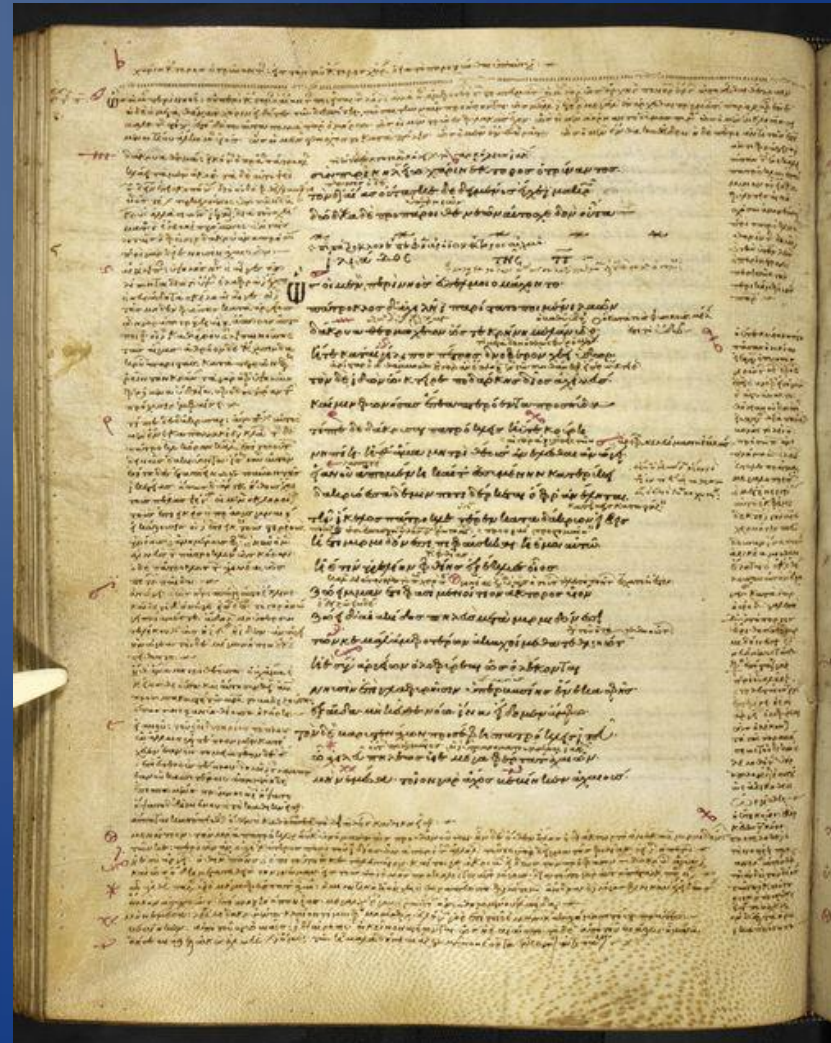
Amphitheatre of
Pompeii



Evidence

Three main types of evidence

3) Literary



Evidence

Three main types of evidence

3) Literary

Papyrus Scroll



Evidence

Three main types of evidence

3) Literary



Evidence

Strengths and Weaknesses to Each

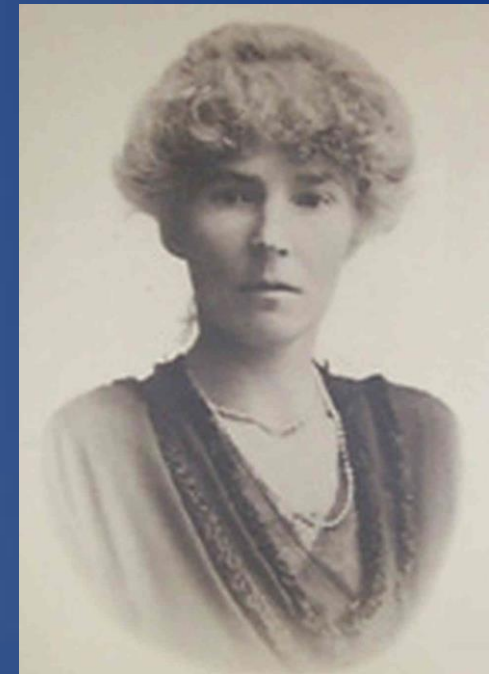
1) Archaeology

2) Epigraphy

3) Literary



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Which one is the most trustworthy? Why?

Evidence

Our entire understanding of the ancient world (including “spectacles”) is based on the evaluation – and reevaluation – of the best evidence available.

What times are we collecting our
evidence from?

The Greek World:

Minoan Age *circa* 2000-1400 BCE

Mycenaean Age *circa* 1600-1100 BCE

Dark Age *circa* 1100-750 BCE

Archaic Age 750-480 BCE

Classical Age 480-323 BCE

Hellenistic Age 323-33 BCE

The Greek World:

Minoan Age *circa* 2000-1400 BCE

Mycenaean Age *circa* 1600-1100 BCE

Dark Age *circa* 1100-750 BCE

Archaic Age 750-480 BCE

Classical Age 480-323 BCE

Hellenistic Age 323-33 BCE

The Roman World:

Republican Period: 509 BCE – 27 BCE

Imperial Period: 27 BCE – 284 CE

Definition of Sports:

A 'spectacle' to the Mycenaeans might not be the same as a 'spectacle' to the Classical Greeks (or the Romans)

We must be wary about mapping our own concepts upon the ancient world.

But in order to *study* ancient 'sports' we need to come up with a definition.

Definition of Sports:

Sport vs. Spectacle (Oxford Dictionary):

Sport: an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment

Spectacle: a visually striking performance or display

Scope:



Athenian Acropolis (reconstruction)

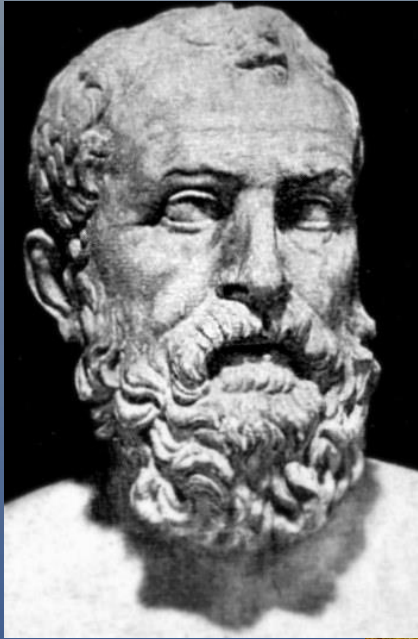
Scope:



Imperial Roman Forum (reconstruction)

Selection of Topics:

The Spectacle of Power

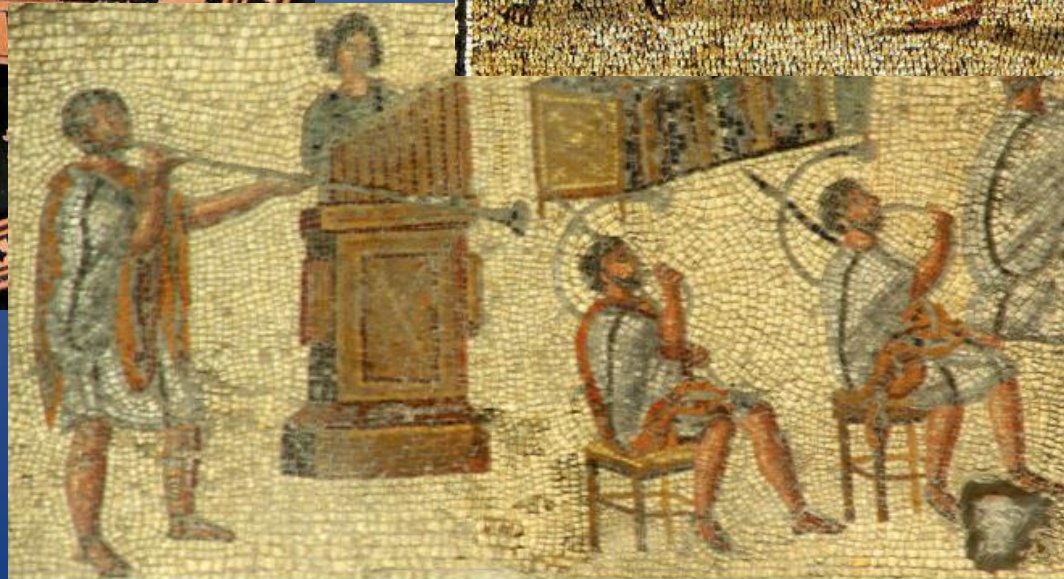
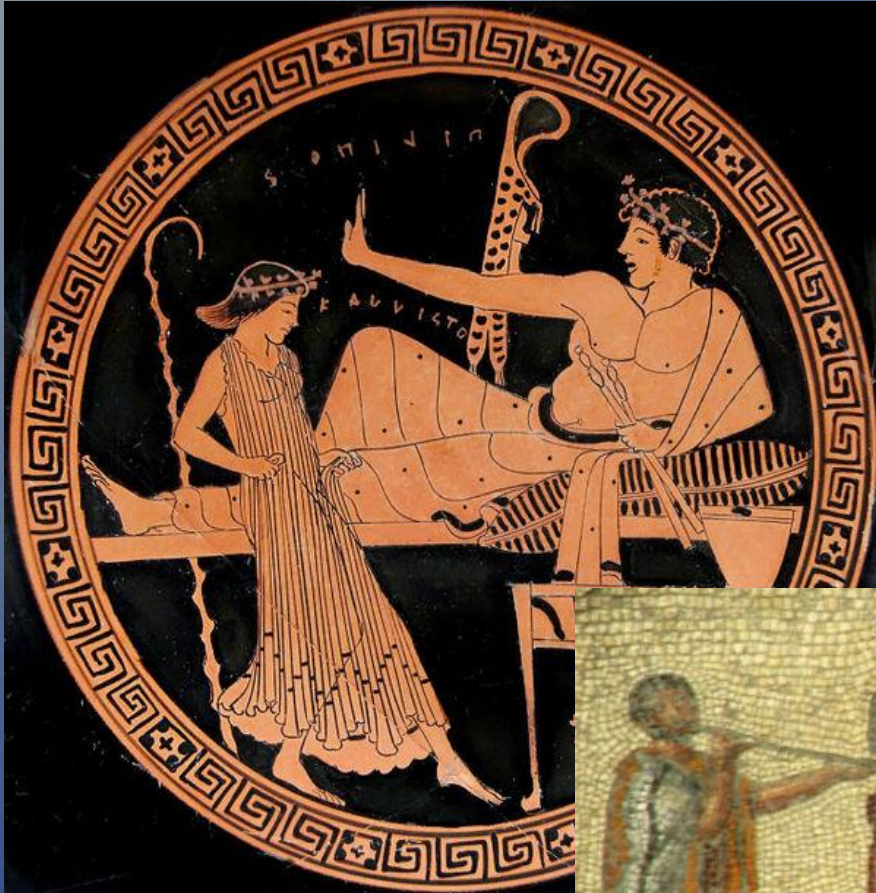


Selection of Topics:

Domestic life: plenty is written about famous Greeks and Romans, but what of the everyday person?



Selection of Topics: What made people happy?

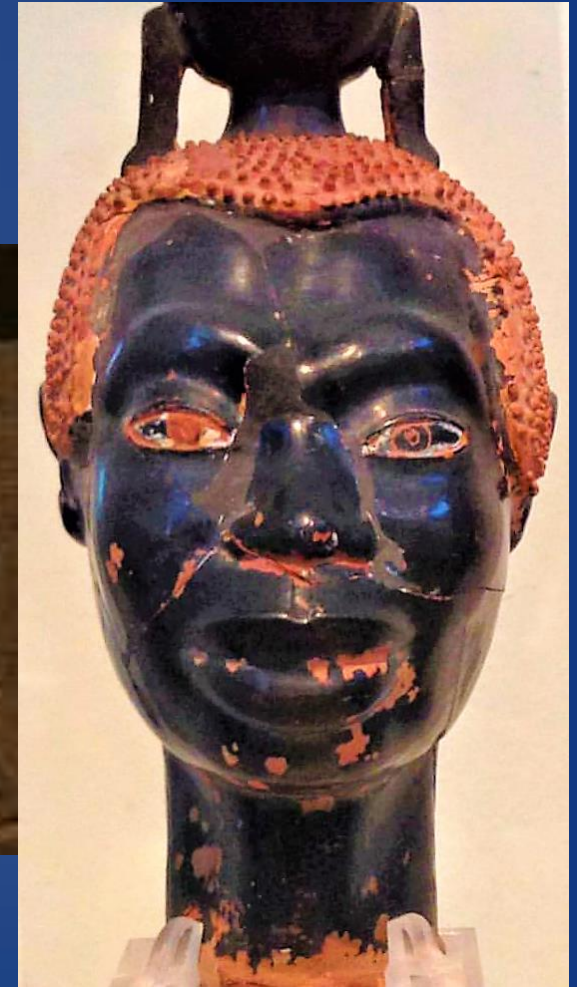


Selection of Topics:

How and why did they fight?

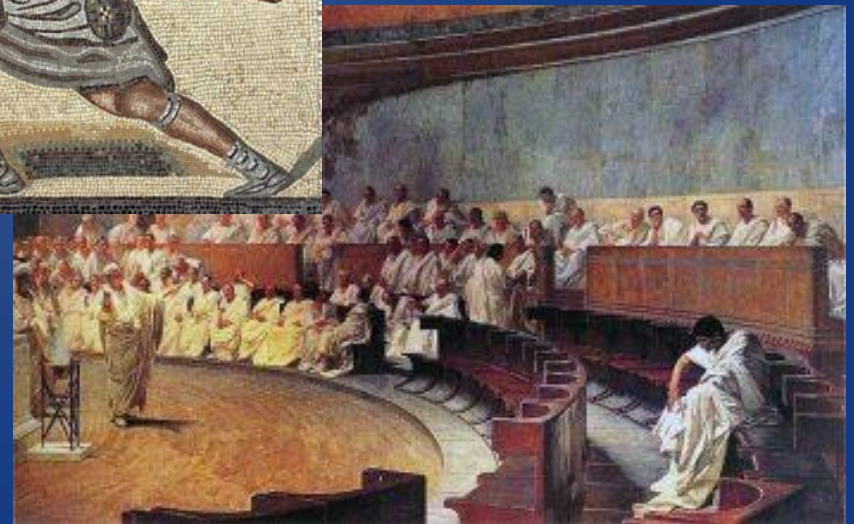


Selection of Topics: The Spectacle of the “Other”



Selection of Topics:

Were Greek and Roman Spectacles Unique?



Selection of Topics:

What is the “Classical” legacy? Is it authentic?



Thursday's Reading:

Freeman, *Egypt, Greece, and Rome*
128-143