

UC BERKELEY

HISTORY 105A

Archaic and Classical Greek History

Andrew Gleeson

Professor:
Randall SOUZA

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1 Introduction

These are notes that I have compiled from my experience in History 105A at UC Berkeley with Prof. Randall Souza, which I took during the fall semester of 2016. Information and structure is primarily taken from lecture slides, and is augmented by readings both assigned and personal.

The study of ancient Greek history is important because of the impact Greek thought had on Western civilization. Many of our modern political ideas derive in some form from Greek politics. Specifically, both democracy and communism had their first realization in the city-states of Athens and Sparta. Science and philosophy can trace its roots back to the work of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato, who were among the first to attempt to rationalize the world in which we live.

By studying ancient Greek history, we can better understand the context and society in which these ideas originated, and therefore are better equipped to think about the modern world.

2 Background

For most of early Greek history, there was no context of "Greece" as a political or cultural entity. Therefore, it is useful to keep the wider context of the Mediterranean in mind while examining the development of Greek civilization.

Ancient Greek history is typically divided into five periods:

1. The Bronze Age, lasting from roughly 3000 to 1200 BCE, in which the Aegean was dominated by Minoan civilization.
2. The Iron Age, lasting from 1200 to c. 800 BCE, in which the Greeks slowly recovered from the power vacuum left by the fall of the Minoans.
3. The Archaic Period, lasting from c. 800 to 479 BCE, in which the Greeks began to formulate a sense of "Greekness", culminating with the emergence of Greece as a more-or-less unified power after defeating a Persian invasion in the Greco-Persian War.
4. The Classical Period, lasting from 479 to 323 BCE, in which the Greeks entered a golden age, ending in the rise and fall of Alexander the Great.
5. The Hellenistic Period, lasting from 323 to 31 BCE, in which Greece slowly declined in influence until being subsumed into the Roman Empire.

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