Course Description
It is hard to overstate the influence of Thucydides. He is the earliest author whose text substantially survives to theorise the writing of history. He describes his methods and the reasons for adopting them, and he also structures his work so as explicitly to address historical causation. Thucydides’ primary concern was not simply to preserve a record of events, but to come to understand the forces at work in bringing to pass what he argued to be the greatest war fought in the Greek world down to his own day.

Thucydides’ analysis of internal politics and of the relations between states has proved foundational, not simply for all subsequent attempts to understand the dynamics of individual cities and their interrelations within the Greek world, but for understandings of politics and international relations across time and space. His decisions about what was and what was not relevant as an explanatory framework have had a massive impact. His exploration of the inter-relationship between word and deed has come to dominate our understanding both of Athenian democracy and of how politics in general works.

This course will look closely at Thucydides’ whole history, trying to understand why he included and excluded what he included and excluded, and exploring the interpretation embedded in the structure of his work. It will look closely at Thucydides’ understanding of what brings success or failure in war, and what the effects of war are. It will explore his treatment of internal political dynamics, both in his treatment of individual political occasions (e.g. meetings of the assembly in Athens and elsewhere) and in his discussion of civil strife, both in Corcyra and in Athens. It will ask what role Thucydides allows to the supernatural, and how the influence of the gods is manifested.

The course will also look at Thucydides’ influence, both on the writing of history and on understandings of international relations.

Those taking the course are expected to read Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* in translation (the most helpful edition is probably the Landmark edition, with the translation by Crawley). Close study of the following passages will be expected: 1.1–23, 79–88; 2.13–17, 34–54; 3.35–50, 70–85; 5.26, 84–116, 6.1–40, 53–60; 8.47–77.

Preliminary Reading

Mode of teaching
8 lectures; 8 2-hour classes.
The teaching will be organised around 8 topics that are first explored in lectures and then discussed in 2-hour follow-up classes.

The 8 topics will be:
1. Thucydides the writer and the writing of history: aims, claims, the plague and literary practice
2. Thucydides and historical causation: the archaeology, the causes of war in 431 and the causes of the Sicilian expedition.
3. Thucydides and war: strategy, tactics, experience and the role of the leader.
4. Thucydides and civil strife: Corcyra and the 400 at Athens
5. Thucydides as political theorist: Pericles’ funeral speech and the analysis of democracy
Thucydides and rhetoric: paired speeches and political persuasion
Thucydides and international relations: Mytilene, Plataia, Melos: treaties and ethics
Thucydides and religion: curses, oracles and purification.

Supervisions will be centrally organised.

Maximum supervision capacity:
20

Reading list:
This reading list is for reference purposes. Further advice will be given as to the major landmarks within this field of scholarship.

Thucydides general

Thucydides the writer
Rhodes, P.J. 1998b. “‘Epidamnus is a City’: On Not Overinterpreting Thucydides”, Histos 2.

Thucydides’ theory of history
Thucydides and war

Thucydides and political theory
Thucydides and international relations

**Thucydides and religion**