

## DRINKING (AND) CULTURE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

This course asks students to examine the role that drinking (both proper and improper drinking) plays in the ancient Greek world and use this to reflect on the modern world. Students will be encouraged to make connections to the modern world throughout, but the course will conclude with a unit that explicitly invites this. The course will lay the groundwork with an examination of the myths and worship of Dionysus, as the god of wine, and will then move into the literary and material evidence of what took place at symposia, including the games and poetry that were involved. Then we will move into literary depictions of symposia and contrast three very different accounts (Plato, Xenophon, and Lucian), beginning with Xenophon and then using him as a sort of baseline to look at Plato's additions and Lucian's parodic account. We will also compare these literary accounts to the image of symposia that lyric poetry, vase paintings, and other testimonia convey. Finally, we will conclude with a more explicit comparison of ancient and modern attitudes toward drinking (and the proper way to drink and be drunk).

Primary texts: Plato's *Symposium*, Xenophon's *Symposium*, Euripides' *Bacchae*, something by Aristophanes' *Wasps*, Euripides' *Cyclops* (depending on length of course), Lucian's *Symposium*, selection of lyric poetry (Theognidea, Archilochus, Alcaeus, Ibycus, Anacreon) and skolia. Other articles will be available online or in PDF scan form.

Writing Assignments: each unit will feature one substantive writing assignment as well as several smaller weekly written reflections.

### Unit 1: Who is Dionysus?

#### Part 1: Dionysus in literature, part 1

Lectures on myths about Dionysus, covering content from Homer, Homeric Hymns, Pseudo-Apollodorus, and Orphic hymns/myth. Major themes will include depictions of the invention of wine, stories of the wrath of Dionysus, and stories of his role in mystery cults.

#### Part 3: Dionysus in literature, part 2

Focus on the comic Dionysus and maybe also satyr plays. Lectures will cover the *Frogs* as well.

#### Part 3: Dionysus in practice

Lectures will include Dionysia, Dionysiac mysteries, evidence for cult worship and will draw on material culture (depictions of Dionysus and satyrs on vases).

Primary Readings:

- *Bacchae*
- *Wasps*
- *Cyclops*

Secondary Readings:

- Bowie, A.M. 1997. "Thinking with Drinking: Wine and the Symposium in Aristophanes," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*. 117: 1-21.

- Selection from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* on the Apollonian and Dionysian
- Selection from *Masks of Dionysus* (eds. Carpenter and Faraone)

*Themes: the benevolent and vindictive natures of Dionysus and what that means for an understanding of Greek perspectives (on theater, on intoxication, etc.). Why is Dionysus the god of these disparate things?*

**Writing assignment: short reflective essay on what myths about Dionysus can tell us about actual attitudes toward intoxication. Students are encouraged to think about modern parallels (what do modern fairy tales or folk tales or mythohistorical stories reflect about our actual societal values?). (1000 words)**

## Unit 2: What is a symposium?

*Lectures on what is known about the symposium, discussion of who participated in symposia and what kinds of things took place at actual symposia (as best we can tell). Lectures will also include sources complaining about excessively drunk/rowdy behavior. Material culture (particularly cups and things designed for a sympotic context)*

Primary Readings:

- Selection of lyric poetry, skolia, and popular songs
- *Protagoras* 347c-e

Secondary readings:

- Selections from *Symptica* (ed. Murray)
- Bowie, E. 1993. "Greek Table-Talk before Plato," *Rhetorica*. II: 355-371
- Selections from Collins, D. 2004. *Master of the Game: Competition and Performance in Greek Poetry*. Cambridge, MA.
- Yatromanolakis, D. 2009. "Ancient Greek popular song." In F. Budelmann (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*. Cambridge.

*Themes: How is our image of actual symposia shaped by our sources? What differences do we see between literary and archaeological sources?*

**Writing Assignment: Working from our primary readings, construct a "code" for gentlemanly behavior at a symposium that accounts for the disparate sources and opinions. You may use the secondary readings, but do not accept their findings uncritically. Your arguments must be anchored in the primary texts. (1500-2000 words)**

## Unit 3: Literary Symposia

### Part 1: Xenophon's *Symposium*

Primary Reading: Xenophon's *Symposium*

### Part 2: Plato's *Symposium*

Primary Reading: Plato's *Symposium*

Secondary reading: Introduction to Dover's *Symposium* (Dover, K. (ed.) with Introduction and Commentary, 1980. *Plato: Symposium*. Cambridge.)

### **Part 3: Lucian's *Symposium***

Primary Reading: Lucian's *Symposium*

Secondary Reading: Relihan, J. and the Members of the Greek Seminar 420. 1992. "Rethinking the History of the Literary Symposium." *Illinois Classical Studies* 17(2): 213-244.

Themes: comparing and contrasting the different works and thinking about what we can tell about Greek attitudes and also drawing connections with modern attitudes toward drinking.

***Writing assignment: Reimagine one of the *Symposium* texts we read in a modern context. What would any of the three versions look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if the goal is to stay true to what you see as the heart/spirit of those texts? (1500 words)***

### **Unit 4: Symposia Then and Now**

*Expanding on the reception/application aspects of Unit 3, this section will bring some more modern examples of drinking culture into the picture and specifically ask students to compare these ancient perspectives with more modern ones.*

*Potential current parallels will depend on the students, but might include fraternity culture, drinking songs/games, and more "sophisticated" versions of these (wine tasting, microbrew enthusiasts), as well as toasts and prominent images of drinking in pop culture.*

### **Part 1: "Nunc est bibendum": Horace and the Romans**

Lectures will cover Bacchanalia and the figure of Bacchus more broadly.

Primary readings will include selections from this list:

- Horace *Odes* 1.11, 1.18, 1.37, 2.19, 3.8, 3.19, 3.21, 3.25, 3.28, 3.29
- Propertius 1.3, 2.15, 2.33, 3.8, 4.6
- Tibullus 1.2, 2.1
- *Cena Trimalchionis*
- Bacchus and Silenus in Roman art
- Cicero's *Second Philippic* (2.104-106)
- Seneca *Ep.* 51, 59, 83
- Juvenal 6

### **Part 2: "Rouze Anacreon from the dead; / And return him drunk to bed": Renaissance and Early Modern Symposia**

Selection from Jeanneret, M. 1991. *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes (trans.). Chicago.

Scodel, J. 2002. "Drinking and the Politics of Poetic Identity from Jonson to Herrick" in *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature*. Princeton.

A selection of primary readings from drinking songs and toasts

**Part 3: Tailgates, Frat Parties, and Microbrews: How we moderns drink**

Student presentations will structure this section in large part.

Selections from *Drinking with Men* (Schaap 2013) contrasted with "Giving up alcohol opened my eyes to the infuriating truth about why women drink" (Coulter 2016)

Drinking songs from a selection of colleges and drinking games (including an excerpt from the movie *Beerfest*)

**Writing assignment: students will take their chosen presentation topic and develop it into a final paper which situates a modern example of drinking culture within the historical framework we have established in class. (2000-2500 words)**