

HERTOG 2021 SUMMER COURSES

THUCYDIDES & TODAY'S CHALLENGES

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More than two thousand years ago, Thucydides described with great lucidity the strategic challenges facing a maritime great power, Athens – and they are remarkably relevant to today's US security dilemmas and strategic choices. Led by Professor Jakub Grygiel, this course will focus on Thucydides' masterpiece, *The Peloponnesian War*, and examine a series of strategic challenges and responses to them. Fellows will read extended excerpts from Thucydides, focusing on key speeches and moments in the conflict. The course requires careful reading of the text but is not a history class. Rather, by placing themselves in the position of the Thucydidean characters, students will discuss recurrent principles of strategy and the dilemmas facing leaders.

This seminar will meet online weekly on **Thursdays** from **1 PM** to **3 PM ET** on the following dates: June 17, 24, July 1, & on **Wednesday**, July 7

Course Materials:

- *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Strassler (Free Press, 2008)

Discussion Papers: Each fellow will be responsible for completing a brief discussion paper (1-2 pages, single spaced). See below for your assignment. **Papers are due the day before your assigned session by 5 PM ET.** They should be posted on the course Slack channel and will be part of the assigned readings for the session. Paper-writers should be ready to briefly present their ideas during the seminar.

Resources:

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Thursday, June 17, 2021

1 PM – 3 PM ET

Session I: How to Assess the Enemy; The Role of Alliances

Readings:

- Thucydides, Book 1.1–1.146 (pp. 3–85)

Discussion Questions:

1. Great power rivalries inevitably lead to war. Is Thucydides correct?
2. Great powers fear “entrapment” (being dragged into small and peripheral wars by their allies) while their allies fear “abandonment” (being left alone by their distant security patron). How can these fears be mitigated? Do they reflect the reality of international politics?
 - Question A: Why should the Athenians vote in favor of Corcyra?
 - Question B: Why should the Athenians vote in favor of Corinth? What is the importance of allies for the U.S.?

Thursday, June 24, 2021

1 PM – 3 PM ET

Session II: Land Power vs. Sea Power

Readings:

- Thucydides, Book 2.1–2.103 (pp. 89–156)

Discussion Questions:

1. The Peloponnesian War was a conflict between a sea power (Athens) and a land power (Sparta).
 - Question A: Argue for a “seapower advantage” using Athens.
 - Question B: Argue for a “landpower advantage” using Sparta.
2. Archidamus and Pericles formulated their own strategies to deal with each other.
 - Question A: Argue for the superiority of Archidamus’s strategy.
 - Question B: Argue for the superiority of the Periclean strategy.
3. What strategy should the U.S. pursue against its continental rivals (China, Iran, Russia)?

Thursday, July 1, 2021

1 PM – 3 PM ET

Session III: The Role of Domestic Cohesion & The Rise of Demagogues

Readings:

- Thucydides, Book 3.1–3.86 (pp. 159–202)
- Thucydides, Book 5.84–5.116 (pp. 350–57)

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you deter rebellions? If so, how?
 - Question A: Cleon is right: firmness awes opponents.
 - Question B: Diodotus is right: deterrence is difficult, perhaps impossible.
2. Justice and power are often in tension. What is justice? What is power?
 - Question A: You are Melian: Why should you not surrender to Athens?
 - Question B: You are Athenian: Why should you conquer Melos?
3. How does internal cohesion (or lack thereof) affect foreign policy?
4. What is the appeal of demagogues?

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

1 PM – 3 PM ET

Session IV: Are Distant Expeditions Always Doomed?

Readings:

- Thucydides, Book 6:
 - o 6.1; 6.6–6.26 (pp. 361; 365–76)
 - o 6.46–6.53 (pp. 387–90)
 - o 6.75–6.88 (pp. 403–12)
 - o 6.89–6.93 (pp. 412–16)
- Thucydides, Book 7:
 - o 7.3–7.30 (pp. 429–45)
 - o 7.42–7.87 (pp. 451–78)

Discussion Questions:

1. Pericles warned against ambitious power projections. The Athenians went to Sicily and failed miserably. Are distant expeditions doomed?

- Question A: Nicias was a brilliant strategist as seen in his debates with Alcibiades. His strategy was superior.
 - Question B: Alcibiades was far superior to Nicias.
2. Was it a strategic blunder—or a strategically bold move but executed poorly?
- Question A: The fault lies with Nicias and his generalship.
 - Question B: The fault lies with the whole idea of going to Sicily, and thus it lies with the Athenians writ large.

TIMELINE OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR From Victor Davis Hanson's *A War Like No Other*

PHASE ONE: THE ARCHIDAMIAN WAR (431–421)

- 431** Thebans attack Plataea (March)
Spring evacuation of Attica and first Peloponnesian invasion (May)
Athenian ships raid the Peloponnese (July)
First Athenian invasion of Megara (September)

- 430** Second invasion of Attica (May–June)
Great plague breaks out at Athens (June)
Besieged Potidaeans surrender city to Athens (winter)

- 429** Peloponnesians arrive to besiege Plataea (May)
Phormio's Athenian fleet defeats the Peloponnesians in the Corinthian Gulf (summer)
Athenian maritime raids against northwestern Greece (summer)
Death of Pericles (September)

- 428** Third invasion of Attica (May–June)
250 Athenian ships deployed in the Aegean and in the west (summer)
Athenians besiege Mytilene on Lesbos (June)

- 427** Fourth invasion of Attica (May–June)
Capitulation of Mytileneans and debate over their fate at Athens (July)
Surrender of diehards at Plataea and destruction of the city (August)

- 426** Return of plague at Athens (May–June)
Demosthenes conducts campaigns in Aetolia and Amphilochia (June)
First Athenian expedition to Sicily (winter)

- 425** Athenian occupation of Pylos (May)
Fifth and last annual Peloponnesian invasion of Attica (May–June)
Spartan surrender on Sphacteria (August)
Athenian raid on the Corinthia and battle of Solygia (September)

- 424** Boeotians defeat Athenians at Delium (November)
Brasidas captures Amphipolis (December)
Athenians sail home from first expedition against Sicily (winter)

- 423** Athens moves against Mende, Scione, and Torone (April)
Walls of Thespieae razed by the Boeotians (summer)
Brasidas active in northwestern Greece (summer)

- 422** Cleon and Brasidas killed at Amphipolis (October)
Peace negotiations between Athens and Sparta (winter)

PHASE TWO: THE PEACE OF NICIAS (421–415)

- 421 Athens evacuates Messenians from Pylos (winter)
Boeotia, Corinth, and Argos discuss various alliances (summer)
- 420 Alcibiades urges anti-Spartan alliance of Athens, Argos, and Mantinea (July)
Elis bars Spartans from participation in the Olympic Games (summer)
- 419 Alcibiades marches small force into the northern Peloponnese (summer)
Argos and Epidaurus renew border war (summer)
- 418 Victory of Sparta at Mantinea (August)
Argos and Mantinea return to Spartan alliance (November)
- 417 Civil strife at Argos and defeat of the democrats (winter)
Athenian fleet active in northern Greece (summer)
- 416 Athenian attack on Melos (May)
Debate over sending an armada to Sicily (winter)

PHASE THREE: THE SICILIAN WAR (415–413)

- 415 Alcibiades, Nicias, and Lamachus set sail for Syracuse (June)
Recall of Alcibiades, death of Lamachus, and stalemate on Sicily (September)
- 414 Arrival of Gylippus with various Peloponnesian relief forces (August)
Second Athenian armada under Demosthenes prepares to leave (winter)
Spartans arrive at Decelea, on the Athenian plain (winter)
- 413 Thracian mercenaries attack Mycalessus (spring)
Defeat of Athenians on Epipolae and in the Great Harbor (July–September)
Execution of Demosthenes and Nicias (September)

PHASE FOUR: THE DECELEAN AND IONIAN WARS (413–404)

- 412 Athenians construct a new fleet (spring)
Persian and Spartan military alliance (summer)
Revolts of Athenian allies in the Aegean (June–July)
- 411 Oligarchic revolution at Athens (June)
Spartan admiral Mindarus sends fleet into Aegean (September)
Dramatic Athenian naval victory at Cynossema (September)
- 410 Athenian naval victory at Cyzicus (March)
Failure of oligarchic revolution and rehabilitation of Alcibiades (summer)
Spartans garrison bases in Asia Minor (winter)
- 408 Athenians seek to regain Byzantium (winter)

- 407** Cyrus arrives as satrap of Asia Minor and gives greater aid to Sparta (spring)
Alcibiades dismissed (spring)
- 406** Spartan admiral Callicratidas defeats Athenians in the Aegean (June)
Athenian victory at Arginusae followed by trial of victorious generals (August)
Athens rejects Spartan offers of peace (August–September)
- 405** Athenian defeat at Aegospotami and loss of fleet (September)
Lysander prepares to sail to Athens (November)
- 404** Ongoing naval blockade of Athens (winter)
Lysander sails into the Piraeus and Athens surrenders (April)
Ascension of the Thirty Tyrants (summer)