

Credo Inquiry Seminar The Greeks at War



Chigi Vase, Villa Giulia, Rome. Earliest known depiction of hoplite phalanx warfare, circa 625 BCE.
Photo by Barbara McCauley.

George Connell
E-mail: connell@cord.edu
Phone: 299-3097
Office: Bishop Whipple 150
Office Hours: MWF 2:30-3:45
TTh 2:30-4:00
And by appointment

At a time when our own country has just disengaged from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and when some in our country are calling for use of force to stop Iran's nuclear program, we will spend the semester reflecting on the ways the ancient Greeks experienced, represented and understood war.

This is one of circa 30 Inquiry Seminars that are being offered as part of Concordia's integrated First-Year Experience. Of these, 8 seminars, including this one, are designated as part of Credo, Concordia's Honor Program. While Credo Inquiry Seminars share the same general goals as all Inquiry Seminars, they are distinctive in two ways: admission is selective and enrollment is limited to just eleven students per seminar. Both of these distinctive features give us an ideal opportunity for a semester of active give and take on the part of everyone in the seminar. That makes it imperative that we all come to class well-prepared and ready to participate.

While the various Inquiry Seminars focus on a wide range of topics, there are common learning outcomes that all seminars are expected to achieve. Students completing the Inquiry Seminars are expected to warrant the following descriptions:

1. Reads, observes and listens carefully
2. Writes and speaks effectively and persuasively
3. Constructs, tests, and articulates sound arguments
 - analyzes and evaluates argument effectively
 - organizes ideas clearly
 - develops ideas thoroughly
4. Applies an effective, efficient, and ethical research methodology
 - locates appropriate research materials
 - evaluates information and its sources critically
 - uses information and sources ethically
5. Submits beliefs, convictions, and perspective to challenge
 - examines the conditions, assumptions, and values that shape one's identity
 - acknowledges her/his own limited knowledge and personal bias
 - takes chances that challenge his/her intellectual and creative abilities
 - recognizes ambiguity and understands its role in decision making
6. Understands the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the course topic

(For a listing of goals of the Inquiry Seminar, go to:

https://concordiacollege.edu/files/resources/inq_syl_requirements.pdf)

Our challenge will be to move from these general goals to specific tasks and accomplishments. We will spend the semester working out together precisely how to achieve these goals, but here is a preliminary sketch of how these goals will apply in our seminar.

1. Our readings for the semester include some of the greatest classics of Greek civilization. They both deserve and demand close, careful attention. By reading these engaging and demanding texts closely, carefully, and critically, you will be developing skills that will stand you in good stead through the rest of college and beyond. Additionally, we will be viewing a variety of films in connection with our readings. You will discover that films can be "read" rather than simply viewed. That is, the same skills of careful, critical attention that literary texts demand can open up films as well. And as we interact with each other in class, we will need to use same fundamental skills, listening carefully and respectfully but also critically to what we have to say to each other.

2. There will be a variety of written assignments throughout the semester, moving from shorter and less heavily weighted assignments to a longer final essay. A primary goal throughout the semester will be to develop skills in academic writing. Our seminar is paired with an Oral Communication Seminar, which will give you opportunities to develop your skills as a speaker, but I fully expect that the limited size of our class will give everyone lots of chances to develop discussion skills. Further, each of you will orally present your final research project in the final class sessions of the semester.

3. As we write and speak about the Greek experience and understanding of war, we won't just report what we find in the texts. We will advance interpretive claims about those texts. Our task as we advance such claims will be to support them with evidence and argument. That is, it is not enough to report what we think about the texts; we need to say why we think what we think and why our readers and listeners ought to join us in that understanding. We will aim throughout the semester to be self-conscious about how we and others argue for claims. We will also aim to distinguish between good (valid) and bad (fallacious) forms of argument.

4. Early in the semester (Sept. 14 and Sept. 28), we will meet at the library where our assigned librarian, Virginia Connell, will introduce us to a variety of Information Literacy skills. We will hone those skills throughout the semester with a variety of assignments. The final essay of the course will involve a research component that will put those information literacy skills to work.

5. During the semester, we will be looking at the Greek experience of war from a variety of strikingly different perspectives. To some extent, these differences in perspective correlate to the different genres of the texts: we will read epic poetry (Homer), history (Thucydides), comedy (Aristophanes), tragedy (Euripides) and philosophy (selections from Plato). Each vantage point brings out distinctive features of war and thus shows us the way perspective shapes perception. Further, each of us comes to the controversial topic of war with our own moral, religious and political convictions. That will give us ample occasion to see the way that our different viewpoints influence what we make of the various texts we read together. We will also need to move from simply recognizing the role of perspective to coming to terms with it. What "coming to terms" will mean will differ for each of us, but, minimally, we need to avoid both a dogmatic rejection of any view but our own and a lazy relativism that assumes that all ways of thinking are equally good (or bad).

6. War is a topic fraught with ethical controversy, so moral questions will run through the course from beginning to end. (Not least of these questions is whether war is governed by moral rules or whether it represents the breakdown of moral restraint.) Further, we will be dealing with artistic articulations of the experience of war, so aesthetic issues will be constantly before us. (Homer is a case in point. He frequently describes the ugliness of war. But at times he also expresses delight at the beauty of good weapons, well-deployed armies, and even deadly battle.)

Rather than viewing these goals as separate items, we should see them as aspects of a unified process of critical inquiry. We will spend the semester working toward a deeper and more reflective understanding of the disturbing phenomenon of war. We will do this by entering deeply into the way the ancient Greeks experienced and thought about war. We will need to attend to ways in which the Greek experience is different from our own. (When spears and swords are the primary weapons, killing is up close and personal; when we fight using drones and cruise missiles, killing is distant and impersonal.) But we will also find lots of parallels to our own situation. (We will bring this out with films, notably *Catch-22* and *The Fog of War*, films about the Korean and Vietnam wars.) The combination of difference and similarity is a great stimulus to looking more deeply and thoughtfully at our topic. Just as critical inquiry involves the apparently opposed principles of sameness and difference, it also involves both receptivity and activity. We need to be open and attentive to our readings and to comments made in class discussion. But we then need to take what we have read and heard under active consideration, to test it, to extend it, and to connect it to other ideas and observations. These are just a few notable aspects of critical inquiry. We will spend the semester working out what such inquiry means concretely.

Texts

Homer *The Essential Iliad*
 Simone Weil and Ruth Bessaloff *War and the Iliad*
 Thucydides *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*
 Aristophanes *Lysistrata*
 Euripides *Trojan Women*
 Plato *Republic* (selections)
 Christopher Hedges *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*

Reserve Texts

Victor D. Hanson *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans Fought the Peloponnesian War*
 J.E. Lendon *Soldiers and Ghosts*

Films

Wolfgang Petersen *Troy*
 Errol Morris *The Fog of War*
 Ari Folman *Waltz with Bashir*
 Mike Nichols *Catch-22*
The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization
 Michael Cacoyannis *Trojan Women*

Some films we will watch as part or all of a scheduled class session, but we will also need to find times in the evening or on weekends to watch some films. I know that many of you have significant extracurricular commitments that make it difficult for us to find a time that works for all. We will negotiate a time that works for as many as possible and place the films on reserve in the library for those who cannot make the arranged showing. Watching with others in the class adds much to the experience of these films, so make every effort to attend the film screening.

Assignments

1. Close reading and analysis of a single passage from the Iliad (4 pages). Due Sept 14 (10%)
 2. Essay on one aspect of either Weil's or Bernal's analysis (4 pages). Due Sept 28 (10%)
 3. Statement of the topic of your final essay (1-2 pages). Due Oct 2 (You must schedule a meeting with me to discuss your plans for your final essay prior to turning in this short description.) (Not graded but failure to turn this statement in on time will have a negative impact on the final grade.)
 4. Library project: Locate, summarize, and evaluate an academic article on either the Iliad or Thucydides (3 pages) Due Oct 9 (5%)
 5. Medium length essay on some aspect of Thucydides' History (5 pages) Due Oct 19 (15%)
 6. Medium length essay on Aristophanes or Euripides (5 pages) Due Nov 2 (15%)
 7. Annotated bibliography of resources to be used in your final essay. You should have *at least* six sources over and above the assigned texts for the course. Due Nov. 16 (Not graded but failure to turn in the annotated bibliography in on time will have a negative impact on the term paper grade)
 8. Short reflection on some aspect of Plato's reflections on war. (4 pages.) Due Nov 16 (10 %)
 9. Term Paper tracing a single theme through a variety of our texts (10-15 pages) (25%)
- Due on the day of our scheduled final examination

The percentage in parentheses at the end of each of the listed assignments indicates the weighting of the assignment in determining the final grade for the course. Assignments 1-9 add up to 90%. The final 10% will be assigned on the basis of consistency of class attendance and quality of class participation.

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance and participation are integral, graded parts of the course, so consistent active presence in class is essential to success. I understand that sometimes absences are unavoidable. Absences from class for college sponsored events (athletic competitions, Christmas concert, debate, etc.) are recognized across campus as legitimate, but students have the responsibility to make up for missed classes. I will work with you in such cases, so keep me informed of such absences. Note that 10% of the final course grade is based on your attendance and participation.

Academic Integrity: For a full statement of the Academic Integrity Policies that apply to this and all Concordia Courses, see the on-line student handbook:

<https://www.concordiacollege.edu/handbooks/student-handbook/academic-policies/>

For a statement of Concordia's guiding commitments in regards to academic integrity, see page 23 of the 2014-15 catalog:

<http://issuu.com/cordmn/docs/academiccatalog14-15>

Submission of Written Work: It is essential that you submit written work no later than the assigned date. Late work will be subject to grade reduction, and work more than one week late will typically not be accepted for credit. Written work may be submitted up until 5PM on the day it is due. If you do not submit the work to me in class, it may be dropped off at my office (BW 150). Unless there is a good reason to do so, I prefer not accept essays in the form of email attachments. (That said, I'd rather get a paper as an attachment than not get it on time.)

Assignments: You will receive guidelines for each of the assignments at least a week prior to the due date. The final essay, however, should be the result of reading, reflection and note-taking throughout the semester. Each of you will choose a broad theme as early as possible in the semester. As we read and

discuss each of our texts, you should keep an eye out for your particular theme. By keeping good notes on relevant passages in the readings and by pursuing library research on your theme, you will be in a good position in the final weeks of the semester to write the longer final essay tracing your theme through a variety of texts. You will also be asked to provide your own critical reflections on the theme. Below is a list of a number of themes that would work with our topic and our texts. You may either choose one of these or use them as examples as you choose a theme of your own devising.

Potential Themes

1. Treatment of non-combatants during war
2. The non-combatants' experience of war
3. The combatants' experience of war
4. Gender and war (a related theme: erotic love and war)
5. Causes of war
6. Economic dimensions of war
7. Music and War
8. Do democracies (such as Athens) and authoritarian states (such as Sparta) think differently about war? Do they conduct wars differently?
9. War as a limited, rule-governed activity vrs. war as "no-holds-barred" (total war)
10. Honor/pride and war
11. Psychological preparation for war/battle (overcoming our natural aversion to killing)
12. Deception and war
13. Does war reveal human nature or represent a departure from it?
14. Heroic vrs. comic aspects of war (or you could just focus on one of the two)
15. Leadership and war
16. Strategy in war
17. Courage as a primary warrior virtue
18. Education and war
19. The role of naval power in war
20. "The fog of war": confusion and ignorance during conflict
21. Treatment of the bodies of fallen warriors
22. Diplomatic dimensions of warfare
23. Peacemaking
24. The role of the horse (practical and symbolic) in Greek warfare
25. War as rational pursuit of ends vrs. war as surrender to irrational violence
26. Disease as a factor in warfare

Schedule

Homer's Heroic Vision of War

August	28	Introduction	
	31	Iliad	Introduction, Book 1
September	2	Iliad	Books 2, 3, 4
	4	Iliad	Books 6, 9, 12
	7	Iliad	Books 14, 16
	9	Iliad	Books 18, 22
	11	Iliad	Books 23-24
	14	Library Launch	Virginia Connell (Library Liaison)
	16	Weil	War and the Iliad vii-xxiii, 3-37
	18	Weil and Bernal	War and the Iliad, 3-37, 43-50
	21	Bernal	War and the Iliad 50-70, 79-85
	23	Fall Symposium	

Herodotus' Heroic History of the Persian Wars

25	Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis	Selections from Herodotus
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	28	Second Library Session	
		Thucydides' Anti-heroic History	
October	30	Thucydides	Introduction and Ch. 1
	2	Thucydides	Ch. 2
	5	Thucydides	Ch. 3
	7	Thucydides	Ch. 4
	9	Thucydides	Ch. 5
	12	Thucydides	Ch. 6-8
	14	Film: The Fog of War	
16	Film: The Fog of War		
		Women and War: Tragic and Comic Perspectives	
	19	Aristophanes	Lysistrata
	21	Aristophanes	Lysistrata
	23	Eurpides	Trojan Women
	28	Eurpides	Trojan Women
	30	Film: Trojan Women	
		Plato: Thinking About War Philosophically	
November	2	Plato	selections from Book I
	4	Plato	selections from Book II
	6	Plato	selections from Book II
	9	Plato	selections from Books III and IV
	11	Plato	selections from Books III and IV
	13	Plato	articles on Plato and war
		War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning: A Contemporary Reflection on War	
	16	Hedges	Introduction and Ch 1
	18	Hedges	Chapter 2
	20	Hedges	Chapter 3
	23	Film: Waltz with Bashir	
	25	Film: Waltz with Bashir	
December	30	Hedges	Chapter 4-5
	2	Hedges	Chapter 6
	4	Hedges	Chapters 7
	7	Presentations	
	9	Presentations	
	11	Presentations (if needed)	
	14	Final class discussion	