

USF Mini-Course HIS 4900 Topics in Ancient History

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Texts and Readings

I. Lectures of Nov. 12 and 13:

“The Use and Purpose of History in the Graeco-Roman World”

“Inventing a New Genre: Herodotus, Thucydides, and the Challenge of Writing Large-scale Prose History”

Articles of Interest:

Deborah Boedeker, “Presenting the Past in Fifth-century Athens,” in Boedeker and Kurt A. Raaflaub (eds.), *Democracy, Empire, and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) 185-202.

Christian Meier, “Historical Answers to Historical Questions: The Origins of History in Ancient Greece,” in Deborah Boedeker (ed.), *Herodotus and the Invention of History (Arethusa 20, 1987)* 41-57.

Kurt A. Raaflaub, “Herodotus, Political Thought, and the Meaning of History,” *ibid.* 221-48.

1. HERODOTUS (second half 5th cent. BCE)

a. Preface:

What Herodotus of Halicarnassus has learnt by inquiry is here set forth: in order that so the memory of the past may not be blotted out from among men by time, and that great and marvellous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners and especially the reason why they warred against each other may not lack renown.

1.1: The Persian learned men say that the Phoenicians were the cause of the feud. [Herodotus then tells the stories of theft of women among Greeks and Asians (1.1-3): the Phoenicians abducted Io from Argos in Greece. In retaliation, some Greeks abducted Europa from Tyre in Phoenicia to Crete. Then Jason and the Argonauts carried off Medea from Colchis in the Black Sea area, which Alexandros (Paris), son of Priam of Troy, avenged by stealing Helen of Sparta and refusing the Greeks’ request for restoration and compensation. Herodotus then continues:]

1.4: Thus far it was a matter of mere robbery on both sides. But after this (the Persians say) the Greeks were greatly to blame; for they invaded Asia before the Persians attacked Europe. “We think,” say they, “that it is wrong to carry women off: but to be zealous to avenge the rape is foolish; wise men take no account of such things... We of Asia regarded the rape of our women not at all; but the Greeks, all for the sake of a Lacedaemonian woman, mustered a great host, came to Asia, and destroyed the power of Priam. Ever since then we have regarded Greeks as our enemies.” The Persians claim Asia for their own, and the foreign nations that dwell in it; Europe and the Greek people they hold to be separate from them.

1.5: Such is the Persian account of the matter: in their opinion, it was the taking of Troy which began their feud with the Greeks...

b. Herodotus’ philosophy of history:

1.5: For my own part, I will not say that this or that story is true, but I will name him whom I myself know to have done unprovoked wrong to the Greeks, and so go forward with my history, and speak of small and great cities alike. For many states that were once great have now become small; and those that were great in my time were small formerly. Knowing therefore that human prosperity never continues in one stay, I will make mention alike of both kinds.

1.6: Croesus was by birth a Lydian, son of Alyattes, and monarch of all the nations west of the river Halys... This Croesus was as far as we know the first foreigner who subdued Greeks and took tribute of them, and won the friendship of others... Before the reign of Croesus all Greeks were free: for the Cimmerians who invaded Ionia before his time did not subdue the cities but rather raided and robbed them.

1.207 (Croesus to Cyrus): “If you recognize the fact that both you and the troops under your command are merely human, then the first thing I would tell you is that human life is like a revolving wheel and never allows the same people to continue long in prosperity.”

1.32 (Solon to Croesus): Only the man who was favored in his life *and* dies a peaceful death deserves to be called happy.

c. Authorial statements (his methods in using his sources):

1.177: Harpagus then made havoc of lower Asia; in the upper country Cyrus himself subdued every nation, leaving none untouched. Of the greater part of these I will say nothing, but will speak only of those which gave Cyrus most trouble and are worthiest to be described.

2.123: These Egyptian stories are for the use of whosoever believes such tales: for myself, it is my rule throughout this history that I record whatever is told me as I have heard it.

... The Egyptians were the first to teach that the human soul is immortal, and at the death of the body enters into some other living thing then coming to birth; and after passing through all creatures of land, sea and air (which cycle it completes in three thousand years) it enters once more into a human body at birth. Some of the Greeks, early and late, have used this doctrine as if it were their own; I know their names, but do not here record them.

4.42: (in a chapter on the size and shape of continents and the inadequacy of existing maps) Libya [Africa] clearly is encompassed by the sea, save only where it borders on Asia; and this was proved first (as far as we know) by Necho, king of Egypt [ca. 600 BCE]. He, when he had made an end of digging the canal which leads from the Nile to the Arabian Gulf, sent Phoenicians in ships, charging them to sail on their return voyage past the Pillars of Heracles [Gibraltar] till they should come into the northern [Mediterranean] sea and so to Egypt. So the Phoenicians set out from the Red Sea and sailed the southern sea. [They returned to Egypt in the third year.] There they said (what some may believe, though I do not) that in sailing round Libya they had the sun on their right hand.

5.44-45: (on the war between Croton and Sybaris in southern Italy: late 6th century) The people of Sybaris say that [when they were contemplating war against Croton,] the Crotoniates in great alarm asked, and obtained, the assistance of Dorieus [as Spartan prince and adventurer], who joined them in their campaign and helped them to capture Sybaris. This, as I said, is the account the Sybarites give; but the Crotoniates say that they had no foreign ally in their war with Sybaris... Both parties produce evidence to support their stories [which Herodotus reports in detail]... In this conflict of evidence, you may agree with whichever party you think is telling the truth.

7.214: (on the betrayal of the Greeks at Thermopylae) A man from Malis, Ephialtes..., came [to Xerxes], in hope of a rich reward, to tell the king about the track which led over the

hills of Thermopylae... Later on, Ephialtes, in fear of the Spartans, fled to Thessaly, and in his absence, a price was put upon his head by the Amphictyons [religious league centered in Delphi]. Some time afterwards he returned to Anticyra, where he was killed by Athenades of Trachis... According to another story, it was Onetes... of Carystus and Corydallus of Anticyra who spoke to Xerxes and showed the Persians the way round by the mountain track. This is entirely unconvincing, my first criterion being the fact that the Amphictyons, presumably after careful inquiry, set a price not upon Onetes and Corydallus but upon Ephialtes of Trachis, and my second, that there is no doubt that the accusation of treachery was the reason for Ephialtes' flight. Certainly Onetes, even though he was not a native of Malis, might have known about the track, if he had spent much time in the neighborhood, but it was Ephialtes, and no one else, who showed the Persians the way, and I leave his name on record as the guilty one.

d. Passages foreshadowing historical developments in the later 5th century

8.3: The Athenians yield the naval command — for the time being

[Hdt. explains why the Spartans were in command of both the land army and the navy in the war of 480/79 against the Persians, although the Athenians contributed by far the largest contingent to the allied fleet.] From the first, even before Sicily was asked to join the alliance, there had been talk of the advisability of giving Athens command of the fleet; but the proposal had not been well received by the allied states, and the Athenians waived their claim in the interest of national survival, knowing that a quarrel about the command would certainly mean the destruction of Greece. They were, indeed, perfectly right; for the evil of internal strife is worse than united war in the same proportion as war itself is worse than peace. It was their realization of the danger attendant upon lack of unity which made them waive their claim, and they continued to do so as long as Greece desperately needed their help. This was made plain enough by their subsequent action; for when the Persians had been driven from Greece and the war had been carried to Persian territory, the Athenians made the insufferable behaviour of Pausanias (the Spartan commander of the allied forces) their excuse for depriving the Lacedaemonians of the command.

6.98: The earthquake on Delos

[This episode took part in 490 BCE, during the advance across the Aegean of the Persian army that was subsequently defeated at Marathon.] The Delians declared that after their departure the island was shaken by an earthquake — the first and the last shock ever experienced there up to my time. It may well be that the shock was an act of God to warn men of the troubles that were on the way; for indeed, during the three generations comprising the reigns of Darius the son of Hystaspes, and of his son Xerxes and his grandson Artaxerxes, Greece suffered more evils than in the twenty generations before Darius was born — partly from the Persian wars, partly from her own internal struggles for supremacy [in the Peloponnesian War]. In view of this, it is not surprising that there should have been an earthquake in Delos, where there had never been an earthquake before. [Thucydides claims that the first and only earthquake that ever shook Delos happened at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. We don't know who is right but if it is Thucydides, Herodotus seems deliberately to have displaced this earthquake so as to establish an even firmer connection between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars.]

e. Passages implicitly contrasting past with present Athenian actions and attitudes

7.139: Athens, the savior of Greece

At this point I feel impelled to express an opinion which I am not going to keep to myself, despite the fact that it will offend a great many people [by the time of Herodotus' writing, Athens had become a "tyrant city" in Greece, hated by many], because I believe it to be true. If the Athenians had taken fright at the danger that was bearing down on them and had abandoned their country, or if they had stayed put where they were but had surrendered to Xerxes, no one would have tried to resist Xerxes at sea. What would have happened on land, then? Even if the Peloponnesians had built wall after defensive wall across the Isthmus, the Lacedaemonians would still have been let down by their allies, not out of deliberate treachery, but because they would have had no choice, in the sense that they would have fallen one by one to the Persian fleet. So the Lacedaemonians would have been left all alone, and in that situation they would have shown their mettle and fought bravely and well—and died nobly. Or an alternative scenario, instead of this one, is that before matters went this far they would have seen that the rest of Greece was collaborating with the Persians and so they would have come to terms with Xerxes. But in either case Greece would have come under Persian rule, because I cannot see what good the defensive wall built across the Isthmus would have done with Xerxes controlling the sea.

As things are, however, anyone who claims that the Athenians proved themselves to be the saviors of Greece would be perfectly correct, because the scales were bound to tilt in favor of whichever side Athens joined. Once they had decided that their preference was for Greece to remain free, it was they who aroused the whole of the rest of Greece (except those places which were already collaborating with the Persians) and, with the help of the gods, repelled the king's advance. Not even the fearsome and alarming oracles that came from Delphi persuaded them to abandon Greece; they held firm and found the courage to withstand the invader of their country.

8.140-44: The Athenians refuse to join the Persians and sacrifice Greek liberty

[Mardonius, the commander of the Persian forces left in Greece after the defeat at Salamis, made a serious effort to win over the Athenians to the Persian side. He sent a Macedonian prince, Alexander, who had long-standing relations with Athens, to offer a favorable treaty of alliance.]

140: On his arrival at Athens as Mardonius' ambassador, Alexander spoke in the following terms: "Men of Athens, this comes from Mardonius: I have received a message from the king, which says: 'I am willing to forget all the injuries which Athens had done me. So, Mardonius, first give the Athenians back their land; and secondly, let them take whatever other territory they wish, and have self-government. If they are willing to come to terms with me, you are also to rebuild the temples which I burnt.' Those are the king's orders which I have to carry out, unless you yourselves put obstacles in the way. Why then, I ask you, are you so mad as to take up arms against the king? You can never defeat him, and you cannot hold out forever. You have seen his army, its size, and what it can do; you know, how powerful a force I have under me now. Even should you beat us — and, if you have any sense, you cannot hope to do so — another force many times as powerful will come against you. So stop trying to be a match for the king, at the cost of the loss of your country and continual peril of your lives. Come to terms with him instead — you have the finest possible opportunity of doing so, now that Xerxes is inclined that way. Make an alliance with us, without craft and deceit, and so keep your freedom." [Alexander then adds his own entreaties, urging the Athenians to accept the offer. He concludes:] "Do therefore agree; for surely it is no small thing that the Great King should single you out from all the people of Greece, and be willing to forgive the past and to become your friend."

142: [Hearing of Alexander's mission, the Spartans get greatly alarmed. They send envoys to plead with the Athenians not to accept the offer.] "It would be an intolerable thing that the Athenians, who in the past have been known so often as liberators, should now be the cause of bringing slavery upon Greece." [They offer Athens all the support they can, including to care for the Athenian women and children for the duration of the war.]

143: The Athenians then gave Alexander their answer. "We know as well as you do that the Persian strength is many times greater than our own... Nevertheless, such is our love of freedom, that we will defend ourselves in whatever way we can. As for making terms with Persia, it is useless to try to persuade us; for we shall never consent. And now tell Mardonius, that so long as the sun keeps his present course in the sky, we Athenians will never make peace with Xerxes. On the contrary, we shall oppose him unremittingly, putting our trust in the help of the gods and heroes whom he despised, whose temples and statues he destroyed with fire..."

144: To the Spartan envoys they said: "No doubt it was natural that the Spartans should dread the possibility of our making terms with Persia; none the less it shows a poor estimate of the spirit of Athens. There is not so much gold in the world nor land so fair that we would take it for pay to join the common enemy and bring Greece into subjection. There are many compelling reasons against our doing so, even if we wished: the first and greatest is the burning of the temples and images of our gods — now ashes and rubble. It is our duty to avenge this desecration with all our might — not to clasp the hand that wrought it. Again, there is the Greek nation — the community of blood and language, temples and ritual, and our common customs; if Athens were to betray all this, it would not be well done."

f. The poor country vs. rich country pattern

7.102: Poor country breeds valor

[Hdt. attributes this statement to an exiled Spartan king whom the Persian king Xerxes asks whether the Greeks are even going to dare to fight his vastly superior army.] Poverty is Greece's inheritance from old, but valor she won for herself by wisdom and the strength of law. By her valor Greece now keeps both poverty and despotism at bay.

9.82: The Persians came to rob the Greeks of their poverty

[Herodotus tells this anecdote after the Greeks have defeated the Persians in the battle of Plataea and conquered the Persian camp. Mardonius was the Persian commander at Plataea, Pausanias the commander of the victorious Greeks.] It is said that Xerxes on his retreat from Greece left his tent with Mardonius. When Pausanias saw it, with its embroidered hangings and gorgeous decorations in silver and gold, he summoned Mardonius's bakers and cooks and told them to prepare a meal of the same sort as they were accustomed to prepare for their former master. The order was obeyed; and when Pausanias saw gold and silver couches all beautifully draped, and gold and silver tables, and everything prepared for the feast with great magnificence, he could hardly believe his eyes for the good things set before him, and, just for a joke, ordered his own servants to get ready an ordinary Spartan dinner. The difference between the two meals was indeed remarkable, and, when both were ready, Pausanias laughed and sent for the Greek commanding officers. When they arrived, he invited them to take a look at the two tables, saying, "Men of Greece, I asked you here in order to show you the folly of the Persians, who, living in this style, came to Greece to rob us of our poverty."

9.122: Soft countries breed soft men

[This anecdote forms the final chapter of Hdt.'s work; it is thus marked (endings in ancient literature are always significant) and bears significance for the entire work. It relates a proposal some Persians supposedly made to Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, after his remarkable conquests ranging from Babylonia to the Aegean.] "Since," they said, "Zeus has given empire to the Persians, and among individuals to you, Cyrus..., let us leave this small and barren country of ours and take possession of a better. There are plenty to choose from — some near, some further off; if we take one of them, we shall be admired more than ever. It is the natural thing for a sovereign people to do; and when will there be a better opportunity than now, when we are masters of many nations and all Asia?"

Cyrus did not think much of this suggestion; he replied that they might act upon it if they pleased, but added the warning that, if they did so, they must prepare themselves to rule no longer, but to be ruled by others. "Soft countries," he said, "breed soft men. It is not the property of any one soil to produce fine fruits and good soldiers too." The Persians had to admit that this was true and that Cyrus was wiser than they; so they left him, and chose rather to live in a rugged land and rule than to cultivate rich plains and be slaves to others.

g. The failures of excessive Persian imperialism

In describing the excesses and failures of Persian imperialism, Hdt. follows a remarkable pattern. The first three Persian kings at some point in their reigns undertake a campaign against unfamiliar countries beyond the civilized world and peoples whose customs they do not understand; they are forced to cross great natural boundaries and enter lands that themselves conspire against invaders. All three kings, although earlier successful in their conquests, become overambitious and succumb to *hybris*, ignore serious warnings, and fail miserably, barely if at all escaping with enormous losses. This applies to Cyrus's attempt to conquer the Massagetae beyond the Araxes River (in southern Russia, 1.201-14), Cambyses' plan to conquer the "long-lived Ethiopians" beyond the desert (3.17-25), and Darius's campaign against the Scythians beyond the Danube (4.83-143). These stories (perhaps with the exception of Cambyses' plan to conquer the rather mythical Ethiopians) were probably based at least on a core of historical fact. But the narrative elaboration, following a clearly recognizable common pattern, is surely Herodotus's doing.

The same pattern is visible in Xerxes' expedition to Greece. The king is driven by high ambition, emulating the achievements of his ancestors (7.8, 11). He ignores good advice and warnings (7.10-11, 49-50, 235-37; 8.68-69). He behaves hybristically, not least in bridging the Hellespont and cutting a canal behind Mt. Athos (7.24), thus turning ocean into land and land into ocean, and in punishing and threatening the Hellespont for destroying an earlier bridge (7.35, but see 54). He does not know and understand the customs of the Greeks (especially the Spartans) and laughs when he is told about them (7.101-4, 208-9). He underestimates a people that, when confronted with an existential threat, is able to unite and maximise its resources and the advantages of its terrain.

To understand the significance of this pattern, we might consider that in the last phase of Hdt.'s life, while he was working on his *Histories*, the Athenians were involved in a serious campaign to conquer Sicily or at least to establish a foothold there (427-424 BCE, the "First Sicilian Expedition"). This expedition ended without results because the Sicilians united against the invaders and settled their disputes, thus depriving the Athenians of the cause that had prompted them to intervene. But they fined and exiled the generals who had led the expedition, accusing them of having been bribed to leave Sicily, when they had a chance to conquer it.

Herodotus witnessed all this and was alarmed by parallels he perceived between this event and the failed Persian attempt to conquer Greece. He knew that this was not going to be the end of Athens' Sicilian ambitions. Ten years later, in 415, the Athenians sent an even greater army to Sicily. In books 6 and 7 of his *History*, Thuc. describes the departure of this magnificent fleet and the miserable failure of the expedition, which took the Athenians far from home across the ocean to a land, Thuc. claims, they did not know sufficiently, did not care to take seriously, and where they failed to take advantage of their usual strength and superiority.

2. THUCYDIDES (late 5th cent. BCE)

a. Preface:

1.1: Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war waged by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another. He began the task at the very outset of the war, in the belief that it would be great and noteworthy above all the wars that had gone before, inferring this from the fact that both powers were then at their best in preparedness for war in every way, and seeing the rest of the Hellenic people taking sides with one state or the other, some at once, others planning to do so. For this was the greatest movement that had ever stirred the Hellenes, extending also to some of the barbarians, one might say even to a very large part of mankind. Indeed, as to the events of the period just preceding this, and those of a still earlier date, it was impossible to get clear information on account of lapse of time; but from evidence which, on pushing my inquiries to the furthest point, I find that I can trust, I think that they were not really great either as regards the wars then waged or in other particulars.

b. The second preface:

5.26: The history of these events [the renewal of hostilities after the "peace of Nicias"], also, has been written by the same Thucydides, an Athenian, in the chronological order of events, by summers and winters, up to the time when the Lacedaemonians and their allies put an end to the dominion of Athens and took the Long Walls and Piraeus.... I lived through the whole war, being of an age to form judgments, and followed it with close attention, so as to acquire accurate information. It befell me also to be banished from my own country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis, and being conversant with affairs on both sides, especially with those of the Peloponnesians by reason of my banishment, to gain at my leisure a better acquaintance with the course of events....

c. The "Archaeology" (sketch of prehistory)

1.2-19: [Thucydides then offers a sketch of prehistory, focusing on the power formations that existed and wars that were fought, in order to support his claim that no previous war was as great and all-encompassing as that described in his *Histories*. I give a couple of selections, illustrating Thucydides' method of reaching historical conclusions.]

1.3: The weakness of the olden times is further proved to me chiefly by this circumstance, that before the Trojan war Hellas, as it appears, engaged in no enterprise in common. Indeed, it seems to me that as a whole it did not yet have this name, either, but that before the time of Hellen, son of Deucalion, this name did not even exist, and that the several tribes... gave their own names to the several districts; but when Hellen and his sons became strong in Phthiotis [in Thessaly] and were called in to the aid of the other cities, the clans

thenceforth came more and more, by reason of this intercourse, to be called Hellenes, though it was a long time before the name could prevail among them all. The best evidence of this is given by Homer: for, though his time was much later even than the Trojan war, he nowhere uses this name of all, or indeed of any of them except the followers of Achilles of Phthiotis, who were in fact the first Hellenes, but designates them in his poems as Danaans and Argives and Achaeans. And he has not used the term “barbarians” either, for the reasons, as it seems to me, that the Hellenes on their part had not yet been separated off so as to acquire one common name by way of contrast. However that may be, those who then received the name of Hellenes... engaged together in no enterprise before the Trojan War, on account of weakness and lack of intercourse with one another. And they united even for this expedition only when they were making considerable use of the sea...

[Thucydides then talks about widespread piracy in these days, when life was unsafe and people wore arms all the time (which in his time was still the habit of peoples living in remote areas of Greece); piracy was finally suppressed by king Minos of Crete.]

1.8: The coast populations now began to apply themselves more closely to the acquisition of wealth, and their life became more settled; some even began to build themselves walls on the strength of their newly-acquired riches. For the love of gain would reconcile the weaker to the dominion of the stronger, and the possession of capital enabled the more powerful to reduce the smaller towns to subjection. And it was at a somewhat later stage of this development that they went on the expedition against Troy.

1.9: What enabled Agamemnon to raise the expedition was more, in my opinion, his superiority in strength, than the oaths of Tyndareus which bound the suitors to follow him. [According to the myth, this oath obliged all suitors competing for the hand of Helen (the most beautiful woman on earth) to support the winner if he ever got in trouble; this obviously was the case when Helen was abducted from Sparta by Paris of Troy. Thuc. then argues that Agamemnon’s kingdom was at the time the largest in Greece.]... He had also a navy far stronger than his contemporaries, so that, in my opinion, fear was quite as strong an element as love in the formation of the confederate expedition. The strength of his navy is shown by the fact that his own was the largest contingent, and that of the Arcadians was also furnished by him; this at least is what Homer says, if his testimony is deemed sufficient. Besides, in his account of the transmission of the sceptre, he calls him “Of many an isle, and of all Argos king.” Now Agamemnon’s was a continental power; and he could not have been master of any except the adjacent islands (and these would not be many), but through the possession of a fleet.

1.10: And from this expedition we may infer the character of earlier enterprises. Now Mycenae may have been a small place, and many of the towns of that age may appear comparatively insignificant, but no exact observer would therefore feel justified in rejecting the estimate given by the poets and by tradition of the magnitude of the expedition. For I suppose if Sparta were to become desolate, and the temples and the foundations of the public buildings were left, that as time went on there would be a strong disposition with posterity to refuse to accept her fame as a true exponent of her power. And yet they occupy two-fifths of the Peloponnese and lead the whole, not to speak of their numerous allies outside of it. Still, as the city is neither built in a compact form nor adorned with magnificent temples and public edifices, but composed of villages after the old fashion of Hellas, there would be an impression of inadequacy. Whereas, if Athens were to suffer the same misfortune, I suppose that any inference from the appearance presented to the eye would make her power seem to have been twice as great as it really is. We have therefore no right to be sceptical, nor to content ourselves with an

inspection of a town to the exclusion of a consideration of its power; but we may safely conclude that the expedition in question surpassed all before it, though it fell short of modern efforts—if, that is, we can here also accept the testimony of Homer’s poems, in which, without allowing for the exaggeration which a poet would feel himself licensed to employ, we can see that it was far from equalling ours [that is, the fifth-century Athenians’]. He has represented it as consisting of 1200 vessels; the Boeotian complement of each ship being 120 men, that of the ships of Philoctetes fifty. By this, I conceive, he meant to convey the maximum and the minimum complement: at any rate he does not specify the amount of any others in his catalogue of ships. That they were all rowers as well as warriors we see from his account of the ships of Philoctetes, in which all the men at the oars are bowmen. Now it is improbable that many supernumeraries sailed if we except the kings and high officers; especially as they had to cross the open sea with equipment of war, in ships that had no decks but were equipped in the old piratical fashion. So that if we strike the average of the largest and smallest ships, the number of those who sailed will appear inconsiderable, representing, as they did, the whole force of Hellas. [The calculation would yield ca. 100,000 men or, allowing for poetic exaggeration, 70-80,000: an enormous force, compared even with those fighting in the Peloponnesian War: the famous Athenian expedition to Sicily in 415 comprised about 30,000 men, most of whom were rowers and thus at best light-armed fighters. Thucydides’ statement makes sense only if he thinks that all the Greek states participating in the Trojan expedition sent their largest possible contingents; but see next par.]

1.11: And this was due not so much to scarcity of men as of money. Difficulty of subsistence made the invaders reduce the numbers of the army to a point at which it might live on the country during the prosecution of the war. Even after the victory they obtained on their arrival—and a victory there must have been, or the fortifications of the naval camp could never have been built—there is no indication of their whole force having been employed; on the contrary, they seem to have turned to cultivation of the Chersonese [an area nearby] and to piracy from want of supplies. This was what really enabled the Trojans to keep the field for ten years against them; the dispersion of the enemy making them always a match for the detachment left behind. If they had brought plenty of supplies with them, and had persevered in the war without scattering for piracy and agriculture, they would have easily defeated the Trojans in the field—given that they could hold their own against them with the division on service. In short, if they had stuck to the siege, the capture of Troy would have cost them less time and less trouble. But as want of money proved the weakness of earlier expeditions, so from the same cause even the one in question, more famous than its predecessors, may be pronounced on the evidence of what it effected to have been inferior to its renown and to the current opinion about it formed under the tuition of the poets.

d. Methods:

1.20: Now the state of affairs in early times I have found to have been such as I have described, although it is difficult in such matters to credit any and every piece of testimony. For men accept from one another hearsay reports of former events, neglecting to test them just the same, even though these events belong to the history of their own country. [Thuc. adduces as example the fall of the Athenian tyranny, on which popular beliefs differed widely from historical fact.]

1.21: Still, from the evidence that has been given, any one would not err who should hold the view that the state of affairs in antiquity was pretty nearly such as I have described, not giving greater credence to the accounts, on the one hand, which the poets have put into song,

adorning and amplifying their theme, and, on the other, which the chroniclers (*logographoi*, storywriters) have composed with a view rather of pleasing the ear than of telling the truth, since their stories cannot be tested and most of them have from lapse of time won their way into the region of the fabulous so as to be incredible. He should regard the facts as having been made out with sufficient accuracy, on the basis of the clearest indications, considering that they have to do with early times. And so, even though men are always inclined, while they are engaged in a war, to judge the present one the greatest, but when it is over to regard ancient events with greater wonder, yet this war will prove, for men who judge from the actual facts, to have been more important than any that went before.

1.22: As to the speeches that were made by different men, either when they were about to begin the war or when they were already engaged therein, it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought me reports. Therefore the speeches are given in the words in which, as it seemed too me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.

But as to the facts of the occurrences of the war, I have thought it my duty to give them, not as ascertained from any chance informant nor as seemed to me probable, but only after investigating with the greatest possible accuracy each detail, in the case both of the events in which I myself participated and of those regarding which I got my information from others. And the endeavor to ascertain these facts was a laborious task, because those who were eye-witnesses of the several events did not give the same reports about the same things, but reports varying according to their championship of one side or the other, or according to their recollection.

And it may well be that the absence of the fabulous from my narrative will seem less pleasing to the ear; but whoever shall wish to have a clear view both of the events which have happened and of those which will some day, given human nature, happen again in the same or a similar way—for these to adjudge my history useful will be enough for me. And, indeed, it has been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time.

e. Historical causation: beginning, causes, “truest explanation,” and alleged reasons:

1.23: The greatest achievement of former times was the Persian war, and yet this was quickly decided in two sea-fights and two land-battles. But the Peloponnesian war was protracted to a great length, and in the course of it disasters befell Hellas the like of which had never occurred in any equal space of time. Never had so many cities been taken and left desolate, some by the barbarians and others by Hellenes themselves warring against one another; while several, after their capture, underwent a change of inhabitants. Never had so many human beings been exiled, or so much human blood been shed, whether in the course of the war itself or as the result of civil dissensions. [In addition, many natural disasters, like earthquakes, droughts, and especially the pestilence, fell upon the Hellenes at the same time as the war.]

The war began [*arche*] when the Athenians and Peloponnesians broke the thirty years' peace, concluded between them after the capture of Euboea [in 446]. The reasons why they broke it [*aitiai*] and the grounds of their quarrel I have first set forth, that no one may ever have to inquire for what cause the Hellenes became involved in so great a war. The truest explanation [*alethestate prophasis*], although it has been the least often advanced, I believe to have been the growth of the Athenians to greatness, which brought fear to the Lacedaemonians and forced

them to war. But the reasons publicly alleged [*hai legomenai aitiai*] on either side, which led them to break the truce and involved them in the war, were as follows.

[Thuc. then proceeds to describe the immediate causes and prehistory of the war. Before relating the outbreak of the war, he interjects another digression, on the “Fifty Years” between the Persian Wars and the Peloponnesian War:]

1.97: Exercising then what was at first a leadership over allies who were autonomous and took part in the deliberations of common assemblies, the Athenians, in the interval between this war and the Persian, undertook, both in war and in the administration of public affairs, the enterprises now to be related... And I have made a digression to write of these matters for the reason that this period has been omitted by all my predecessors, who have confined their narratives either to Hellenic affairs before the Persian War or to the Persian War itself; and Hellanicus, the only one of these who has ever touched upon this period, has in his Attic History treated of it only briefly, and with inaccuracy as regards the chronology. And at the same time the narrative of these events serves to explain how the empire (power) of Athens was established.

f. Athens’ and Sparta’s different collective characters and identical imperial aspirations:

1.70: (The Corinthians explaining to the Spartans their and the Athenians’ different characters) You are quite unaware of (the enormous difference between you and the Athenians); you have never yet tried to image what sort of people these Athenians are against whom you will have to fight—how much, indeed how completely different from you. An Athenian is always an innovator, quick to form a resolution and quick at carrying it out. You, on the other hand, are good at keeping things as they are; you never originate an idea, and your action tends to stop short of its aim. Then again, Athenian daring will outrun its own resources; they will take risks against their better judgement, and still, in the midst of danger, remain confident. But your nature is always to do less than you could have done, to mistrust your own judgement, however sound it may be, and to assume that dangers will last for ever. Think of this, too: while you are hanging back, they never hesitate; while you stay at home, they are always abroad; for they think that the farther they go the more they will get, while you think that any movement may endanger what you have already. If they win a victory, they follow it up at once, and if they suffer a defeat, they scarcely fall back at all. As for their bodies, they regard them as expendable for their city’s sake, as though they were not their own; but each man cultivates his own intelligence, again with a view to doing something notable for his city. If they aim at something and do not get it, they think that they have been deprived of what belonged to them already; whereas, if their enterprise is successful, they regard that success as nothing compared to what they will do next. Suppose they fail in some undertaking; they make good the loss immediately by setting their hopes in some other direction. Of them alone it may be said that they possess a thing almost as soon as they have begun to desire it, so quickly with them does action follow upon decision. And so they go on working away in hardship and danger all the days of their lives, seldom enjoying their possessions because they are always adding to them. Their view of a holiday is to do what needs doing; they prefer hardship and activity to peace and quiet. In a word, they are by nature incapable of either living a quiet life themselves or of allowing anyone else to do so.

1.76: (The Athenians on the Spartans’ potentially identical reactions to challenges) Certainly you Spartans, in your leadership of the Peloponnese, have arranged the affairs of the various states so as to suit yourselves. And if, in the years of which we were speaking, you had gone on taking an active part in the war and had become unpopular, as we did, in the course of exercising your leadership, we have little doubt that you would have been just as hard upon your allies as we

were, and that you would have been forced either to govern strongly or to endanger your own security.

5.105: (The Athenians speaking to the Melians) Our opinion of the gods and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever on can... We are merely acting in accordance with (this law), and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. (This, as the Athenians go on to explain, includes the Spartans who) are most conspicuous for believing that what they like doing is honourable and what suits their interests is just.

g. De-ideologizing history:

1.1.73-76: (The Athenians at Sparta, justifying their imperial rule): We must refer to the Persian War, to events well known to you all, even though you may be tired of constantly hearing the story. In our actions at that time we ventured everything for the common good... This is our record: At Marathon we stood out against the Persians and faced them single-handed... (At Salamis,) we produced most of the ships, we provided the most intelligent of the generals, and we displayed the most unflinching courage...

5.89: (The Athenians at Melos) We will use no fine phrases saying... that we have a right to our empire because we defeated the Persians...—a great mass of words that nobody would believe.

h. Sparta's battle cry of freedom:

2.8: People's feelings were generally very much on the side of the Spartans, especially as they proclaimed that their aim was the liberation of Hellas. States and individuals alike were enthusiastic to support them in every possible way... So bitter was the general feeling against Athens, whether from those who wished to escape from her rule or from those who feared that they would come under it.

i. Pericles and his successors:

2.65: During the whole period of peace-time when Pericles was at the head of affairs the state was wisely lead and firmly guarded, and it was under him that Athens was at her greatest. And when the war broke out, here, too, he appears to have accurately estimated what the power of Athens was. He survived the outbreak of the war by two years and six months, and after his death his foresight with regard to the war became even more evident. For Pericles had said that Athens would be victorious if she bided her time and took care of ther navy, if she avoided trying to add to the empire during the course of the war, and if she did nothing to risk the safety of the city itself. But his successors did the exact opposite, and in other matters which apparently had no connection with the war private ambition and private profit led to policies which were bad both for the Athenians themselves and for their allies. Such policies, when successful, only brought credit and advantage to individuals, and when they failed, the whole war potential of the state was impaired. The reason for this was that Pericles, because of his position, his intelligence, and his known integrity, could respect the liberty of the people and at the same time hold them in check. It was he who led them, rather than they who led him, and, since he never sought power from any wrong motive, he was under no necessity of flattering them: in fact he was so highly respected that he was able to speak angrily to them and to contradict them. ... So in what was nominally a democracy, power was really in the hands of the first citizen. But his successors, who were more on a level with each other and each of whom aimed at occupying the first place,

adopted methods of demagoguery which resulted in their losing control over the actual conduct of affairs...

3. POLYBIUS

[Second century BCE, author of a history that describes and explains the rise of Rome to world power.]

a. The usefulness of history

1.1.1-2: If earlier chroniclers of human affairs had failed to bear witness in praise of history, it might perhaps have been necessary for me to urge all readers to seek out and pay special attention to writings such as these; for certainly mankind possesses no better guide to conduct than the knowledge of the past. But in truth all historians without exception, one may say, have made this claim the be-all and end-all of their work: namely that the study of history is at once an education in the truest sense and a training for a political career, and that the most infallible, indeed the only method of learning how to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of Fortune is to be reminded of the disasters suffered by others.

12.25b: Now the special function of history, particularly in relation to speeches, is first of all to discover the words actually used, whatever they were, and next to establish the reason why a particular action or argument failed or succeeded. The mere statement of a fact, though it may excite our interest, is of no benefit to us, but when the knowledge of the cause is added, then the study of history becomes fruitful. For it is the ability to draw analogies between parallel circumstances of the past and of our own times which enables us to make forecasts as to what is to happen: thus in some cases where a given course of action has failed, we are impelled to take precautions so as to avoid a recurrence, while in others we can deal more confidently with the problems that confront us by repeating a solution which has previously succeeded. On the other hand, a writer who passes over in silence the speeches which were actually made and the causes of what actually happened and introduces fictitious rhetorical exercises and discursive speeches in their place destroys the peculiar virtue of history.

b. The importance of a community's constitution:

1.1.5: There can surely be nobody so petty or so apathetic in his outlook that he has no desire to discover how and under what type of constitution (*genos politeias*) the Romans succeeded... in bringing under their rule almost the whole of the inhabited world, an achievement which is without parallel in human history.

3.118.9: [T]hrough the peculiar virtues of their constitution (*politeumatōs idiotēs*) and their ability to keep their heads they not only won back their supremacy in Italy and later defeated the Carthaginians, but within a few years had made themselves masters of the whole world.

See also **6.2.3; 6.2.9-10:** Now in all political situations... the principal factor which makes for success or failure is the form of a state's constitution (*sustasis politeias*); it is from this source, as if from a fountainhead, that all designs and plans of action not only originate but reach their fulfilment. [See also the digression on the cycle of constitutions (6.3-10) and Rome's ideal mixed constitution (11-18)].

3.118.12: I shall give a separate account of the Roman constitution before proceeding with the rest of my history. I believe that a description of this not only has an important bearing upon the whole scheme of my work, but will prove of great service both to students of history and to practical statesmen in the task of reforming or drawing up other constitutions.

4. LIVY (late first cent. BCE), *Ab urbe condita* (Roman history from the founding of the city)

Pref. 9-10: I invite the reader's attention to the much more serious consideration of the kind of lives our ancestors lived, of who were the men, and what the means both in politics and war by which Rome's power was first acquired and subsequently expanded; I would then have him trace the process of our moral decline... and the dark dawning of our modern day when we can neither endure our vices nor face the remedies needed to cure them. The study of history is the best medicine for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings: fine things to take as models, base things, rotten through and through, to avoid.

5. TACITUS (late first/early second century CE)

a. *Annals* 1.1.2-3: Famous writers have recorded Rome's early glories and disasters. The Augustan Age, too, had its distinguished historians. But then the rising tide of flattery exercised a deterrent effect. The reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero were described during their lifetimes in fictitious terms, for fear of the consequences; whereas the accounts written after their deaths were influenced by still raging animosities. So I have decided to say a little about Augustus, with special attention to his last period, and then go on to the reign of Tiberius and what followed. I shall write without anger and partisanship (*sine ira et studio*): in my case the customary incentives to these are lacking.

b. *Histories* 1.1: Many historians have dealt with the 820 years of the earlier period..., and the story of the Roman Republic has been told with equal eloquence and independence. After the Battle of Actium, when the interests of peace were served by the centralization of all authority in the hands of one man, that literary genius fell idle. At the same time truth was shattered under a variety of blows. Initially, it was ignorance of politics which were no longer a citizen's concerns. Later came the taste for flattery or, conversely, hatred (*odium*) of the rulers. So between malice on the one side and servility on the other the interests of posterity were neglected. But historians find that flattery soon incurs the stigma of slavishness and earns for them the contempt of their readers, whereas people readily open their ears to slander and envy, since malice gives the false impression of independence... But those who lay claim to unbiased trustworthiness (*incorrupta fides*) must speak of no man with either hatred or affection (*neque amore et sine odio*).

c. *Annals* 4.34-35: the prosecution of the historian Cremutius Cordus in 25 CE)

34. In the year of the consulship of Cornelius Cossus and Asinius Agrippa, Cremutius Cordus was arraigned on a new charge, now for the first time heard. He had published a history in which he had praised Marcus Brutus and called Caius Cassius the last of the Romans. His accusers were Satrius Secundus and Pinarius Natta, creatures of Sejanus. This was enough to ruin the accused; and then too the emperor listened with an angry frown to his defence, which Cremutius, resolved to give up his life, began thus: - "It is my words, Senators, which are condemned, so innocent am I of any guilty act; yet these do not touch the emperor or the emperor's mother, who are alone comprehended under the law of treason. I am said to have praised Brutus and Cassius, whose careers many have described and no one mentioned without eulogy. Titus Livius, pre-eminently famous for eloquence and truthfulness, extolled Cneius Pompeius in such a panegyric

that Augustus called him Pompeianus, and yet this was no obstacle to their friendship. Scipio, Afranius, this very Cassius, this same Brutus, he nowhere describes as brigands and traitors, terms now applied to them, but repeatedly as illustrious men. Asinius Pollio's writings too hand down a glorious memory of them, and Messala Corvinus used to speak with pride of Cassius as his general. Yet both these men prospered to the end with wealth and preferment. Again, that book of Marcus Cicero, in which he lauded Cato to the skies, how else was it answered by Caesar the dictator, than by a written oration in reply, as if he was pleading in court? The letters of Antonius, the harangues of Brutus contain reproaches against Augustus, false indeed, but urged with powerful sarcasm; the poems which we read of Bibaculus and Catullus are crammed with invectives on the Caesars. Yet the Divine Julius, the Divine Augustus themselves bore all this and let it pass, whether in forbearance or in wisdom I cannot easily say. Assuredly what is despised is soon forgotten; when you resent a thing, you seem to recognise it."

35. "Of the Greeks I say nothing; with them not only liberty, but even license went unpunished, or if a person aimed at chastising, he retaliated on satire by satire. It has, however, always been perfectly open to us without any one to censure, to speak freely of those whom death has withdrawn alike from the partialities of hatred or esteem. Are Cassius and Brutus now in arms on the fields of Philippi, and am I with them rousing the people by harangues to stir up civil war? Did they not fall more than seventy years ago, and as they are known to us by statues which even the conqueror did not destroy, so too is not some portion of their memory preserved for us by historians? To every man posterity gives his due honour, and, if a fatal sentence hangs over me, there will be those who will remember me as well as Cassius and Brutus." He then left the Senate and ended his life by starvation. His books, so the Senators decreed, were to be burnt by the aediles; but some copies were left which were concealed and afterwards published. And so one is all the more inclined to laugh at the stupidity of men who suppose that the despotism of the present can actually efface the remembrances of the next generation. On the contrary, the persecution of genius fosters its influence; foreign tyrants, and all who have imitated their oppression, have merely procured infamy for themselves and glory for their victims.

d. For comparison: Cicero, *In defense of Marcellus* 29 (a speech delivered to the dictator Julius Caesar in 46 BCE, thanking him for the pardon of his opponent, Marcellus, and urging him to waste no effort in restoring the Roman state to its previous glory):
Work, I ask you, for a verdict from those judges who are going to judge you many centuries from now. Their decision is likely to be more unbiased than our own, since they will be judging without partisanship or self-interest (*sine amore et sine cupiditatibus*), without rancor or jealousy (*sine odio et sine invidia*).

e. Tacitus, *Agricola* 2-3: (2) We read that when Arulenus Rusticus published the praises of Paetus Thrasea, and Herennius Senecio those of Priscus Helvidius, it was construed into a capital crime; and the rage of tyranny was let loose not only against the authors, but against their writings; so that those monuments of exalted genius were burnt at the place of election in the forum by triumvirs appointed for the purpose. In that fire they thought to consume the voice of the Roman people, the freedom of the senate, and the conscious emotions of all mankind; crowning the deed by the expulsion of the professors of wisdom, and the banishment of every liberal art, that nothing generous or honorable might remain. We gave, indeed, a consummate proof of our patience; and as remote ages saw the very utmost degree of liberty, so we, deprived by inquisitions of all the intercourse of conversation, experienced the utmost of slavery. With

language we should have lost memory itself, had it been as much in our power to forget, as to be silent.

(3) Now our spirits begin to revive. But although at the first dawning of this happy period, the emperor Nerva united two things before incompatible, monarchy and liberty; and Trajan is now daily augmenting the felicity of the empire; and the public security has not only assumed hopes and wishes, but has seen those wishes arise to confidence and stability; yet, from the nature of human infirmity, remedies are more tardy in their operation than diseases; and, as bodies slowly increase, but quickly perish, so it is more easy to suppress industry and genius, than to recall them. For indolence itself acquires a charm; and sloth, however odious at first, becomes at length engaging. During the space of fifteen years, a large portion of human life, how great a number have fallen by casual events, and, as was the fate of all the most distinguished, by the cruelty of the prince; whilst we, the few survivors, not of others alone, but, if I may be allowed the expression, of ourselves, find a void of so many years in our lives, which has silently brought us from youth to maturity, from mature age to the very verge of life! Still, however, I shall not regret having composed, though in rude and artless language, a memorial of past servitude, and a testimony of present blessings.

f. *Histories* 1.1 end: I have reserved as an employment for my old age, should my life be long enough, a subject at once more fruitful and less anxious in the reign of the Divine Nerva and the empire of Trajan, enjoying the rare happiness of times, when we may think what we please, and express what we think.

g. For comparison: Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 53.19: [A senator and historian writing in the time of Commodus and the Severan emperors in the late 2nd/early 3rd centuries CE. The following comment follows upon Dio's description of the monarchy and the institutions and instruments of imperial power that emerged in Rome with Augustus's settlement of 27 BCE.]

In this way the government was changed at that time for the better and in the interest of greater security; for it was no doubt quite impossible for the people to be saved under a republic. Nevertheless, the events occurring after this time can not be recorded in the same manner as those of previous times. Formerly, as we know, all matters were reported to the senate and to the people, even if they happened at a distance; hence all learned of them and many recorded them, and consequently the truth regarding them, no matter to what extent fear or favour, friendship or enmity, coloured the reports of certain writers, was always to a certain extent to be found in the works of the other writers who wrote of the same events and in the public records. But after this time most things that happened began to be kept secret and concealed, and even though some things are perchance made public, they are distrusted just because they can not be verified; for it is suspected that everything is said and done with reference to the wishes of the men in power at the time and of their associates. As a result, much that never occurs is noised abroad, and much that happens beyond a doubt is unknown, and in the case of nearly every event a version gains currency that is different from the way it really happened.

II. Lectures of Nov. 14 and 15

“Ancient War as Spectacle”

“Peace as the Highest End and Good? Concepts of Peace in Ancient Rome”

I recommend as introductory reading for both lectures the following article:
K. A. Raaflaub, "The Quest for Peace in the Ancient World—Why Greece?"

In the lecture on Roman peace concepts, I will quote passages from the following Roman authors:

Augustine, *City of God* 19.12

Vergil, *Eclogue* 4; *Aeneid* 1.286-96; 6.791-800

Horace, *Epode* 7; *Ode* 4.15

Tibullus 1.10

Augustus, *Res gestae* 12-13

Velleius Paterculus 2.89

Tacitus, *Agricola* 30

III. Lecture of Nov. 16

"Greek Explorers and Concepts of Utopia"

I recommend to read sections of Lucian, *A True Story*