

Cities and Empires: Politics and Society in the Greco-Roman World (A006710)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	English	Gent	independent work	0.0h
			seminar	0.0h
			lecture	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Zuiderhoek, Andries Johan LW03 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme Classics	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Elective Set The Classical Tradition	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Ancient Greek history; Roman history (Republic and Empire); Political and Institutional History; Social History

Position of the course

This module is one of the two core modules of the research focus Ancient History at the BA3 level. Building on knowledge about the ancient world acquired in the first two bachelor years, it offers an in-depth look at key themes in the political, institutional and social history of ancient Greece (Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic) and Rome (Republic and Empire until c. 250 CE), focusing on sources, methods and debates, with the aim of allowing students to navigate this field of study independently. It prepares for the Research Seminar: Ancient History in the MA, whilst also being of interest to students of ancient Greek, Latin or Classical/Mediterranean archaeology who wish to deepen their understanding of Greek and Roman history.

Contents

Ancient Greek and Roman history seems full of contradictions. This was a world of politically deeply participatory city-states as well as strongly autocratic empires, of democracy and imperialism, of free citizens and slaves, of highly sophisticated forms of urban life and luxury as well as glaring inequalities of wealth, power and gender. How to make sense of this long, complex and often seemingly paradoxical period? In this course, we focus on a number of key themes in the political, institutional and social history of the Greco-Roman world and the scholarly debates associated with them, as well as a selection of primary sources (in translation) that are available for their study, to see if we can come up with some answers of our own. Topics for discussion include the rise of the polis, Classical Greek democracy and oligarchy, kings, courts and cities in the Hellenistic world, mass and elite in Republican Rome, emperors and institutions during the Principate, Greek and Roman slavery, family and household in the Greco-Roman world, inequality and

social stratification, patrons and benefactors, and local civic life in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

Initial competences

Basic knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman history, acquired in the survey course of BA1, or through other means. Knowledge of Latin or ancient Greek is NOT necessary.

Final competences

- 1 To have a firm knowledge of the most important historical facts and interpretations
- 2 To be able to explain the main concepts, structures, changes, and debates in scholarship, and to situate them on a long term perspective.
- 3 To show familiarity with the sources used for the study of ancient Greek (Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic) and Roman history (Republic and Empire until c. 250 CE) and to be able to recognise, discuss, and critically evaluate them.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Interactive classes

Given the interactive character of the seminars, with group discussion during class, classes will not be recorded.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Powerpoint presentations
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader with relevant source texts and articles.
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Course content-related study coaching

During and directly after classes;
Via Ufora;
By appointment with the lecturer

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

NPE: Active and constructive participation in the classes on the basis of reading assignments and prepared questions.

PE: At the end of the semester the course is assessed through an oral exam with written preparation.

Calculation of the examination mark

NPE: 10%

PE: 90%

Students must pass both NPE and PE assessments in order to pass the course as a whole.

Facilities for Working Students

Possibility to change the NPE part into an assignment.

Possibility to move oral exam.

Possibility to move feedback.