

2025 AGRS Undergraduate Conference Program
Wednesday, April 9, 2025
Bata Library 106.6

Josephine Lack, 'Going with the Grain: The Prioritization of Grain in Athenian Foreign and Domestic Policies in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BCE'

Abstract: Grain was a crucial part of the diet in ancient Greece. Ensuring consistent access to it either through agriculture or trade was essential for any city-state. Athens was not self-sufficient in its grain supply and had to constantly look to outside sources like trade and conquest. Despite the lack of self-sufficiency, Athens rarely faced food crises due to its expansionism, control of trade routes, taxes, attempted subjugation of grain-producing areas, and political focus on securing grain. This essay seeks to answer the question: How did food insecurity in the Aegean concerning the grain supply affect and define Athens' political and military strategies in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE? This topic has been examined extensively, typically in relation to smaller aspects of the grain trade. Scholars have argued that Athenian officials manipulated the grain market throughout the Aegean and prioritized relationships with grain-producing regions. This essay expands on this previous scholarship and argues that the primary reason for Athenian expansion and command of the Aegean was driven by their need for grain.

Nathan Leger, 'Bread & Circuses: The Function of Gladiatorial Munera from the Emperor's Perspective'

Abstract: Gladiatorial *munera* were a popular form of bloody entertainment in the Roman world, with the first recorded *munera* spectacle dating to 264 BCE within the era of the Middle Republic. *Munera* had originally functioned as funerary spectacles dedicated to recently deceased members of aristocratic families, however, in the later years of the Republic the sponsorship and performance of *munera* had become a means for politicians to secure plebian votes for elections into the prestigious offices of aedileship and consulship. Innovations had been expected by the Roman people in regards to the spectacle and performance aspects of *munera* and public executions, a feature which individuals like Julius Caesar had successfully capitalized upon (Martial, *On the Spectacles* 27). In the era of the Roman Principate (27 BCE-284 CE), gladiatorial *munera* had dramatically changed as much as the structures of government had changed. Under the reign of the Caesars, the previous funerary associations had become merely a pretext, with the number of days dedicated to the games (*ludi*) being dramatically extended in conjunction with the triumphs and successes of the Imperial family. Although the Emperor's role as the *editor* (producer) of the games had been powerful, his position was not absolute, as the crowd collectively possessed the power of the *theatralis licentia* ("permission of the theatre"), wherein they could directly address the Emperor on either matters of state, or criticize the games. Directly disobeying this permission could leave the Emperor's image and legacy in a rather unfavorable position in the eyes of the Roman people (Pliny, *Natural History* 34.62). Where other

authors such as Keith Hopkins and Thomas Wiedemann have analyzed gladiatorial *munera* and public executions from their specific performance contexts, this essay will focus on the emperor's direct role as the *editor* of the games, and how these performances could either bolster or impede his ruling image.

Ashe MacDougall-Shackleton, “Those Who Have Power Do What That Power Enables Them to Do:” The Helot Revolt of 464 BCE and Athens' Turn Against Sparta’

Abstract: In 464 BCE, faced with the devastation of a major earthquake and a large-scale revolt by the enslaved helot population, Sparta turned to Athens for aid. While the two states would eventually become rival powers in the Peloponnesian War, at this time one of the leading figures in Athenian politics was Cimon, who famously promoted friendship with the Spartans. Although he convinced the assembly to send a large contingent of hoplites to Sparta, they would eventually be rejected and sent home. Following this, Athens would take a sharp anti-Spartan turn: Cimon was ostracised, alliances were made with enemies of Sparta, and many helots who fled Sparta were settled in Naupactus. According to Thucydides, this was done to spite Sparta, out of anger at the insult of being rejected. This paper makes use of ancient literature from Plutarch and Thucydides, as well as a range of modern historiography on the topic, in an attempt to argue that Thucydides' assessment is incorrect. Rather, this turn against Sparta represented the outcome of an anti-Spartan political movement within Athens that had been working against people like Cimon, and the rejection from Sparta served more as an excuse rather than a cause.

Evan Burke, ‘Sin in Ancient Greek Religion: Uncovering the Ancient Greek View on “Missing the Mark”’

Abstract: This paper responds to a claim made by Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones in his work “Ancient Greek Religion.” Published in 2001, Lloyd-Jones states that there was no concept of “sin” in ancient Greek religion. Lloyd-Jones’ assertion comes from a long history of classicists making similar remarks, portraying ancient Greek religion as joyful and happy, and the Greeks, unconcerned with their actions. This viewpoint can be seen starting in the works of George Rawlinson, Edwin Rumball, and more recently in Lloyd-Jones’ paper and his Oxford contemporary Eric Dodds’ book *The Greeks and the Irrational*. However, such as many viewpoints in history, this is not an undisputed claim. Alexander Kadison, Rumball’s contemporary, claims the sin was common to all Ancient religions. Modern historians have begun to side with Kadison’s view, that the ancient Greeks did have sin in their religion, such as Folake Onayemi who in their 2006 paper supported this view by examining hubris, but this field still lacks ample research to refute Lloyd-Jones’ popular viewpoint. This paper will add to the current scholarship by taking a comprehensive view of “sin” in ancient Greek religion, showing that the Greeks had a notion of “sin” in their religious practices. Through examining hubris, the avenging spirits (*alastōr*; pl:

alastores), and sanctuary sacrificial rules this paper will show that Lloyd-Jones was false in asserting there was no “sin” in ancient Greek religion.

Sarah Ronson, ‘Mirrors of Brauron: Reflections and Visual Representation of Identity and Girls Transitions’

Abstract: The sanctuary of Artemis Brauron is home to the *Arkteia* ritual, an important transition rite for young girls in the region of Attica. Due to the secrecy of the ritual the *Arkteia* has been subject to much scholarly debate, however, thanks to literary evidence such as Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, and archaeological evidence such as the *krateriskoi*, aspects of the ritual can be reconstructed. However, some archaeological evidence has received little scholarly attention, namely the impressive number of mirrors discovered during excavations. At first glance, the mirrors appear uncharacteristic, as Artemis does not concern herself with simple adornment. Mirrors, however, are closely associated with the realms of Hera and Aphrodite, and when we consider that dedication to Artemis happened at multiple critical points in a woman's life, the mirrors, as I argue, become a symbol of transformation, identity and the cyclic reproductive life cycle.

Colby Gavine, ‘Opportunistic Athens: Opportunism and the Formation and the Actions of the Delian League’

Abstract: The fifth century was a period of great change for the Hellenic World. Following the conclusion of the Second Greco-Persian War and fearing the onset of a third, many Greek states allied together to form the Greek League, with Sparta serving as its hegemon, which later evolved into the Delian League. Then, around 450 BCE, it evolved into what we call the Athenian Empire, with Athens taking complete and absolute control over the league. Throughout the events surrounding the formation of the Delian League and its subsequent actions, opportunism played a key role in Athens's rise to hegemonic status and eventual complete domination of the allied states. This article aims to examine how Athens capitalized on the opportunities that arose to seize power and disputes the idea that Athens had a preconceived plan from the outset to dominate the Delian League and establish an empire.

Madison Marks-Thomson, ‘Etruscan Bronze Mirrors and Masculinity’

Abstract: The purpose of the study was to examine the way in which Etruscan bronze mirrors depicted forms of idealized masculinity. The scenes present on Etruscan bronze mirrors informed their users how their masculinity was to be constructed and performed. The paper explores how Etruscan values constructed idealized masculinity on the basis of the possession of a warrior persona, the appearance of an athletic build, and skills, as well as the avoidance of spaces of female adornment for any reason unless it was for sexual purposes. All three principles of Etruscan masculinity stress the importance of public performance to identity construction, highlighting the

importance of public approval to the confirmation of Etruscan masculine identities. The differences between female and male athletic figures and the acceptability of men in female adornment scenes only for sexual purposes also confer the acceptability boundaries of idealized Etruscan masculinity.

Emily Moquin, ‘From Destruction Onward: The Anthropological Effects of the Theran Eruption’

Abstract: The intention of this essay is to utilize both scholarly literature and archaeological evidence in order to bring greater understanding to the impacts which the Theran eruption had upon the Mediterranean and beyond. Three particular areas of focus within this work include trade, society, and legends or myths. The eruption’s impacts upon trade would have included a loss of relationships, trade revenue, and a possible increase in the cost of trade. Further, it is evident that ancient societies would have been greatly affected by the physical effects of the volcanic eruption and that modern societies are influenced by the great eruption story which has been perpetuated throughout history. Finally, the Theran eruption has had an impact upon legends and myths, the best known of which is likely Atlantis.