FYSEM-UA 514, Xenophon of Athens—Cavalry Commander and Socratic Philosopher

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Office Hours by appointment.

Seminar:
§001: Tuesdays .............................. 11:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. ............ Silver Center, room 514

Thematic Description

The greatest ancient you’ve never heard of, Xenophon of Athens (c. 425–355 B.C.E.)—brilliant general, student of Socrates, renowned author. His heroism leading the army of the Ten Thousand inspired the conquests of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. His political philosophy informed the thought of Cicero, Machiavelli, Franklin, and Jefferson. When knowledge of Greek was still required for admission to college, his fame was ubiquitous, as his writings formed the basis of the pre-college curriculum. Readings, in English translation: Apology of Socrates, Symposium, Memorabilia, Cyropaedia, Cavalry Commander, Anabasis, and the film based on the latter, The Warriors.
Overview

As a seminar designed for first-year students in the College of Arts and Science, this course has a number of complementary goals.

First, it is intended to be a formative social and intellectual introduction to your new life as an undergraduate student in the liberal arts. Together with your classmates and the others in your cohort, you will be learning what it means to join in the community of scholarship that is the University.

Second, we will pursue our studies in a liberal spirit, not for their practical utility (although Xenophon certainly has things to teach us about success as a military leader), but for what they reveal about the human condition and how they help us to imagine the higher possibilities of our human freedom.

Finally, the seminar is intended to introduce you to the methods of research in the humanities, and your major goal for the course will be to complete a substantial work of independent research. Together with the other reading and writing skills we will practice, the seminar should help hone the critical and analytic abilities you will need for success in your later studies and for your future lives as thoughtful individuals and engaged citizens.

Requirements

You are expected to read each of the works listed below, to attend all class meetings, to arrive at class promptly, and to participate actively and appropriately in class. In-class writing exercises and brief weekly homework assignments will also be required, as well as some supplemental reading. Each student will also make a seminar presentation on a selected reading or on his or her research project. Finally, you will be required to write three papers. The first two will be short papers (2–3 and 4–6 pages, respectively, typed, double-spaced). The final paper will be a substantial work of independent research, 10–12 pages. All work will be graded as submitted, with no opportunity for revision, and credit will be withheld for poor grammar and spelling.

In determining your grade, I will weigh your completion of the course requirements approximately as follows; bear in mind, however, that you are expected to complete every assignment in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

Class participation ................................................................. 10%
Seminar presentation ............................................................ 10%
Weekly homework assignments .............................................. 15%
Papers (5%, 10%) ................................................................. 15%
Final Paper ............................................................................ 50%

Note well that a failing grade may be assigned to any student with more than one absence from class. Incompletes will be considered only in cases of documented medical emergency or other, comparably grave circumstances. In the event that you are for good reason unable to attend class, you are expected to contact me in advance (or as soon as is practicable) by telephone or e-mail.

A Note on Classroom Decorum

As a matter of courtesy to the instructor and to your fellow seminarians, please arrive at class promptly, and, apart from emergencies, please remain in the classroom for the duration of the session.

Please be sure to shut off your cellular telephone at the beginning of class.
Recording & Transcription

While you are encouraged to take notes in class, you may not make audio tapes or any other kind of recordings. Neither may you take or exchange class notes in return for remuneration. Violation of this policy will result in a failing grade for the course. Use of laptop and tablet computers is also prohibited.

Bibliography

The following texts are required and are available at the N.Y.U. Bookstore. Be certain to purchase exactly those listed below.


Listed below is information for texts excerpted in the course pack and other relevant works.


Schedule of Classes

Please complete the readings prior to the class at which they are first discussed. Be sure to bring the appropriate texts to class.


T 9/12: Anabasis. Flower, Chapter 4.

T 9/19: Anabasis.


T 10/17: Memorabilia.

T 10/24: Symposium.

T 10/31: Cyropaedia. Paper II due.

T 11/7: Cyropaedia. Gera, Chapter 5.


T 11/28: Cavalry Commander.

T 12/5: Conclusion.

T 12/19: Final Paper Due by 11:50 a.m.