

# Ancient Greek Thought and Civilization, Part I: The Archaic Era (c. 776-510 BCE)

Ayn Rand University 2025  
Quarter 2 (January-March)

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## **INSTRUCTOR**

Dr. Jason Rheins      Email: [jrheins@aynrand.org](mailto:jrheins@aynrand.org)

## **COURSE WEBSITE**

Logistical details about the course are available at the course website, including:

- Live class schedule and Zoom link for attending live classes
- Recordings of past classes
- Office hour details
- Teaching assistant information
- How to join the ARU Discord server

The course website is accessible through your dashboard after logging into the ARU website. The direct link to the site is [Ancient Greek Thought and Civilization, Part I: The Archaic Era \(c. 776-510 BCE\)](#).

Please contact [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) if you have any issues accessing the site.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

Familiarize yourself with the [ARU Handbook](#) if you have not already done so. Unless specified otherwise in this syllabus, all policies in the Handbook are in effect for this course.

## **COMMUNICATION**

- Course announcements are posted in the Announcements tab of the course website and automatically emailed to all participants. Please make sure you are receiving these emails and that they are not going to your spam folder. If you join after the start of class, be sure to check the Announcements tab for anything you may have missed.
- For questions about course content, structure or schedule, please ask during the live class or in the course channel on the ARU Discord server (see the Discord tab of the course website).
- For personal administrative issues (e.g., website problems), email [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org).
- If you have a technical issue preventing submission of an assignment, email your assignment to the instructor and cc [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) to troubleshoot the matter.

## **LIVE CLASSES AND RECORDINGS**

See the course website and the curriculum overview below for the schedule of live classes and the Zoom link to attend. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend classes live for the best experience. However, we are aware this is not always possible and recordings of live classes are posted on the course website and on the ARU App/ARI Campus website, usually within an hour or two after the conclusion of each live class. Contact [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) if you have any issue accessing a recording.

If you attend class live, please turn on your camera unless you are in a setting with a distracting background or your device is not on a stable surface. It makes for a much better experience for all participants when faces are visible.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

In this course we will examine key works and developments in the history, art, and literature of Ancient Greek civilization as it grows and flourishes during the so-called “Archaic Period” from the middle of the 8th century to the end of the 6th century BCE. At the beginning of this period, the Greeks reacquire the art of writing, and the epic poems of Homer and Hesiod become the cornerstones of a Pan-Hellenic culture that would last for more than a thousand years. The autonomous city-state (polis) solidifies as the dominant form of Greek social organization and governance, and new Greek cities are founded throughout the Mediterranean and Black Sea. New and rapidly evolving styles of art and music are invented and perfected, and philosophy emerges as a revolutionary new way of understanding humanity and nature.

After briefly looking at the Bronze Age cultures of Greece, their collapse, and the subsequent Greek “Dark Age”, we turn to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. Thence, we will survey the epic poems of Hesiod; the lyric poetry of Sappho, Archilochus, Solon, and others; the political developments of state formation, colonization, factionalism, and tyranny; and the philosophies of the Milesian naturalists (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes), the early Pythagoreans, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus.

## **CURRICULUM OVERVIEW AND READINGS**

### **Required Books:**

*A Presocratics Reader (Second Edition)*. edd P. Curd and R.D. McKirahan.  
Modern translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

### **Session 1 – Jan. 10**

#### **Bronze Age Civilizations in Greece and the Bronze Age Collapse**

##### Required

Donald Kagan, Yale Courses: CLCV 205 Ancient Greek history: lectures [2](#) and [3](#)  
Eric Kline presentation on [The Survival of Civilizations After 1177](#)

##### Recommended

Donald Kagan Ancient Greek history lecture [1](#)

**Session 2 – Jan. 17**

**Homeric Epic: Origins in the Bronze and Dark Ages; Poetical Forms and Composition**

Required

Homer, *Iliad*

**Session 3 – Jan. 24**

**Homeric Epic: The *Iliad***

Required

Homer, *Iliad*

Donald Kagan Ancient Greek history lectures [3](#), [4](#)

**Session 4 – Jan. 31**

**Homeric Epic: The *Odyssey***

Required

Homer, *Odyssey*

Recommended

“Odysseus’ Scar” from *Mimesis* by Erich Auerbach (Scanned Reading)

**Session 5 – Feb. 7**

**Greek Creation Myths and their Near-Eastern Parallels**

Required:

Hesiod, [Theogony](#) on Perseus

[Enuma Elish](#) (new translation, open source)

*Genesis* 1:1-3:24

Recommended:

*Song of Ullikummi* in Scanned Readings

**Session 6 – Feb. 14**

**Archaic Greek Life and Family**

Required

Hesiod, [Works and Days](#) on Perseus

Semonides, *Types of Women* in Scanned Readings

Sappho, selections in Scanned Readings

Donald Kagan Lecture [5](#)

Recommended:

Donald Kagan Lectures [7](#)

### **Session 7 – Feb. 21**

#### **The Rise of the Polis: From Farmland and Phalanxes to Factions and Tyrants**

##### Required

Selected Poems of: Tyrtaeus Alcaeus, Archilochus, Solon, in Scanned Readings

Selections on Pre-Classical Art pt 1 in Scanned Readings

Donald Kagan Lecture [8](#)

##### Recommended:

Donald Kagan Lectures [6](#), [7](#)

### **Session 8 – Feb. 28**

#### **Early Greek Philosophy I: Milesian Natural Philosophy**

##### Required

Selections on Pre-Classical Art 2 in Scanned Readings

Sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 on Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes in Curd and McKirahan

Selections on Pherecydes in Scanned Readings

### **Session 9 – Mar. 7**

#### **Early Greek Philosophy II: New Values and Critiques of Homer and Hesiod**

##### Required

Sections 4, 5 on Xenophanes, Heraclitus in Curd and McKirahan

##### Recommended:

[Homeric Hymn 4 to Hermes](#) on Perseus

### **Session 10 – Mar. 14**

#### **Early Greek Philosophy III: Nature & Change**

#### **Greek Religion: Life, Death, and Afterlife**

#### **Rise of the Polis continued**

##### Required

Section 3 on Pythagoras and early Pythagoreanism in Curd and McKirahan

Section 15 *The Derveni Papyrus* in Curd and McKirahan

Aristotle [Constitution of Athens](#) §§1-21 on Perseus

##### Recommended

[Homeric Hymn 2 to Demeter](#) on Perseus

Donald Kagan lecture [10](#) (from 35:45-end), lecture [11](#)

### **ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES**

22.2 % Participation

11.1 % Geography Quiz

33.3 % Short Paper on Homeric Themes – Due Feb. 10, 5pm Pacific

33.3 % Short Paper on Preplatonic Philosophy – Due Mar. 24, 5pm Pacific