

Athenian Culture & Society in the Fifth Century

CSTS119 • Spring 2006 • Professor Bret Mulligan

In the Fifth Century BCE, Athens experienced a remarkable period of political, military, literary, and intellectual vibrancy and influence. Against the background of establishing democracy, spearheading the defense of Greece against the expansionist Persian Empire, and creating (and losing) its own empire, Athenians produced stunning and influential achievements in philosophy, tragedy, comedy, sculpture, and architecture.

The works of Athenians and their contemporaries will be the main sources for our investigation. As we learn about the defining historical moments and trends of this crucial era, we will also examine the daily working of Athenian democracy, economy, love, art, science, education, and religion, with an eye to the stark contrasts inherent in Athenian culture and society. Restless, wary, elegant, vulgar, pious, and brutal, the legacy of the Athenian "Golden Age" continues to define and influence human achievement (and travails) to this day.

Homer • Aeschylus • Sophocles • Euripides • Aristophanes • Lysias • Demosthenes • Plutarch • Herodotus • Thucydides • Xenophon • Plato • Aristotle