

CX252-30 Food & Drink in the Ancient Mediterranean

20/21

Department

Classics & Ancient History

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

James Davidson

Credit value

30

Module duration

23 weeks

Assessment

50% coursework, 50% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Foucault while writing his History Of Sexuality was happy to concede that to the ancients food was overwhelmingly more of a concern than sex, and over the past decade a number of scholars have shown an interest in this important area of study. This concern is manifested most obviously in four particular areas: the Symposium, with all its social and cultural practices, Religion, The Body and Medicine.

A course focussed on food and drink provides the most natural environment, therefore, for the study of some central issues in ancient Greek history, society and culture. Food, drink and the body constituted a privileged zone for constructions of identity and difference: differences between Greeks and Barbarians, gods and men, men and women, humans and animals, social and political distinctions. Practices of equal participation in the sacrificial banquet and medical anxiety about maintaining balance (isonomia) informed political ideologies, while the private symposium, the drinking-party, was a pre-eminent site for the forging of social bonds in the Greek world. The agricultural cycle complemented the cycle of waging war and trading overseas. An inability to maintain control of the routes of the grain-trade led to Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War and remained a critical concern of foreign policy thereafter.

The relevant material is diverse and includes some important corpora: sympotic vases, medical writings, sympotic literature. The diversity of the material and the centrality of the subject mean

that students will be able to deploy a particularly diverse range of approaches: comparative anthropology, reconstructions of the ancient environment from economic models, the study of skeletal remains, structuralist approaches to myth, cultic practices and death, Foucauldian approaches to regimen and self-discipline, new approaches to iconography.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

This module uses the notion of the Material Body as a site for the thematic study of some areas of ancient culture, which are sometimes treated separately in modern scholarship, but which are closely related symbolically and structurally in the ancient world: food supply and nutrition, commensality, the body. This module offers students the opportunity to look at the changing significance of food and drink and their functions within art, literature and social relations. It explores food as a social, religion and cultural nexus, placing topics within their anthropological and archaeological contexts.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

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Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- be aware of recent scholarly approaches to food and drink
- appreciate the changing significance of food and drink
- understand the contribution made by different types of source material to the study of this topic
- learn how to examine primary texts and material data closely

Indicative reading list

Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osborne eds. *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1994)

*Roland Barthes, *Lecture de Brillat-Savarin*, introduction to Brillat-Savarin: *Physiologie du goût*, (Paris, 1975), translated in M.Blonsky ed. *On Signs* (Oxford, 1985) *W.Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley, 1983) *Walter Burkert *Greek Religion*, (Oxford, 1985) Dalby, A. *Siren Feasts* (London 1996) *Davidson, J. *Courtesans and Fishcakes* (London 1997) *M.Detienne and J-P.Vernant etc., *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks* (London, 1989) P.Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Greco-Roman World* (1988) idem, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (1999) Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table* (Oxford,1993) David Lewis, *The King's Dinner* in Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt

edd. Achaemenid History Workshop II The Greek Sources (Leiden, 1987)
François Lissarrague, The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet (Princeton, 1990)
*Murray, O. Symptica (Oxford 1990)
J.R.Sallares, The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World (London, 1992)
Schmitt Pantel, P. La cité au banquet (1990)
Slater, W. J. Dining in a Classical Context (Ann Arbor 1980)
Visser, M., The Rituals of Dinner: the origins, evolution, eccentricities and meaning of table manners (1991)
J.Wilkins etc, edd., Food in Antiquity, (Exeter, 1995)
D Braund and J Wilkins (eds) Athenaeus and his World (Exeter, 2000)

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

Knowledge

On completion of the module students should be able to show knowledge of:

- the foodways of the ancient Mediterranean
- the diverse materials which allow us to know about the foodways of the ancient Mediterranean
- comparative material and anthropological and sociological theories relevant to the contextualization and analysis of the foodways of the ancient Mediterranean

Analysis and Critique

On completion of the module students should be able:

- to critically assess a wide range of diverse materials as a source of information on the place of food and drink in ancient Mediterranean culture and society
- to construct their own arguments based on their assessment of modern debates and ancient materials on food and drink in ancient Mediterranean culture and society
- to communicate their ideas in the form of written essays, and in oral presentations to the group
- to work with other members of the group, identifying differences of approach and emphasis, defending and/or modifying their arguments, and cooperating to produce a new synthetic analysis

Transferable skills

- critical thinking
- problem solving
- active lifelong learning
- communication
- teamwork and working effectively with others
- information literacy
- ICT literacy
- intercultural learning and diversity awareness
- professionalism

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	41 sessions of 1 hour (14%)
Seminars	4 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Tutorials	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Private study	253 hours (84%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

private study and exam revision

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group C1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Second Essay A 2,500-3000 word essay.	25%		Yes (extension)
First Essay A 2,500-3000 word essay.	25%		Yes (extension)
Online Examination A 2-hour exam.	50%		No

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Feedback on assessment

Individual tutorials, Tabula feedback marking sheets.

[Past exam papers for CX252](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q800 BA in Classics
- Year 2 of UCXA-VV16 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology
- Year 2 of UCXA-Q820 Undergraduate Classical Civilisation
- Year 2 of UCXA-Q821 Undergraduate Classical Civilisation with Study in Europe
- Year 2 of UCXA-Q802 Undergraduate Classics (Latin) with Study in Europe

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-VV18 Undergraduate Ancient History and Classical Archaeology with Study in Europe

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 2 of UCXA-Q82P Undergraduate Classical Civilisation