CLC 325: Ancient Crossroads

Threshold of Democracy: Athens 403 BCE

**Assembly Day 5 lesson plan**

Today’s assembly:

* Should laws and major decisions be made by the Assembly or by a governing council?
* If the latter, how should the members be chosen?
* Connection to today: *Is democracy best organized through direct participation or through representatives?*

A second matter we have to take care of:

* Pandora’s urn told us there is a Spartan spy amongst us. One name will be drawn at random, that member will have a chance to declare their innocence. Then we will vote to exile.

Essential text (homework) for today:

Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*

Learning objectives (in general):[[1]](#footnote-1)

* Identify factions and political agendas during this formative period for democracy in the ancient world
* Describe the results of political, social, and philosophical conflicts
* Research to find multiple resources that support their arguments
* Sharpen verbal expression, writing skills, and organization of ideas through the process of composing rhetorically appropriate speeches
* Demonstrate how individual characters might react to historical situations
* Evaluate and appreciate classical historical and literary texts
* Criticize opposing viewpoints and defend their own
* Appraise distant cultures and transcend personal cultural constraints
* Develop leadership and collaboration skills, as members and leaders of teams

The year is 398BCE. Students have already debated the following:

**Game prep day 1**

* Students played a mini-game “Athens Besieged: Debating Surrender” to understand the situation at the time of Athens’ surrender and the actions of the Spartans; this introduction also accustomed them to the Reacting classroom.
* Homework: Pericles Funeral Oration; *Republic* Books 1 and 2

**Game prep day 2**

* Review of Plato’s *Republic* Book 1. Students read the *Republic* in the mindset of their character. They were instructed to write down passages they could use later in the game.
  + Focus on “What is justice?” with comparison to Melian dialogue studied earlier
  + Focus on “What is justice” for your faction?
* At the end of class students met in factions to strategize.
* Homework: *Republic* Books 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 (selections)

**Game prep day 3**

* Quiz over the *Republic* and historical narrative.
* Review of Plato’s *Republic*. Students read the *Republic* in the mindset of their character. They were instructed to write down passages they could use later in the game.
  + What is the ideal society in the *Republic?*
  + What is the ideal society for your faction?
  + What is the role of literature in a well-governed state?
  + Can the young learn from only good examples? Why or why not?
  + Do the gods create all things or only good things?
  + How does Socrates critique timocracy, oligarchy and democracy?

**Assembly day 1**

* Students debated whether there should be a reconciliation agreement (they ultimately decided on a modified reconciliation agreement).
  + Connection to today: *Should people who have experienced grievous wrongs seek reconciliation or retributive justice?*
* After class, students could earn additional votes by sending a link to a modern parallel.
* Essential text for today: Xenophon’s *Hellenica;* optional – Thucydides on Corcyra

**Assembly day 2**

* Students debated should metics and/or worthy slaves be admitted and allowed to vote in the Pynx? To serve as jurors in law court?
  + Connection to today: *Under what circumstances should foreign-born peoples be admitted as citizens?*
* Students voted to allow metics, slaves and even women (!) admission if they fulfilled one of three rather challenging criteria – thereby “broadening” the electorate, but not really.
* Essential text for today: Plato’s *Protagoras;* optional – Aristophanes’ *Assemblywomen*

**Assembly day 3**

* Should assemblymen and jurors be paid? (This was defeated)
  + Connection to today: *Must citizens receive special education or training to be entitled to participate in government?*
* Should we educate the young in the tenants of democracy? (this was passed, by modified to include all governments and “fundamental religious ideals”)
* Essential text for today: Xenophon’s “The Estate Manager”; optional – “Constitution of the Athenians”

**Assembly day 4** -- Trial of Socrates

* The prosecution team decided on the charges “corrupting the youth of Athens by spreading seditious anti-democratic ideology”
* Socrates was narrowly acquitted
* Essential text for today: *Republic* (review); recommended Plato’s *Apology*

**What we’ll be doing after this:**

**Assembly day 6**

* Should Athens rebuild the fleet? Recommence tribute collection? Reconstitute the empire?
  + Connection to today: *Can a powerful democracy, to ensure its own security, impose its will on other countries?*
* Essential text for today: Plutarch’s *Life of Cimon;* optional – re-read Thucydides’ *Melian Dialogue*, Athenian tribute lists

**Debriefing class**

* What *really* happened? Why did our actions differ?
* Why was the reconciliation agreement so essential to what happened after? What are some modern parallels with the reconciliation agreement?
* Students reveal their secrets
* Thucydides reads portions of his *History*
* Discussion of the Reacting component. How did it feel to advocate for a position you do not believe in? What was difficult?
* Homework: Debrief assignment

1. Modified from *Threshold of Democracy: Instructor’s Guide*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)