

Core 102
The Idea of Democracy
Roger Williams University
T-Th (LLC) 9:30 - 10:50 GHH 205
T-Th (ELI) 12:30 - 1:50 GHH 106

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Week of January 25

For Tuesday, January 25

Is Democracy the best? Why?

Download, read, and mark up, from the Core Canon
[Pericles' Funeral Oration.](#)

First, on the class website listen to the video on the left to receive some context for the Pericles Funeral Oration which you'll read and mark up for today's class. The Oration had a context, as the title "funeral oration" indicates. Probably the closest thing we have to it in our area (in the United States, at least) are the ceremonies we hold on "Memorial Day". The video on the right is the ceremony from Arlington National Cemetery last year. You might listen to it last.

Here's what I want you to do when you mark up your copy of the Pericles Funeral Oration.

- Look for the assertions Pericles makes about the value or good of democracy. Put a mark by each one and total them up. How many assertions are they.
- Does he give any evidence to support his assertions? If he does, what kind of evidence does he give? Use a sticky note for evidence discovered.
- Whether he gives evidence or not, how many of the assertions he makes about Athens in his day might we hear made about the nation(s) in which we live today? Remember that language may change a bit in over 2,000 years.
- In your judgment, are these assertions true--use the video about Athens to help you form your judgment. In your opinion, as you follow

- the daily news of today would the assertions made back then be true of democracy in the 21st century.
- Summing it all up with a comment on the PDF, what do you think the purpose of the Funeral Oration was, remembering that the audience was composed of people similar to the audience listening to the Memorial Day Service.

**When you're done, don't forget to add it to your drop box.
(And remember to hit the submit button)**

For Thursday, January 27

Download, read, and mark up, from the Core Canon

[The Suppliants, by Euripides.](#)

[The Melian Dialogue: The Fate of Meles.](#)

For this day we're going to take a look at two documents which "look" the same, but are very different. The Suppliants is an excerpt from a play. Perhaps I'll call on a couple of would-be actors in class to enact it for us the audience. As one can understand, the playwright, Euripides, has a point of view here. One of the persons in the dialogue favors democracy, the other doesn't. I want you to do two three things here:

- 1. Mark up the assertions against democracy, using one color of markup.
- 2. Mark up the assertions for democracy in another color of markup (your choice).
- 3. Note whether or not the two speakers are answering each other's statements, or simply "talking past each other," saying what they wanted to say as if the other speaker wasn't there.
- 4. Use sticky notes to suggest things which you believe would have answered the arguments, if you can think of ideas which could have provided counter-arguments to those made by Theseus and the Theban Herald.

Then Comes Part II, the Melian Dialogue

Be Warned! The Melian Dialogue isn't an easy read. The translation is old, and the language complicated. You can do it, but leave yourself time to do it. While this looks very much like a play script, it is more history by Thucydides, who wrote what we read as Pericles Funeral Oration. This does not mean that he copied what was said word for word. But he has a reputation for being as accurate as possible. I don't want to give away the plot, so I won't. You'll know what happened to whom and the excuses for it by the time you've read your way through it.

On one side of the bargaining Table sit the Melian representatives and on the other side, the Athenian representatives. Note one thing: ALL this happens out of sight and mind from the ordinary population of Meles.

After you've read the dialogue, watch the dramatic presentation of it in the video to the left at the bottom of the web page.

The video on the right at the bottom presents a contemporary analysis of the video by a young man who looks to be a recent college graduate--perhaps he's still in college. He gives you his take on the dispute between Meles and Athens and Athens.

Analyze this the same way you've analyzed The Suppliants. Here are a couple of other things to think about.

- 1. Does anything the Melians say change the thinking of the Athenian delegation at all?
- 2. Identify the different arguments for neutrality presented by the Melian delegation. Use a markup color of your choice.
- 3. Put in the same position, would you take the stance the Melians took at the end of the negotiations? Why or why not? (Try to ignore the outcome as you do this--remember that the Melian Ambassadors didn't know what was going to happen to their island and its population). Use a sticky

note for this.

- 4. Was it fair for the Melian Ambassadors to exclude the rest of the population from the decision making process? Why or why not? Would it likely have made a difference?

Once you've completed the assignments, add them to your drop box. **Don't forget to hit the submit button.**