

POL300- Modern Greek Culture: People, Tradition, Language & Cuisine.

SESSION I: MAY 18 – JUNE 12, 2026

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1. Course Description

Greek civilization has influenced the world since the ancient times. Starting from their remarkable contributions in fields such as philosophy, science, architecture, history, music, literature and politics, Greeks continue to impact our everyday lives through their unique language and rich culture. It is impossible to celebrate the values of democracy, to sense the Olympic games spirit, to enjoy the flavours and nutrients of Mediterranean cuisine or to feel the magic of music and theatre, without revealing their Greek connections. This course is intended for anyone who wishes to explore Modern Greek culture both in the context of the Mediterranean and European regions and with reference to the continuing Greek contributions to world civilization. Important aspects of the contemporary Greek culture and values will be examined along with elements of the Greek language, literature, food, and arts. Students will experience living in glorious Athens, a European megalopolis surrounded by significant monuments and museums. They will also travel to famous destinations of mainland Greece and Dodecanese, including the islands of Rhodes and Simi. The course is taught in English without any Greek language requirements

2. Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The main objective of the course is to familiarize students with modern Greece and its culture, the people, their language, values, and traditions. Through lectures, readings, interaction with distinguished Greek professionals and educational excursions to sites of historical and cultural importance, students will have the opportunity to explore and analyze critically contemporary Greece. They will discover unknown aspects of a culture that remains resilient to regional and international challenges.

Students will develop a basic familiarity with the Greek language by learning some daily expressions and discovering a plethora of Greek words used in various languages to encode complex concepts and scientific terms. They will learn about the life and achievements of important Greeks in the fields of art, literature, science, politics, sports and economics. They will be also introduced to the secrets of Mediterranean and Greek cuisine and will observe how Greeks use their local products in their diet and how they preserve their cultural traditions in various aspects of their lives.

While most part of the coursework -lectures and excursions- will be offered in Athens, the course includes several educational excursions around Attica, and the Peloponnese. Furthermore, a five-day trip will take the class to the Dodecanese, one of the most picturesque regions of the Aegean

islands. Students will experience living in glorious Athens, a European megalopolis surrounded by significant monuments and museums, before traveling to Rhodes and Simi to learn more about the Hellenic tradition and enjoy the beauty and hospitality of the Greek islands.

Thus, students will have the opportunity to compare a variety of landscapes and lifestyles: the vivid rhythms of a European multicultural metropolis and the relaxing atmosphere of coastal towns and mountain villages the East meets the West and where history and tradition coexist with the beautiful Mediterranean nature. Major learning outcomes of the course, include:

Understanding of the connection and continuity between ancient and modern Greece; Exploring the impacts of global and regional challenges such as the ongoing financial and refugee crisis, to Greek society and lifestyle; Familiarity with famous Greeks and key events in recent Greek history; Understanding of the enduring influence and the vast contributions of the Greeks in fields such as culture, economy, politics, science, arts, sports, theatre, and cuisine; Developing intercultural awareness by understanding the western and eastern influences. of the Greek civilization as well as the cultural exchanges between Greeks and their neighbours.

3. Assessment

Includes a test based on topics that will be covered in lectures and readings; a reflection paper or presentation based on class visits and the students' experiences and observations; a research paper based on themes discussed throughout the course. Readings and paper guidelines will be available before the beginning of the course.

- Group Presentation (10%): Student groups will present on various dates (see schedule)
- Test (30%): Due at the end of week three (before departure to Rhodes)
- Reflection paper (20%): Due at the end of week three four (before departure from Rhodes)
- Research/Position Paper (30 %): Due one week after course completion
- Participation (10%): Based on the overall performance and coursework

4. Methodology

The course blends conventional and experiential learning. It includes lectures, discussions, and presentations by the course instructor, students, and guest speakers, as well as guided tours and interaction with Greek academics and other professionals. Students will have the opportunity to work independently or collaborate in groups. Lectures will take place in class between Monday and Wednesday. On Thursday and Friday learning takes place outside the classroom with visits to various sites.

5. Course Outline

5.1 Modules

- A. Greece Today: Priorities and challenges in today's society, economy, education, and politics.
- B. Prominent Greeks: Significant contributions by individuals and organizations in preserving and promoting Greek culture and values.
- C. Cuisine: Introduction to Greek products and the Mediterranean diet.

D. Culture: Language, literature, religion, history, music, arts, science, traditions.

5.2 In-class lectures (*While in Athens, lectures take place at CYA. In Rhodes, lectures are held at the hotel, at the University of the Aegean, at various cities*).

Topics

Introduction to Greek geography, culture, religion, and the Modern Greek alphabet
Introduction to recent Greek history and useful everyday phrases in Greek
Greek politics, economy and the “National Greek Issues”
Greeks in the Arts, Science, Sports and Entertainment (e.g., Maria Callas, Melina Merkouri, Theo Angelopoulos, George Papanikolaou, Yannis Antetokounmpo).
Greek Literature and Music: Cavafy, Kazantzakis, Seferis, Elytis, Ritsos, Tsitsanis, Chatzidakis, Theodorakis.
Politicians and Benefactors: Kapodistrias, Venizelos, Karamanlis, Papandreou, Onassis, Niarchos
Made in Greece: Olive oil, mastic, feta, yogurt, herbs, fruits and vegetables, seafood, well-known Greek dishes
Food and tradition: Ancient, Byzantine, and Modern Greek gastronomy/ from fasting to feasting; major holidays and unknown-local Greek dishes
The Greek economy and social life/ hospitality and tourism
Greek Diaspora and Naval Tradition/ life in the Greek islands

5.3 Sites / Excursions / Field Trips

The course includes a rich program of guided visits, on-site lectures, experiential learning activities, and cultural excursions in Athens, the Peloponnese, and the Dodecanese. All visits are fully aligned with the 2026 academic calendars for Session I and Session II.

ATHENS & ATTICA REGION

- Acropolis: Guided exploration of the Parthenon, Erechtheion, Propylaea, and surrounding monuments.
- Acropolis Museum: Curated visit focusing on sculpture, classical aesthetics, and material culture.
- Theatre of Dionysus: Examination of ancient drama, performance, and sacred topography.
- Greek Parliament (Hellenic Parliament): Guided tour and discussion on modern Greek political life.
- Benaki Museum: Survey of Greek art, culture, and material heritage from antiquity to modernity.
- Olympias Trireme: Visit to the reconstructed ancient Athenian warship at Floriovo Marina.
- Averoff Battleship: Exploration of the Hellenic Navy flagship and modern naval history.
- Ellinikon Experience Park: Guided tour of Europe’s largest urban regeneration project, highlighting contemporary urban design, sustainability, and landscape architecture.
- Graffiti & Urban Art Walking Tour: Study of contemporary street art, identity, and urban culture.

- Greek Dancing Lesson (Lykeio Ellinidon): Traditional Greek dance workshop and cultural immersion.

MAINLAND EXCURSIONS

- Delphi: Visit to the Panhellenic sanctuary of Apollo, its museum, and the archaeological site.
- Cape Sounio: Coastal excursion and sunset visit to the Temple of Poseidon.
- Nafplio: Walk through the first capital of modern Greece (Syntagma Square, St. Spyridon Church).
- Epidaurus: Exploration of the ancient theatre and sanctuary of Asklepios.

DODECANESE ISLANDS – RHODES & SYMI

- Rhodes Medieval City (UNESCO World Heritage Site): Tour of the Old Town's fortifications and urban fabric.
- Palace of the Grand Master: Study of Crusader, Byzantine, and Ottoman influences.
- Archaeological Museum of Rhodes: Material culture and local history of the Dodecanese.
- Kallithea Springs: Visit to the restored therapeutic spa and its modern architectural heritage.
- Lindos Acropolis: Exploration of ancient, medieval, and early modern layers of the site.
- Asklepeio Village: Cultural immersion in a traditional community environment.
- Symi Island (Day Trip): Guided excursion highlighting island architecture, trade history, and maritime culture.
- Bee Museum of the Dodecanese: Study of local agricultural traditions and apiculture.
- Valley of the Butterflies: Ecological walk and exploration of local biodiversity.

6. Course Calendar: May 18 – June 12, 2026

Please note that for various reasons daily course activities could be rescheduled. While in Greece, make sure to check the course announcements on Quercus daily.

Pre-Departure Meeting (90 min.) – TBA

Discussion of syllabus, pre-departure readings, first assessment, Q&A

WEEK ONE

1. Monday, May 18

11:00–14:00 | Meet and Assist at the airport by CYA staff

12:30 | Bus Transfer to CYA

13:00–14:00 | Check-in CYA apartments

19:30 | Welcome dinner in a neighborhood restaurant (Vyrinis)

2. Tuesday, May 19

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A
14:00 | Orientation Session by CYA staff
16:00 | Neighborhood Walk (CYA staff)

3. Wednesday, May 20

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A

4. Thursday, May 21

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A
Group Presentations A (10%)
16:30 | Visit to the Acropolis Museum – On-site lecture
18:00 | Visit to the Acropolis & Theatre of Dionysus

5. Friday, May 22

Day Trip to Delphi
Visit the archaeological site and museum – On-site lecture
Lunch in Itea

6. Saturday, May 23 Free day (optional activities TBA)

7. Sunday, May 24 Free day

WEEK TWO

8. Monday, May 25

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A

9. Tuesday, May 26

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A

10. Wednesday, May 27

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A & Guest Speaker
Group Presentations B (10%)

11. Thursday, May 28

Day Trip to Sounio
15:00 | Bus departs for Sounio
17:00–19:00 | Swim and snack at the beach under the temple
19:30–20:45 | Visit the Temple of Poseidon – On-site lecture
22:30 | Return to Athens

12. Friday, May 29

08:30 | Bus from Kallimarmaro to Floisvos
09:00 | Visit Olympias Trireme
09:30 | Visit Averof
10:30 | Bus to Ellinikon
11:00 | Visit the Ellinikon Experience Park – guided tour
17:00 | Graffiti walking tour of Athens (CYA faculty)

13. Saturday, May 30 Free day (optional activities TBA)

14. Sunday, May 31 Free day

WEEK THREE

15. Monday, June 1

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A
(Holiday: Holy Spirit Monday)

16. Tuesday, June 2

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A
17:00 | Greek Dancing Lesson (Lykeio Ellinidon)

17. Wednesday, June 3

09:00–12:30 | Class with Prof. T.A
Group Presentations C (10%)

18. Thursday, June 4

10:00 | Visit to the Greek Parliament – Guided Tour by Parliament Staff
11:30 | Benaki Museum – On-site lecture by CYA Faculty
17:00–20:00 | Class with Prof. T.A
ASSESSMENT: Test (30%)

19. Friday, June 5

Day Trip to Nafplio
08:00 | Bus departs
10:30 | Visit Nafplio Town (Walking tour)
12:00 | Lunch/Free time
14:30 | Bus to Epidaurus
15:30–17:00 | Visit the Ancient Theatre – On-site lecture
18:30–19:00 | Return to Athens

20. Saturday, June 6 Free day

WEEK FOUR (In Rhodes, Dodecanese)

21. Sunday, June 7

Early morning | Bus transfer to airport
Flight Athens → Rhodes
Orientation walking tour (Prof. T.A)
Lunch on your own
14:00 | Check-in at hotel

22. Monday, June 8

Morning | Breakfast
10:00–13:00 | Field visits in Rhodes Town
Palace of the Grand Master
Archaeological Museum
(On-site lectures by Prof. T.A)

23. Tuesday, June 9

Morning | Breakfast
Visit to:
• Kallithea Springs
• Lindos Acropolis
• Asklepeio Village
(On-site lectures by Prof. T.A)

24. Wednesday, June 10

Day Trip to Symi Island
(TBA) Ferry to Symi
(On-site lectures by T.A. & Guest lecturer) Visit upper town

Lunch/swim on your own
Return to Rhodes

25. Thursday, June 11

08:45 | Bus to Melissokomiki Dodekanisou
09:15–10:15 | Guided tour
10:30 | Bus to Valley of the Butterflies & Springs
(On-site lectures)

26. Friday, June 12

REFLECTION PAPER DUE (20%)

Morning | Breakfast
11:00 | Check-out
Independent departures

POSITION PAPER DUE June 19

7. Bibliography-Readings

A. READINGS BEFORE DEPARTURE to Greece (Required)

Module: Greece Today, Greek Society
Topic: Geography, geology, economy, history, society, arts, education, etc.
Authors: John Frederick Haldon, Loring Danforth, Richard Ralph Mowbray Clogg, John S. Bowman, The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica
Publication: Encyclopaedia Britannica
URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Greece>
Recommended: Kalyvas, S. (2015). *Modern Greece: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

B. READINGS OF WEEK 1

Check daily the course announcements on Quercus for additional notes, readings, and videos

Babiniotis, G. (2006). The Greek Language. Diachronic Evolution and Present. Its Role in the European Union

Modules: Greece Today
Topic: Greek Language
Author: George Babiniotis, Linguist, University of Athens
Publication: <https://babiniotis.gr/>
Chatzidakis, M. (2016). Street art conservation in Athens: Critical conservation in a time of crisis
Modules: Greek Society, Greece Today
Topic: Street art in Athens
Author: Maria Chatzidakis, Department of Conservation of Antiquities & Works of Art, Technological Educational Institute of Athens, Athens, Greece
Publication: Studies in Conservation, 61:sup2, 17-23, DOI: 10.1080/00393630.2016.1201757
URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2016.1201757>

Georgakopoulos, T. (2017). What Greeks believe

Module: Greece Today
Topic: Survey on Greek people beliefs about various contemporary societal, cultural and political challenges
Author: Thodoris Georgakopoulos, journalist, writer.
Publication: DiaNEOsis
URL: <https://www.dianeosis.org/en/2017/04/greeks-believe-in-2017/>

Liakos, A. (2007). Historical Time and National Space in Modern Greece. Historical Time and National Space in Modern Greece

Module: Greece Today
Topic: Modern Greek national history
Author: Antonios Liakos
Publication: Hayashi Tadayuki and Hiroshi Fukuda (Eds) Regions in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present, Sapporo, Slavic Euroasian Studies 15, 2007, 205-227
URL: http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no15_ses/11_liakos.pdf

Plantzos, D (2017). Caryatids lost and regained: Rebranding the classical body in contemporary Greece

Module: Greek Society, Greece Today

Topic: Classical Culture in contemporary Greece

Author: Dimitris Plantzos National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Publication: Journal of Greek Media & Culture Volume 3 Number 1

URL:

<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/jgmc/2017/00000003/00000001/art00001>

Simopoulos, A. P. (2001). The Mediterranean Diets: What Is So Special about the Diet of Greece? The Scientific Evidence

Module: Greek Cuisine

Topic: Mediterranean diet

Author: Artemis P. Simopoulos

Publication: American Society for Nutritional Sciences.

Trichopoulou, A., Vasilopoulou, E. (2000). Mediterranean diet and longevity. British Journal of Nutrition, 84 (S2), S205-S209. doi:10.1079/09658219738855

Module: Greek Cuisine

Topic: Mediterranean diet

Author: Trichopoulou, A., Vasilopoulou, E

Publication: British Journal of Nutrition

C. READINGS OF WEEK 2

Check daily the course announcements on Quercus for additional notes, readings, and videos

Critchley, S. (2019). Athens in Pieces: The Happiest Man I've Ever Met.

Modules: Greek Society, Greece Today

Topic: A story about Greece's monasteries and what is like to be a monk

Author: Simon Critchley: philosophy professor and author.

Publication: NY Times, online edition

URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/03/opinion/mount-athos-monks.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FGreece&action=click&contentCollection=world®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection

Kiortsi, F., Mavroidis, K. (2019). Kostas Gavras on Tragedy, Power and Filmmaking in Greece

Module: Great Greeks

Topic: Greek cinema

Author: Florentia Kiortsi, Kostas Mavroidis

Publication: Greek News Agenda

URL: <http://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/interviews/filming-greece/6955-kostas-gavras-on-tragedy,-power-and-filmmaking-in-greece>

Maltezou, R., Georgiopoulos, G. (2019). Greek parliament calls on Germany to pay WW2 reparations

Module: Greece Today

- Topic: Greek national issues, WWII reparations
 Author: Renee Maltezou, George Georgiopoulos
 Publication: Reuters
 URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-germany-reparations/greek-parliament-calls-on-germany-to-pay-ww2-reparations-idUSKCN1RT1PL>
- Norris, M (2019). Greek to Me: The Comma Queen on the pleasures of a different alphabet
 Module: Greece Today
 Topic: Greek language
 Author: Mary Norris (author, journalist)
 Publication: New Yorker, January 14, 2019 issue/ headline “To the Letter.”
 URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/01/14/greek-to-me>
- Tsilimpounidi, M. (2015). If These Walls Could Talk”: Street Art and Urban Belonging in The Athens of Crisis
 Module: Greek Society, Greece Today
 Topic: Street art in Athens
 Author: Myrto Tsilimpounidi, social researcher, photographer, Department of Social and Political Thought, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.
 Publication: Laboratorium. 2015. 7(2):71–91
 URL: Quercus/readings
- Varvarrigou, M. (2019). Remembering Melina – 25 Years After
 Module: Great Greeks
 Topic: Melina Merkouri
 Author: Mariana Varvarrigou
 Publication: Greek News Agenda
 URL: <http://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/topics/culture-society/6945-remembering-melina>

D. READINGS OF WEEK 3

Check daily the course announcements on Quercus for additional notes, readings and videos

- Georgakopoulos, T. (2016). Greeks and the Refugee Problem
 Module: Greece Today
 Topic: The refugee crisis, Greek society
 Author: Thodoris Georgakopoulos, journalist, writer.
 Publication: DiaNEOsis
 URL: <https://www.dianeosis.org/en/2016/02/study-greeks-refugee-problem/>
- Greek News Agenda (2019). Between a “glorious past” and an “authentic present”: a brief overview of tourism in modern Greece
 Module: Greece Today
 Topic: Tourism, economy
 Author: Greek News Agenda
 Publication: Greek News Agenda

- URL: <http://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/topics/culture-society/6969-tourism-modern-greece>
- INSETE (2017). Contribution of Tourism to the Greek Economy 2016-2017.
 Module: Greek Society, Greece Today
 Topic: Tourism, Economy
 Author: INSETE
 Publication: insete.gr
 URL: http://www.insete.gr/portals/0/meletes-INSETE/01/2018_SymvolhTourismou-2017_EN-Summary.pdf
- Papandreou, N. (2003). Growing Up Bilingual
 Module: Greece Today
 Topic: Greek as a second language
 Author: Nikos Papandreou
 Publication: Pantheon Books, Essay for Collection Entitled: The Genius of Language
 URL: <http://npapandreou.gr/en/83/>
- Livaditi, I. (2017). Rethinking Greece: George Prevelakis on Contemporary Hellenism as a “cultural sediment” linking Europe with the emerging multipolar world
 Module: Greece Today
 Topic: Greek geopolitical condition
 Author: Ioanna Livaditi
 Publication: Greek News Agenda
 URL: <http://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/index.php/interviews/rethinking-greece/6346-georges-prevelakis>
- Additional Sources on Greek Cuisine
 Meneley, Anne. “Like an Extra Virgin.” *American Anthropologist* 109, no. 4 (2007): 678–87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27563819>.
- An Introduction to Greek Food and Greek Cooking
 Module: Greek cuisine
 Topic: Greek cuisine
 Author: thespruceeats.com
 Publication: thespruceeats.com
 URL: <https://www.thespruceeats.com/greek-food-history-1705413>
- Greek Gastronomy Website
 Module: Greek Cuisine
 Topic: Greek Products
 Authors: George Pitas, Bilio Tsoukala
 Publication/ URL: <http://www.greekgastronomyguide.gr/en/>