Overview: Over the course of this semester we will read with close attention Thucydides’ great work, The Peloponnesian War. Our purpose in such focused dedication is twofold. First, despite having been written almost 2,500 years ago, Thucydides had much to say about politics, democracy, revolution and war that remain remarkably relevant to this day. Some popular commentators refer to a “Thucydides Trap” in describing contemporary relations between the U.S. and China—but we will do better than that, exploring continuity (and change) across what Thucydides identified as the timeless wellsprings of human behavior – honor, interest and fear – in order to enhance our understanding of contemporary politics. Second, The Peloponnesian War illustrates the power of words, highlighting the influence of rhetoric and persuasion in shaping events. Additionally, and profoundly, although Thucydides aspired to write an objective, just-the-facts, narrative non-fiction record of events, his own (necessary) choices as a writer and historian demonstrate that the personal and political remain inevitable and inescapable. Put another way by Raymond Aron: “The more one wants to be objective, the more important it is to be aware of the viewpoint from which one expresses oneself and from which one regards the world.” This credo we will bring to Thucydides—and to those who interpret him.

Objectives: This course is conducted as a seminar, with an emphasis on discussion among the participants. Students will develop critical skills in identifying arguments and in expressing their own perspectives, with an emphasis on crafting and editing written work with clarity and style. (Students are encouraged to take advantage of the services provided by the writing program, including the free one-on-one consultation service offered by the Knight Institute: http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/walkin/walkin.htm)

Requirements: We will follow the Strassler edition of The Peloponnesian War (on sale in the bookstore) as well as a small number of secondary sources (posted to the course blackboard site). All of the readings for each week should be completed before Monday’s class. Students are expected to engage in active and thoughtful discussion of the readings, and to complete five written assignments, three of which will go through revisions. (A separate assignment sheet will provide the expectations for each essay; due dates are noted on the syllabus. Also note that given that this is a writing seminar, some of your work may be read and discussed by the entire class.)

Grading: requirements are weighted approximately as follows: Class participation (20%), Essay 1 (10%), Essay 2 (15%), Essay 3 (15%), Essay 4 (20%), Essay 5 (20%). Late work will be marked down.

Some Fine Print: This syllabus is not a contract; it is an overview of the course. Nevertheless, two things about which there should be absolute clarity:

-This is an electronics free seminar – no laptops, no phones, no anything

-All students are expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity: “Absolute integrity is expected of every Cornell student in all academic undertakings.” Students unfamiliar with or uncertain about attributes of the code should review it on-line at: https://provost.cornell.edu/files/2014/12/2016-essential-guide-academic-integrity-t7slma.pdf
Course Schedule:

Week 1: Wednesday August 24

-Reading for this week:

Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, pp. 51-90. [BB]


Week 2: Monday August 29 – Wednesday, August 31

**Assignment #1** (Something to Say) due in class Monday, August 29

-Reading for this week:


*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 1-37.

Week 3: Wednesday September 7 (**No Class** Monday September 5, Labor Day)

-Reading for this week:

*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 38-85.

**Among other things, we will surely discuss the decisions for war in Sparta and Athens.**

Week 4: Monday September 12 – Wednesday September 14

-Reading for this week:

*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 89-128 [stop at 2.66].


**Among other things, we will surely discuss Pericles’ funeral oration.**

Week 5: Monday September 19 – Wednesday September 21:

**Draft of Assignment #2** (Dueling Speeches) due in class Monday, September 19.

-Reading for this week:
The Landmark Thucydides, pp. 128-156.

Simon Hornblower, A Commentary on Thucydides, Volume I, pp. 349-78. [BB]

Week 6: Monday September 26 – Wednesday September 28
-Reading for this week:

The Landmark Thucydides, pp. 159-193.

Among other things, we will surely discuss the debate about Mytilene.

Week 7: Wednesday October 5 (No Class Monday October 3)

Revised version of Assignment #2 due in class Wednesday, October 5.
-Reading for this week:

The Landmark Thucydides, pp. 194-235 [stop at 4.24].

Week 8: Wednesday, October 12 (No Class Monday October 10, fall break)
-Reading for this week:

The Landmark Thucydides, pp. 235-272 [stop at 4.89].


Week 9: Monday, October 17 – Wednesday October 19

Assignment #1 Revisited, due in class Wednesday October 19.
-Reading for this week:

The Landmark Thucydides, pp. 272-316 [stop at 5.25].

Week 10: Monday October 24 – Wednesday October 26
-Reading for this week:

The Landmark Thucydides, pp. 316-357.

Among other things, we will surely discuss the Melian Dialogue.
Week 11: Monday October 31 – Wednesday November 2

**Draft of Assignment #3** (Thucydides Taking Sides) due in class Monday October 31.

-Reading for this week:

*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 361-423 [book 6].

*Among other things, we will surely discuss the decision to embark on the Sicilian campaign.*

Week 12: Monday November 7 – Wednesday November 9

**Revised version of Assignment #3** due in class Monday, November 7.

-Reading for this week:

*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 427-478 [book 7].

Week 13: Monday November 14 – Wednesday November 16

-Reading for this week:

*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 481-515 [stop at 8.61].

*Among other things, we will surely discuss Thucydides on the prospects for democracy*

Week 14: Monday November 21 (*No Class* Wednesday, November 23, Thanksgiving)

**Assignment #4** (Characters Then and Now) due in class Monday November 21

-Reading for this week:

*The Landmark Thucydides*, pp. 515-548.

Hunter R. Rawlings, *The Structure of Thucydides’ History*, pp. 216-249. [BB]

Week 15: Monday November 28 – Wednesday November 30

*Among other things, we will surely discuss the lessons of the Peloponnesian war*

**Assignment #5** (Lessons for Today) due by Friday, December 9.