**What stories do Greek Vases tell us?**

**Instructor: Dimitris Bosnakis**

**Course description:**

This course explores the rich visual narratives depicted on ancient Greek vases from the Geometric period (8th century BC) through the Classical period (4th century BC). By analyzing a variety of vase paintings, students will investigate how myths, daily life, religious practices, and historical events were represented in ceramic art. The course will also consider the social, political, and cultural contexts in which these vases were produced and used, as well as the technological advancements in pottery and painting styles. Special emphasis will be placed on key themes such as sports and gymnastics, Greek mythology, male ideology and symposia, women and their activities, religion and worship practices, death and burial practices, slaves and strangers, and sexuality and love as depicted in vase painting. The course will incorporate interpretive approaches, most notably from *City of Images*, while also providing a brief introduction to techniques, workshops, and key painters and potters.

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Analyze visual narratives and storytelling techniques employed by ancient Greek vase painters.
2. Discuss the role of vases in Greek society, including their use in symposium culture, religious rituals, and as grave markers.
3. Evaluate the relationship between literary traditions (e.g., Homeric epics, tragedy) and visual storytelling.
4. Develop skills in visual analysis and interpretation of ancient artworks.
5. Engage with current scholarly debates on Greek vase painting.

**Weekly schedule:**

Week 1 **Introduction to Greek Vase Painting**

Week 2 **The Origins of Narrative in Greek Art**

Week 3 **Sports and Gymnastics in Vase Painting**

Week 4 **Gods in Greek Mythology**

Week 5 **Heroes in Greek Mythology**

Week 6 **Men in War and Hunting**

Week 7 **Symposiums and Social Gatherings**

Week 8 **Women and Their Activities**

Week 9 **Religion and Worship Practices**

Week 10 **Death and Burial Practices**

Week 11 **Prostitution, Partners, Sexuality, and Love**

Week 12 **Student presentations**

Week 13 **Student presentations**

**Evaluation:** Student evaluation will be based on the following three criteria:

* 20% of the final mark will depend on middle-term quizzes, to assess student progress and understanding of the course content. Quizzes will take place in weeks 4 and 8.
* 30% of the final mark will be based on a 15-min oral presentation of topics related to the course. Essay topics will be chosen by week 3 in consultation with the course convener, while presentations will take place in weeks 12 and 13.
* 50% of the final mark will be based on an end-of-term written essay of 3.500 words

**Selected bibliography**

Claude Bérard, Christiane Bron, and Jean-Pierre Vernant (eds.) (1989), A City of Images: Iconography and Society in Ancient Greece. Princeton University Press

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Coldstream, J. N. (2008). Greek Geometric Pottery: A Survey of Ten Local Styles and their Chronology. London: Routledge.

Cook, R. M. (1997). Greek Painted Pottery (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

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Kurtz, D. C., & Boardman, J. (1986). Greek Burial Customs. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Lewis, S. (2002). The Athenian Woman: An Iconographic Handbook. London: Routledge.

Lissarrague, F. (1990). The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet: Images of Wine and Ritual. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lissarrague, F. (2001). Greek Vases: The Athenians and Their Images. New York: Riverside.

Osborne, R. (1998). Archaic and Classical Greek Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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