In classical Athens, ordinary citizens ruled over the political elite. That's what *demokratia*, “rule by the people,” meant. How did non-elite Athenians pull that off? In this seminar, we’ll explore two fascinating, important and in some respects baffling short texts, both titled “The Constitution of the Athenians,” one attributed to Xenophon and the other to a student of Aristotle. We’ll also look at some additional brief extracts from Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle. Though the material concerns ancient Greek politics, we’ll approach it with all our assumptions and anxieties about modern democracy in mind. How different was ancient Greek democracy from what we call democracy today—and could we manage something more like it here?

Requirements: regular attendance (maximum 2-3 absences), doing the reading, c.200-word online forum response prior to each session, and a willingness to ask questions and float ideas in class.

All readings supplied by instructor.

Jan 20. Herodotus’ “Constitutional Debate”
Jan 27. Thucydides: Pericles’ Funeral Oration and assessment of Pericles
Feb 3. Ps. Xenophon
Feb 10. Ps. Xenophon
Feb 17. Ps. Xenophon
Feb 24. Plato: the Beast, the Ship and the account of *demokratia*
Mar 3. Ps. Aristotle: Solon
Mar 10. Ps. Aristotle: Cleisthenes
Mar 17. Ps. Aristotle: Ephialtes/Pericles
Mar 31. Ps. Aristotle: The Four Hundred
Apr 7. Ps. Aristotle: The Thirty and reconciliation
Apr 21. Ps. Aristotle: Contemporary Athens II
Apr 28. Aristotle on the virtues of the multitude