Nebraska Wesleyan University

PHIL 2040 The Origin of Western Democratic Thinking: Ancient Greece

Catalog

2025-2026

Course Description

We engage with ideas from a variety of ancient Greek sources, including the preserved texts of mythmakers, philosophers, "sophists," politicians, and playwrights, to explore the philosophical origins and practices of Western democracy. We examine Athenian and non-Athenian forms of life through the collapse of Athenian democracy, and conclude with an examination of the 'schools of thought' that emerge from this collapse. Along the way, we discern and evaluate a variety of concepts and practices integral to ancient political life, including the defining features and cultural requirements of a democracy, criticisms and challenges to these features and requirements, and multiple accounts of citizenship and justice.

Course Hours

3 hours

Departments

1. Philosophy and Religion