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Introducing the Classical world

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Martins the Printers, Berwick-upon-Tweed

Contents

Introduction

This course aims to get you started on exploring the Classical world by introducing you to the sources upon which you can build your knowledge and understanding. The course also gets you started on an exploration of both time and space in the Classical world.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of level 2 study in Classical Studies.

Learning outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand how sources are used in studies of the Classical world
- understand the issues related to time and space in studies of the Classical world.

1 Why study the Classical world?

Welcome to *Introducing the Classical world*. There will be many different reasons why you have chosen this course. You may have a lifelong fascination with the ancient world, and hope to nurture it by studying this course. Or you may know very little about it and are curious to know more. Alternatively, you may have been prompted by some of the many aspects of the Classical world that are present in our world today, be it physical remains, theatre, films, books, words or ideas. This course has two main parts:

1. **How to explore the Classical world** will discuss what it means to 'explore the Classical world'. Much of this section will be taken up by the crucial issue of sources: what sources about the Classical world do we have at our disposal and how best can we use them?
2. **Beginning to explore** will start by looking at the basic parameters of time and space, helping you to develop a grasp of the Classical world that will prepare you to start looking at specific periods and places in your subsequent studies.

A note on conventions and ancient spellings

Anyone writing about the Classical world needs to make various choices concerning consistency.

- *Years*. The course team have opted for BCE ('Before the Common Era') and CE ('Common Era') to refer to dates (we use them in the same way as the more traditional BC and AD). In some other texts you will encounter the use of BC and AD instead, and you are welcome to use either convention, as long as you are consistent. Remember that BCE years (as opposed to CE years) count backwards. Therefore the year 431 BCE is earlier than the year 404 BCE.
- *Names*. Many Greek (and some Latin) names have more than one English equivalent. For instance, you will find Achilles as well as Akhilleus, Thucydides as well as Thoukydides. The reason is that there are different conventions for transliterating words from Greek into the English alphabet. This course tends to use what is often called 'Latinised' spelling, for example, 'c' rather than 'k', and 'ae' rather than 'ai', although some of the books you will read (e.g. the translation of the *Odyssey*) use 'k' rather than 'c', and so on. However, the difference is not important: both are correct. Again, you can choose which convention you adopt, as long as you are consistent. Opt for either Achilles or Akhilleus, and stick to it.
- *Ancient terms*. On occasion it will be important to use Greek or Latin terms, usually because there is no English equivalent. The convention is to put these into italics, such as *agora* (the marketplace in Greek cities) or *virtus* (the ancestor of English 'virtue', but not covering quite the same range of meanings). Usually we will give these words in the singular; if we use the plural, we will usually make that explicit.

2 How to explore the Classical world

It's time to get a little closer to our topic: the Classical world. You will start off with an activity in the format used throughout the Open University course from which this OpenLearn course is derived.

Although some of what is noted in the attached video footage is only dealt with in detail within the OU course, viewing it should prepare you for your work in this course. It should also whet your appetite for further studies in this fascinating area!

Activity 1

Watch the video clips below.

Click below to view part 1 of the course introduction.

Video content is not available in this format.

Course Introduction - Part 1

Click below to view part 2 of the course introduction.

Video content is not available in this format.

Course Introduction - Part 2

The video introduction should have spoken for itself, but it's worth drawing out a couple of general points that have come up (both relating to the theme of the past in the present):

1. The video brings out what you were probably already aware of: the remains of the Classical world are substantial and varied. They are to be found in different parts of the modern world. The remains also come from a range of periods, spanning well over a thousand years. Evidence from the Classical world takes many different forms: stones, bones, words, images and ideas, to name just a few. We are rather fortunate in this respect; anyone wishing to explore the Classical world is almost spoilt for choice. This variety will be discussed further in the next section.
2. Then there is the challenge of moving from the present day to what the Classical world may have been like back then. The Parthenon has survived up to the present day, but it is partly in ruins now, and is a tourist attraction rather than a place of worship. How do we get from there to the society that built it? This move from the Classical world that endures today, to the Classical world that once was, is one you will have to make throughout this course. Section 2.2 will lay the foundations by discussing the sources of evidence for the Classical world that we have at our disposal.

2.1 An initial exploration

To begin your own exploration of the Classical world, you will first read the introduction to the book of essays, *Experiencing the Classical World*. It has been written not only to introduce the essays in the book, but also to introduce *you* to some of the fundamentals of Classical Studies.

Activity 2

Click to open Experiencing the Classical World.

Below is a list of learning outcomes that illustrate what you might expect from a course on the Classical world. As you read, tick off the relevant learning outcome each time you meet a section of the course which addresses that outcome:

1. acquire a broad knowledge of the political, social and cultural history, as well as the geography, of the Classical world;
2. acquire a broad knowledge and understanding of the various disciplines that make up Classical Studies, and develop your ability to practise the methods of enquiry used by these disciplines;
3. develop your ability to examine critically different kinds of ancient material and modern interpretations of this material;
4. develop skills to communicate your knowledge and understanding in an appropriately scholarly manner.

The aim of this activity was to make you think about what you were learning, as you were reading. Such reflection helps you to focus on topics as you learn and also to realise just what it is that you have learned. You should have been able to tick off each one without too much trouble.

Obviously, you haven't had much chance to develop a ‘broad knowledge and understanding’ quite yet, but you've made a start, and we hope that you came away from the introduction having learned and understood some new things about the Classical world. Similarly, you might not have had much chance to develop your powers of critical examination, but you were given some examples of looking at images of artefacts and ancient sources that provide you with an idea of what you should be learning as you progress with your studies in the area. Source analysis, as it is called in shorthand, is a fundamental skill in Classical Studies. The results of source analysis can then be organised into a discussion and argument to communicate your knowledge and understanding. This course doesn't actually give you the opportunity to do the communicating, but the case study within the text that you have just read did provide an example of an argument about the significance of the *curia* of Pompey, drawn from the analysis of a variety of sources. You might like to use the course forum to develop and communicate arguments drawn from source analysis, but this is not an expected outcome of this introductory course.

The introduction also emphasises how exploration of the Classical world can be an interdisciplinary study, and promises more in the following essays. However, there is no single interdisciplinary approach. The selection and combination of subdisciplines and how they may be used together varies, depending on the questions being asked and the material being studied. The introduction will have given you an impression of the enormous range of possibilities for studying the Classical world. No surprise then, that you can't do it all in one course. The course will not cover everything; it does not attempt to provide you with an overview of the whole

Classical world. Instead, it provides you with interesting examples to equip you with the basic skills that you will require to undertake further studies on the Classical world.

2.2 The use of sources

As you saw in the video clips and the introduction to the essays, engagement with the evidence from and about the Classical world that we can still access lies at the heart of exploring the Classical world (as indeed any other place or period in the past). Work with sources is a constant feature of Classical Studies. This section, therefore, introduces you to the available sources, and to ways of working with them.

It will begin by discussing the different types of sources; later you will have the opportunity to practise how best to use sources. Figure 1 below outlines schematically what follows. It's important to stress that it is a schematic simplification, and you should not rely on it without reading the accompanying discussion, but it should provide a helpful starting point. (Note that the list of sources is not necessarily exhaustive: you may come across other types of sources in your studies.)

The most crucial distinction to make is between ancient sources (the past that survives), and modern scholarship (modern accounts of the past). As indicated in the diagram, they are sometimes called 'primary' and 'secondary' sources respectively, though one needs to be careful. 'Primary' is the most immediate source we have, while 'secondary' sources are in turn based on the earlier primary sources. More often than not, the ancient source is primary, and the modern source or better, modern scholarship, is secondary. However, it is worth keeping in mind that you might find an ancient source that itself depends upon an even earlier ancient source. The later source will then be both primary and secondary simultaneously: primary because it is ancient and secondary because it derives from an earlier source. Such a source can be called an 'ancient secondary source'. An ancient secondary source might be a history of earlier events written in the ancient period, derived from earlier sources that now no longer survive, and so paradoxically an ancient secondary source can also be a primary source. That's why we tend to use the terms 'ancient' and 'modern', rather than 'primary' and 'secondary'. Whatever the terminology used, it's becoming clear that sources are far from straightforward. Let's pause for a moment and consider what we mean by a 'source'.

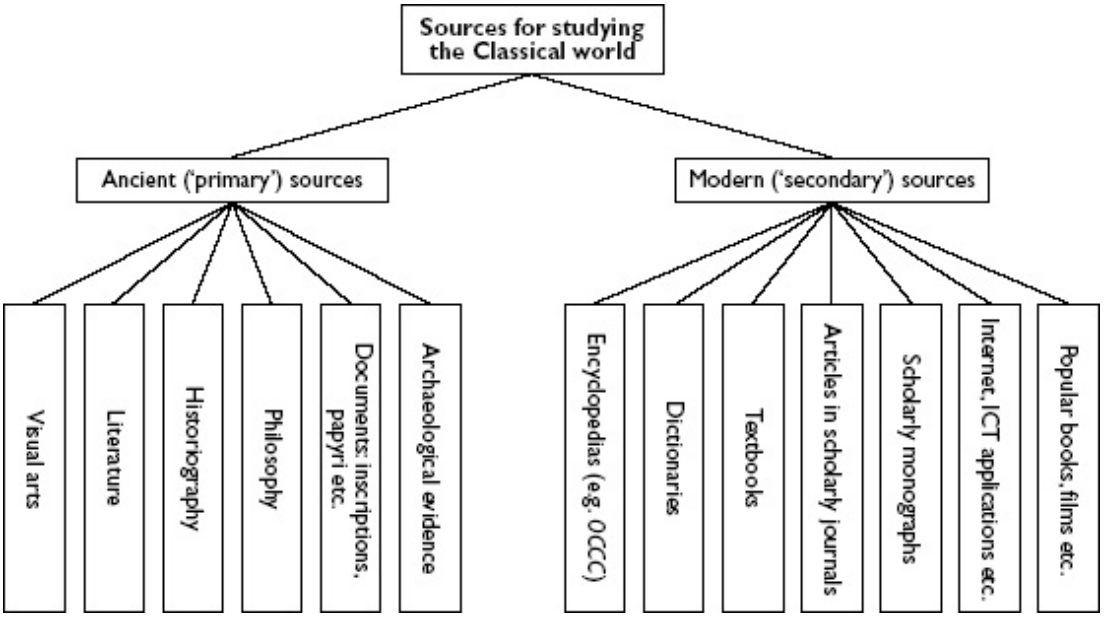

Figure 1 Sources for studying the Classical world. Note that *OCCC* is used in the figure to save space – it stands for *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*.

2.3 Ancient sources

As you have seen, exploring the Classical world is an interdisciplinary pursuit. Perhaps the most immediately obvious aspect of this interdisciplinary approach is that you will confront different kinds of ancient sources, often simultaneously, since one of them by itself may not be sufficient for answering a particular question you may have. Quite apart from whether a source is ancient or modern, the different disciplines that make up Classical Studies use different kinds of source material. Each of them has different characteristics, which you will need to keep in mind when working with them. The following list is not exhaustive, but it should include most of what you might expect to encounter in a course on the Classical world.

Archaeological evidence

This feels in some ways like the most 'real' source – where you can almost touch the Classical world, and where you get a sense of what the Classical world looked like. Classical archaeology covers a wide range of areas: not just buildings like the Parthenon or the temples at Paestum, but also cities, landscapes, graves, coins, battlefields, everyday items, plant and animal remains, ancient rubbish and much else. Archaeology often throws up evidence where literature doesn't. People, after all, use things and change the way the world looks, even when they don't commit themselves to writing. In fact, for certain periods, such as very early Greece in which there was little or no writing, archaeological evidence is the only contemporary evidence. Similarly, many aspects of everyday life, on which literature is not very vocal, can be explored much further through archaeological evidence.

Perhaps the thing to watch out for most carefully with archaeological evidence is a tendency to assume that the very 'realness' of things surviving from the past gives one immediate access to what that past was like. Archaeological evidence needs to be interpreted just as much as literature, and interpretation is required at a number of levels. Many human actions or events create a physical change in the world: the building of a

stone temple is a deliberate creation of a lasting monument for religious and social purposes, whereas the loss of a coin is a casual accident followed by an unsuccessful search for the coin. These different events both changed the world in a way that an archaeologist can detect, but each had a different significance and effect in the past that require interpretation. Furthermore, every single thing that survives from the past has undergone a series of physical and circumstantial transformations in order to survive into the present.

The Parthenon, for example, is no longer in pristine condition. The stone has weathered and its painted decoration is lost; it has been transformed into a church and later an arsenal which exploded; sculptures have been removed and parts have been rebuilt and replaced, to make the building safe and more presentable as a monument to Greek achievement; and doubtless it has suffered several earthquakes along the way! The Parthenon may be a spectacular example, but everything is transformed by time: organic materials decay, buildings are demolished, and tombs robbed. All such transformations need to be assessed and appreciated by archaeologists, and that's before even asking what it all means. The final act of interpretation – attempting to communicate an understanding of the significance and meaning of the evidence – can also be a matter for debate.

Here is an example, drawn from burials, one of the major sources of archaeological evidence for the Classical world. In Attica, the area around Athens, the number of graves decreased significantly in the course of the Archaic period. Many archaeologists assume that this reflects a corresponding decrease in the Athenian population, and have speculated about reasons (the Greek population at large seems to have increased by contrast). They may well be right, but another group of archaeologists have a different explanation for the burial pattern: they say that society became more stratified, increasingly burying only the elite, so that evidence of these burials is the only thing which survives. Not a population decrease then, but a more prominent class system. The debate still continues and probably shows two things: first, the great potential of archaeological evidence, allowing conclusions about social aspects such as class; but also, secondly, the need for interpretation. Not even archaeology gives immediate access to the Classical world.

The visual arts

These are closely related to archaeology. They, too, are things we can look at and touch after all. The difference is very much one of interpretation. Are the Parthenon statues art or archaeology; is an ancient painted pot art or archaeology? In order to avoid such questions, many people use the term ‘material culture’ to cover both. For many purposes, the difference doesn't matter. In fact, it is a good illustration of the advantages of interdisciplinary work, with different kinds of approach illustrating the same issues. Like archaeology, visual arts can tell you things that literature can't, but still it is necessary to read the visual language, interpreting the meaning of the images and reconstructing a visual narrative if appropriate.

Using the word ‘arts’ evokes ideas of aesthetic appreciation and beauty, but the visual arts, like archaeology, and all other kinds of evidence, need to be interpreted, and interpreted in different ways. Take pots, again, as an example. When examining pots archaeologists need to think about:

- what they depict (what do we learn from the scene on that pot?)
- how they depict it (what do we learn from the style and material of that pot?)
- who made and commissioned them (what do we learn from the fact that this pot was produced by a particular workshop in Athens for a rich man in southern Italy?)

- where they are used (what do we learn from the fact that this pot was used at dinner parties and another in the kitchen?)

The more questions you can bring to them, the richer the visual arts will become for you – both as art objects in their own right and as a source for the Classical world more widely.

Literature

This doesn't have the kind of physical presence that material evidence does, but it has a different strength: it gives us, more literally, voices from the past. We can, as it were, hear the ancient Greeks and Romans speak, about what happened, about how they felt, about what they thought, and experience how they expressed themselves. This gives us a rather different access to their world, complementary to the one we get from material culture.

Like the word 'arts', literature can suggest aesthetic pleasure. Theatres, like galleries, aren't places where we study evidence but where we enjoy good writing and acting, and this course will give you plenty of opportunity to do just that. But we want to stress again that literature, at the same time, can serve as a source of information about the past. The sorts of questions you might ask about Homer as a source aren't unlike those we just went through for pots. Homer depicts a particular society. You might ask what you can learn from this depiction of early Greek society. You might further ask why Homer chose to depict society by writing long poems (epics), and what sort of world it was in which these kinds of poem were apparently a dominant genre of literature. Furthermore, much Classical literature (especially in the earlier periods) was performed rather than read. So you might ask who performed the epics of Homer, who listened to them, where these performances took place, who (if anyone) paid for them, and how these contexts will have shaped Homer's poetry.

Again, we'd like to stress one particular risk. The very explicitness of literature – the fact that you can read it – can be deceptive. The nature of Homer's society is a hugely contested issue. Is it contemporary society Homer is describing? Is it an earlier kind of society that Homer (just like us) explores on the basis of knowledge that has somehow come down to him? If it is, does the fiction still tell us something about real societies? Moreover, what sort of voice is Homer's? Was he part of an elite? In that case, how is what he says biased by this fact? Or was he influenced by what his audience wanted to hear? Along with the vast majority of ancient voices we hear through literature, Homer's is a male voice; and even most of the far fewer female voices we *do* hear are written down or even invented by men. The point may be extended to say that we only hear the voices of the literate, a small minority in the ancient past, and so literature can never be representative of the totality of society. As ever, unmediated access to the ancient world is impossible.

Historiography

This is the writing of history, another type of source that relies on words. Many of the things we said about literature apply to historiography as well, and we won't need to repeat them. The reason we think it's worth having a separate paragraph on historiography is that where literature is associated with art, history-writing is today associated with truth. As a result, it's a natural instinct to read ancient historians with the expectation that they are more reliable sources than literature. To a degree, that's fair enough. Most ancient historians took pains to distinguish themselves in one way or another from poets. However, the character of these distinctions varied greatly, and rarely matches the distinctions most of us today would make between history and literature. For

instance, the association of historiography and truth, while known, is rather different in the ancient world. Tacitus (a Roman born in CE 56 and a sophisticated historian if ever there was one) starts his most famous work (the *Annals*) with a line of verse. Herodotus, the first Greek historian to survive in bulk, is at the centre of an enormous debate: some scholars think that he simply made up large chunks of his work, and no one thinks that everything he says can be taken as fact. He even says himself:

> My business is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it – and that may be taken to apply to this book as a whole.
>
> (Herodotus 7.152; trans. de Sélincourt)

So even in the fifth century BCE, history was as much about belief as about truth. You will read several ancient historians during your study of the Classical world. To explore the question of what they thought it meant to write history is immensely rewarding. The downside is that historiography is no more straightforward a source than any other. As you read ancient historians, always ask yourself what you think their aim is and how reliable you consider their evidence to be.

Philosophy

This is yet another essentially literary source, so we can be brief. In fact, as in the case of history, its distinction from literature is anything but cut and dried. The only reason we mention it here separately is because we want to make it explicit that almost everything we have said for literature holds for philosophy too. Many varieties of philosophy aim to find absolute truths. In this respect, philosophy is less concerned with particular periods and places than is, for instance, historiography. You may study what the Roman philosopher Seneca had to say about the ‘right’ life, some of which we can empathise with even now. He didn't try to say anything specifically historical about the Classical world. At the same time, though, Seneca had close ties with the emperor Nero. Moreover, he, like everyone else, was shaped by the times he lived in. Thus philosophy, like literature, can be used as a source for exploring the Classical world, yet it can also be studied as part of our contemporary world since we can still ask some of the same philosophical questions that were asked in the ancient world, and of course reason in similar ways.

Documents

Various texts survive from the ancient world that don’t fit into any of the categories above. Most of them are categorised as ‘documentary’. These can be parts of archives, or public commemorations such as tombstones, or inventories, or even shopping lists. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of such material is now lost (after all, even today, a shopping list and many company and government records have a lower hope of long-term survival than a novel). Nonetheless, some of them have survived, mostly in one of two ways.

They were either recorded in inscriptions on stone which didn’t need as much care as paper to be preserved; or they were recorded on papyrus in a very dry place, usually Egypt, and came down to us even though they were thrown onto a (very dry) rubbish heap. Such documentary inscriptions and papyri add a further dimension to our exploration of the Classical world, as they show us aspects that literature, philosophy or art don't care so much about: the more profane and humdrum sort of things. Moreover, they may often be less biased in their evidence than what a historian or a philosopher has to say (how much room is there for bias on a shopping list?). Nonetheless, they too need careful evaluation. If you find a shopping list in the sands of Egypt, you can immediately draw conclusions about the sorts of things people bought in Egypt, but you will find

yourself immediately wanting to know who these people were: rich or poor, natives or foreign, and so on. Not even documentary sources are completely straightforward.

A further, more general, issue relating to written sources follows on from these considerations about survival. Greek or Latin texts have been translated into many other languages, and all the texts you study here will be translated into English. But as critical scholars we should ask about the nature of the Greek or Latin text that was translated into English (or indeed texts in any of the other languages used in the ancient world). In the case of an inscription, the text may well have survived on stone in an easily legible form, perhaps stored in a museum or still in its original position *(in situ*) on an archaeological site. In this ideal case, the establishment of the text should be relatively straightforward, and all that is required is an accurate copying of the texts and its publication in a collection of inscriptions. For example, it might contain some abbreviations of names or titles; we imagine that a scholar publishing their original reading of an inscription might be able to come up with a suitable ‘expansion’ of the abbreviation, and so produce an authoritative text readable in the original language and translated as required.

Unfortunately, reality is rarely that simple. Often an inscription may be incomplete because the stone upon which it was inscribed is broken and part of the original text is missing. In such cases it may be possible to reconstruct the missing letters or words by comparison with other surviving inscriptions or lexicons of words used on inscriptions, but obviously the more that is missing, the less certain the reconstruction will be. Resolving such problems forms the basis of many academic debates, and ideally a consensus can be reached; reconstructed passages of ancient texts are almost always indicated as such, usually with the reconstructed sections contained in square parentheses.

Problems of this type occur on stone, but even more so on fragile materials. Ancient documents written on papyrus and other fragile materials do survive in their original form, but they are often fragmentary and the handwriting and language can be extremely challenging to read. Ancient texts such as Homer or Herodotus do occasionally survive as papyri, but more often they have survived as manuscripts through a process of repeated copying in antiquity, during the Middle Ages and later. The copying ensured their survival, but also created the possibility of errors during copying being incorporated, as well as providing an opportunity for copyists to ‘correct’ or clarify passages they either could not read or could not understand. As a result, many ancient texts have survived in several different versions and one task of Classical scholarship is to collate various manuscripts in order to produce a reliable text that can be published and form the foundation for further study (either in the original language or in translation). Such publications of texts are often called ‘editions’, and in matters of hair-splitting detail it might be necessary to state which edition of an ancient text is being referred to.

Finally, there is the issue of translation itself. In most introductory courses, you should read all sources in translation. In this course, we just want to make three general points:

1. Don’t forget that what you're reading are translations. In particular, the more you try to come to terms with details of phrasing, the more you need to ask to what degree the phrasing is an aspect of the translation rather than the original Greek or Latin text.
2. However, we suggest that you see this as an opportunity as much as a drawback. The most obvious thing to do is to compare different translations. This allows you to counteract the risk of being misled by a translator. More than that, though, it will almost certainly show you things about the text that you might have missed had you simply read it in the original. Comparing translations will allow you to see how the tone, mood and vocabulary of a text have been interpreted by different scholars – something to which we don’t normally have access when we read a text in its original language.

3. Lastly, it is inevitable that courses on the Classical world, including this course itself and A219, will introduce you to a number of key terms in Greek and Latin. Every language and culture has terms that we find particularly difficult to translate into other languages and cultures. Often these terms have a lot to say about the culture in question. As you progress in your studies on the Classical world, you should be familiar with several such terms.

To round off this section, and before moving on to modern scholarship, we'll highlight a couple of general points applying to all the different ancient sources in different ways:

- All sources have contexts. These contexts can be physical, social, historical, stylistic, literary, political, performative and many other things. The contexts will shape both the way the source was produced – written, built, drawn, buried and so on – and the way it was perceived. Moreover, all sources still have contexts today. The Colosseum (now a half-ruin) is in the middle of a modern city; Sophocles' *Antigone* is performed in modern theatres; while arrowheads unearthed on a battle site are locked up in a store room. The modern contexts will inevitably influence your perceptions, just as the ancient contexts will have shaped ancient perceptions. One of the most crucial things in working with ancient sources is to get into the habit of asking yourself routinely what the ancient and modern contexts of a source are, and to start your interpretation of the source from there. And it is equally crucial to look for more than just one context. Take a scene in *Antigone*. One ancient context is the Athenian outdoor theatre in which the play was performed; another is Athenian concepts of justice; and yet another is simply the context within the play itself, and so on. There will almost always be more than one context to take into account. Judging which contexts are more or less important can be one of the major challenges of studying ancient material.
- Different kinds of sources are available for different issues, regions and periods. Sometimes the most difficult thing about sources isn't interpreting the sources that you have, but the sources that you don't have. This sounds paradoxical, but is quite simple and fairly important. It is inevitable that we concentrate on areas where we have rich sources. So, for instance, we will talk more about Athens than any other Greek city, and more about Rome than any other Roman city. The risk is that for you, Classical Greece becomes just Athens. Similarly, more men than women are covered in studies of the Classical world, because the sources are so much richer about men than about women. Or we may concentrate too much on the social and political elite because their words and deeds survive in the sources. Whatever you study, try to remind yourself that the evidence we have today will hardly ever be balanced. Rather it is that which happens to have survived 1,500–3,000 years later.

2.4 Modern sources

As set out in Figure 1, modern sources, too, fall into various subcategories. You'll look at some of them in more detail a little later. For now let's just say that most of the sources you will use in this course are broadly *scholarly:* publications written by people with an expertise in the Classical world. You will come back later to other sources, in particular the internet, which raise questions in their own right.

Scholarly publications try to do exactly what you will do in this course: explore the Classical world. And like you, they do so by using ancient sources as well as earlier modern scholarship. We stressed at some length that you need to ask questions about the reliability of ancient sources when using them. So what about modern scholarship and its reliability? This is quite a different question, with different issues. First, you can

probably assume that the modern scholars share the bulk of your assumptions about truth, facts, and the aims of academic work, in a way you can't in the case of authors such as Tacitus, Herodotus or any other ancient source. In this sense you can (and generally will have to) rely on them.

On the other hand, modern sources, scholarly or otherwise, aren't really evidence in the same way, and this is very important indeed. Some people would even refuse to call them 'sources', with some justification. You can say: 'I think it is likely that the population of Attica decreased in the course of the Archaic period. Our evidence for that is a decrease in the number of graves during this period.' As mentioned earlier, you will then have to discuss rival interpretations of the same evidence, but as such this is a perfectly valid way of arguing. But you can't say: 'I think it is likely that the population of Attica decreased in the course of the archaic period. My evidence for that is the course *Introducing the Classical world*', or 'My evidence for that is the book that scholar X, Y, or Z wrote.' Those scholars have *interpreted* evidence; their books *aren't* evidence. This is a crucial point to remember when you communicate your understanding to others.

So if secondary literature isn't evidence, what is it? Or rather, why use it? One way of answering this question is to say that it presents a kind of short cut. If you have one year to explore the ancient world, you could spend it exclusively on looking at the ancient evidence. The likelihood is, though, that without the guidance of secondary sources your progress would be very slow. Secondary literature gives you access to the long tradition of scholarship on the Classical world. That's why you will find it immensely useful. But as you read it, you will always need to ask yourself what the ancient evidence is that justifies any scholarly statements, and in fact whether you agree with those statements.

Another issue to be aware of is that the writing of the history of the ancient world has its own history. Each generation of historians is influenced by its predecessors, either improving upon or refuting previous histories. In this way, modern secondary sources also have their own histories. A famous and influential modern secondary source, for example, is Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, readily available on bookshelves in recent editions. It might appear to be an attractive short cut to the ancient world – it makes good use of the ancient evidence and some passages are a good literary read – but it first appeared in CE 1776. Therefore, it is not a very 'modern' modern secondary source. It is a product of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, written at the time of the American struggle for independence; its context is a world very different from today. As such, it has a different status and value to a modern textbook written over 200 years later. The facts it contains are not necessarily now invalid, and some of its themes – the suppression of liberty and the triumph of barbarism – may still have a resonance, but it does not consider many of the contemporary concerns of historians and has not benefited from the advances made in the centuries since it was written. In short, it is out of date, and in many ways is a better source for the Enlightenment than for the ancient world. Of course, it is easy enough to come to a judgement like this about something so old, but where and how can a line be drawn? How can we know that a secondary source is a reliable account of the ancient world?

Ideally, the most recent book on a subject should have discussed and taken into account *all* previous scholarship on the subject, and so make all of its predecessors redundant. Ideally, again, a reliable recent secondary source should be balanced, discussing other competing secondary scholarship and weighing up its strengths and weaknesses. It should also be free of polemic or distorting theoretical frameworks; or if not entirely free of them, it should at least acknowledge their presence and influence. Primary sources should be critically discussed, and assertions supported by argument and reference to other evidence and scholarship.

The function of secondary literature as a short cut – summarising and criticising earlier generations – explains some of the scholarly conventions of this kind of source:

1. *References to primary sources*. Since it is the ancient evidence that counts, secondary literature will normally clearly identify the primary evidence behind a claim. Sometimes such references are put into the text itself; sometimes they are in brackets; sometimes they are in footnotes; and this helps to build up the authority of a secondary source. You, in turn, should learn to adopt a similar discipline.
2. *References to secondary literature*. As we have just said, secondary literature gives you access not just to the learning of one particular scholar but to the tradition of Classical scholarship more generally; that is, other books or articles containing the results of the studies of other modern scholars. Whoever is the author of one particular modern source will themselves have used earlier discussions of related issues. Partly because unacknowledged appropriation of other people's ideas is a type of theft called plagiarism, and partly because it is helpful for the reader to know where else to look, secondary literature will normally be careful to point out not just what primary evidence supports a claim, but also which modern sources have informed the writing. There are different ways of doing that, but the most common is to use brackets or footnotes on the relevant page, and then a bibliography at the back, gathering the various items referred to. This is another element of modern scholarship that when carefully done helps to establish its authority.

A further factor that should be considered is who wrote the book. One would expect that a widely known expert on a subject should be qualified to produce a reliable secondary source, but that is no sure guide. Scholars are not generally household names, and those that appear in the media may spend more time with television producers than with ancient sources! And even if an author has impeccable credentials, that is no guarantee of a reliable book, especially if it is simply presented as opinion rather than argument supported by evidence. However, since a subject such as Classical Studies is based upon interpretation, critical argument and debate, rather than independently verifiable facts, a single book will never be the last word on a subject, and the most important thing is to adopt a critically questioning approach to each and every kind of source you encounter. Once again: modern sources aren't sources in the same way as ancient sources. They are not evidence.

2.5 Books and the internet as sources

Finally, let's come back to the different types of modern sources as indicated in Figure 1. Many of these types are familiar to you in one way or another, so we can be brief. The Open University course that this OpenLearn course originated from used set books that students registered with The Open University were required to purchase. Three of them are clearly modern scholarship: *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization (OCCC), A Brief History of Ancient Greece* (*BHAG*) and *Rome in the Late Republic* (Beard and Crawford). The other two, *The Odyssey* and Pliny's *Letters*, are both translations of ancient sources. You are not expected to read these books in order to complete this course, but their details have been included in the References section in case you wish to find out more about this subject.

The *OCCC* is an encyclopedia; it has succinct entries providing information about aspects of the ancient world, and while it rarely goes into a detailed discussion of sources, it does identify the sources and attempt to give you a reliable starting point. *BHAG* and Beard and Crawford are textbooks. They present a larger-scale overview of our understanding of the topics in question (Greece and late republican Rome respectively). You will shortly do a

couple of activities to familiarise yourself with the particular issues involved in using these sources.

The most detailed form of modern source is the scholarly article, often in an academic journal, or book-length monographs. The difference between such specialist work and textbooks is on a sliding scale, rather than hard and fast. Perhaps the most important difference is the degree to which the work in question advances scholarship and constitutes a contribution to the sum of knowledge about the Classical world. There is little, if anything, in *BHAG* that is new scholarship; the aim of *BHAG* is to summarise existing thought and present an easily accessible account. Beard and Crawford, by contrast, are at least one step closer to scholarly monographs; part of what they do is put forward new suggestions in a way that you won't find in *BHAG*

Yet another, particularly problematic, modern source is the internet. Students registered on the Open University course that this OpenLearn course is taken from used some internet applications that have been designed for them, but OpenLearn is unable to provide these in this short extract of the course. However, it is possible to use the internet to find information that isn't provided here. It is worth, therefore, pointing out the most distinctive feature of the internet as a source: anyone can publish more or less anything they like very easily. This has the great advantage of making an enormous amount of material accessible to you in a way it wasn't to previous generations. But it has the great disadvantage that there is often no quality assurance (or at least this is the case at the time of writing). If you buy a book – and certainly if you're encouraged to buy a book as part of a course – you can at least hope that the publisher will have done some work to ensure a certain degree of accuracy; you can assess the credentials of the author and look for a bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. This isn't so easy to check when you use the internet. Often it is impossible to identify the author, and supporting sources may not be apparent. So you should be even more critically thoughtful about the accuracy of information if it is taken from the internet.'

Activity 3

Have a look at the *OCCC* entry for 'tourism'.

Tourism

As you read it, note down the sources, ancient and modern, that are referred to, and try to organise them using our classifications above. (Remember: we divided ancient sources into archaeology, visual arts, literature, historiography, and documents.) You will find that many sources are abbreviated. This is normal practice in academic publications. Usefully, the *OCCC* has a complete list of abbreviations (which you may well find helpful when consulting other books, too). If you have access to the *OCCC*, for example, in your local library, you may like to look up abbreviations that you don't understand. There will then probably still be sources left which you don't know how to classify, since you have not read them (in fact, some of them are really quite obscure). If you are pressed for time, simply add a category headed 'don't know' to your list of classifications. If you have more time, you could look up the cross-referenced entries to elsewhere in the *OCCC* and check what sort of sources they are. In any case, look up at least one of the sources you don't know, to help you familiarise yourself with the *OCCC* and the quality of the information and discussion it contains.

An example list is as follows:

- Ancient sources

Art history / archaeology: the colossi of Memnon and other pharaonic monuments.
Literature: Isocrates, *Trapeziticus 17.4;* Heraclides Criticus, *On the Cities in Greece;* Pausanias.
Historiography: Herodotus 1.30; Pausanias.
Documents: Tebtunis Papyri 1.33; Greek and Roman graffiti.

- Modern sources

  Pfister, E (1951): an edition.
  Austin 83: a translation.
  Bagnall and Derow 58: an edition of a manuscript.

As already said, there is no reason why you should have been able to categorise all these sources, but hopefully you will have succeeded with a few of them! Now we'd like to add a few comments, with the aim of giving you an idea of what sort of book the *OCCC* is and how you will be able to use it.

1. The references are frequent, detailed and precise. The *OCCC* is very compressed, packing a lot of material into a short space. This means that you will often find it impossible to understand all the detail at first. In most cases, when working with the *OCCC*, it will not be necessary for you to master all the detail, but this shouldn't deter you. For example, we'd never heard of Isocrates' work *Trapeziticus* before reading the 'tourism' entry, and we'd be surprised if many of the course team had! However, using the *OCCC*, you can find out more and more detail the more you dig. If you looked up some of the sources you didn't know, you have already started this process.
2. Most of the sources are ancient. This is partly to do with the history of the *OCCC*, which is based on *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. One of the key differences is that *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* gives bibliographies of modern sources at the end of each entry, while the *OCCC* doesn't. This observation provides a useful reminder of the privileged status of primary evidence. To support the description of ancient tourism, the author felt it necessary to cite numerous primary and no secondary sources, only editions and translations of primary sources.
3. We noticed that there are more word-based sources than those based on material culture. The only reference to material culture we found is in general terms to the 'colossi of Memnon and other pharaonic monuments'. To explain this imbalance, we would need to go into more detail about the subject. It might be that more sources about tourism survive from literature, historiography and philosophy than from art and archaeology. Alternatively, the author may have a preference for written sources; after all, it is the written graffiti and literary associations that get mentioned in the caption more than the statues themselves. It may be the case that the dictionary style, with short articles and little space for illustrations, makes it harder to integrate material culture. Another possible explanation is that less research has been undertaken on the material evidence for ancient tourism. Whichever of these factors come into play, we hope you, too, saw this imbalance.
4. Finally, some sources are referred to very specifically ('Hdt 1.30'), while others are quite vague ('colossi of Memnon and other pharaonic monuments'; 'Pausanias'). Why is that? The precise references are about very specific facts, so for example the paragraph 'Hdt 1.30' starts:

> For this reason, then – and also no doubt for the pleasure of foreign travel – Solon left home and, after a visit to the court of Amasis in Egypt, went to Sardis to see Croesus.
>
> Croesus entertained him hospitably in the palace, and three or four days after his arrival instructed some servants to take him on a tour of the royal treasuries and point out the richness and magnificence of everything.
>
> (Herodotus 1.30; trans. de Sélincourt)

The translation indicates that the ancient text precisely reports the fact provided in the *OCCC* entry. Meanwhile, the more general references are about recurring facts: there are many Greek and Latin graffiti. The work of Pausanias almost entirely consists of descriptions of parts of Greece he visited and was informed about. Wherever possible, give a precise reference, but you don't necessarily need to give such precise references when you refer to a widespread and well-known phenomenon.

So much, then, for the *OCCC*. Textbooks like *BHAG* are rather different kinds of sources and require different skills in using them. The next activity is aimed at introducing these skills, at the same time as giving you some initial practice in working with ancient sources.

Activity 4

In the Open University course this OpenLearn course was taken from, there was a section on Aeschylus' play *Persians*, which is set in the context of the Persian invasion of Greece at the beginning of the fifth century BCE. By way of a sneak preview, we will focus in this activity on one aspect of one battle in the course of this invasion. For our purposes the merest outline of the context is enough. Xerxes, the Persian king, invaded Greece with a massive army, on both sea and land. The Greeks let him take some regions without putting up much resistance, but then confronted him at a narrow pass between the mountains and the sea, called Thermopylae. In the event they lost the battle, but only after intense fighting. Most of them, including their leader, the Spartan Leonidas, died. *BHAG* has an account of this battle. Read this account now.

Thermophylae

We want to focus only on the very last section in this short paragraph, starting with the decapitation of Leonidas (‘On Xerxes’ orders … ‘ up to and including the two-line epitaph). Modern scholarship, we said earlier on, are based on ancient sources, and that's why they are often called ‘secondary’. The most important ancient, or ‘primary’, source here is the historian Herodotus, whom we have already mentioned a few times. His account of the Battle of Thermopylae is lengthy, which is why we concentrate on the aftermath of the battle. Two sections of his narrative are relevant to our passage: Book 7, Chapters 228 and 238, or 7.228 and 7.238 for short.

Next read these two sections of Herodotus (below). There will be some detail (in particular names) that you might not know. This happens quite frequently when you read ancient texts, and isn't just because you may not have studied the Classical world before. The important thing is to try to use, understand and evaluate the texts nonetheless, to the degree that you are able.

Herodotus

Once you have read the two Herodotus passages, compare them to the passage at the end of the paragraph in *BHAG* (if you have access to it), and reflect on the following questions:

1. What do you learn about the way you can use ancient sources like Herodotus?
2. What do you learn about the way you can use modern scholarship like *BHAG*?

No doubt your thoughts aren't quite the same as ours. This is unavoidable in activities that demand a good deal of personal judgement (and, as we said before, that's the case for the majority of activities in this course). But we hope that there are enough points of contact between your way of approaching the question and ours to make our discussion useful to you. We will take the questions one by one.

1. One obvious (perhaps all too obvious) point to make is that the two Herodotus passages treating the events in question are separate. In writing their paragraph, the authors of *BHAG* had to collect these two different passages and put them together. This is one of the most fundamental aspects of using ancient sources: you will need to collect different sources and put them together. In this case, the two different sources come from the same overall source (Herodotus). In other cases, they will come from different places altogether.

   Collecting, however, is only one aspect of what the *BHAG* authors did here. They also *selected*. Both passages had a lot of detail that didn't make it into *BHAG:* three little poems of which *BHAG* only prints the second one, for instance, and Herodotus' views on how Persians usually treat their enemies after battle, which weren't selected for inclusion in the textbook. The *BHAG* authors will have studied both passages, decided which detail is particularly important or relevant for their overall account of the battle at Thermopylae, and made their selection accordingly. This close study followed by selection is a standard practice in using ancient sources.

   Related to this selection process is the issue of evaluation. Evaluation isn't explicit in the *BHAG* passage but can still be felt rather faintly. For instance, the *BHAG* authors must have decided that some basic details in Herodotus were correct, such as the epitaph they quote and Xerxes' orders to decapitate Leonidas. Perhaps (but this is pure speculation) they decided that other aspects were less reliable and that's why they left them out (such as Herodotus' thoughts about the exceptionality of the treatment administered to Leonidas). And their rather cagey phrase ‘attributed to Simonides’ suggests that they don't have complete trust in the reliability of whatever source stated that the poet Simonides is the author of that epitaph. (That source is probably not Herodotus: he is rather vague about this issue, it seems. What do you think?) Evaluation, too, is an essential aspect of work with ancient sources. Wherever you use ancient sources, you have to ask yourself how reliable you think they are. The answer is of course different from case to case.

   2. What does all this mean for the way you can use *BHAG?* Well, perhaps the most important thing is that you should have worked out by now that even a textbook like *BHAG* doesn't simply tell you ‘the facts’ but makes its own choices about what to collect, select, suppress, trust, distrust and so on. The choices may be good (as they usually are) or they may be less good (as they sometimes are – no book is perfect), but they are always choices. Going back to the ancient sources will always tell you further things, and is therefore crucial whenever you want to get to the bottom of something.

> Next, you have become familiar with some of the habits of *BHAG*. In particular, the authors are rather silent about how they collect, select and evaluate. The reason you now know which Herodotus passages are at the bottom of their account is that we worked it out for you (you could have done it yourself, but either way the point is that *BHAG* doesn't tell you). Other books are different, and you, as a matter of course, should be much more explicit than *BHAG*. Another aspect in which *BHAG* is silent is the rationale for its choices. Why the second of the three epigrams? Perhaps because it is the most famous one? (There are many later imitations, both in antiquity and in modern literature.) Or because they think it captures something about the Battle of Thermopylae that the others don't? Or do they like the uplifting tone of it and want us to go away with a rather heroic version of the Greeks at Thermopylae? And why do they leave out Herodotus' comment that the Persians usually treat their enemies with more respect? Don't they believe it? Or do they want to have only information specific to Thermopylae here? Or do they want to create a crueller image of Xerxes? Again, we don't know. Modern scholars, just like ancient sources, have a bias, and it is important to think about bias when dealing with both kinds of source.

As we have pointed to some issues to be aware of when reading *BHAG*, we should probably stress that none of this is intended to warn you against using *BHAG*. On the contrary, the last two activities were designed to get you into the habit of using both the *OCCC* and *BHAG* as much as possible, but to use them critically. In their different ways, they are a mine of information – the *OCCC* for condensed accounts of numerous aspects of the Classical world, and *BHAG* for a more expansive narrative of Greek history. As should have become clear, they can't be treated as the last word, but they can be a good summary and a pointer to where to find out more.

3 Beginning to explore

With your initial work on sources and on what it may mean to ‘explore the Classical world’ under your belt, you're now in a good position to start exploring. To lay the foundations for your explorations, you will in this section do some work on ancient times and places. Not least since you will cover a wide range of materials from different periods and locations, it will be important for you to know how they all fit together.

3.1 Ancient time

Timelines have been created for this course. Like all timelines, they provide sets of important events and dates in the periods being studied, but in addition this one allows learners to add their own dates as they work on the various periods being studied.

In this course we would like to illustrate some of the issues that arise in connection with timelines, so you will be working with a ‘general’ timeline as an example. The next activity should give you a flavour of working with timelines.

Activity 5

Read quickly through the ‘general’ timeline given below. As you read through it, don't try to remember every entry, but for now think instead about the sort of entries. What sort of entries have been entered on the timeline?

1600–1150 BCE	Mycenaean civilisation in Greece.
c. 1250 BCE	Traditional date of the Trojan War.
900–800 BCE	Homer active. Greek alphabet created from Phoenician models.
753 BCE	Traditional date of the founding of Rome.
509 BCE	Founding of the Roman Republic.
508 BCE	Cleisthenes’ reforms in Athens. Often taken as the start date for democracy.
490 and 480–79 BCE	Persian invasions of mainland Greece defeated.
431–04 BCE	Peloponnesian War: Sparta eventually defeats Athens.
399 BCE	Trial and execution of Socrates.
359–36 BCE	Philip II is King of Macedon. Eventually defeats Athens and Thebes.
336–23 BCE	Alexander (‘the Great’) is King of Macedon. Greatly increases his kingdom.
300–100 BCE	Alexandria is prominent centre of learning in the Greek world.
295 BCE	Battle of Sentinum: Romans defeat Etruscans, Umbrians and Gauls and so dominate Italy.
264–41 BCE	First Punic War: Rome against Carthage.
218–01 BCE	Second Punic War: Carthaginians led by Hannibal ravage Italy.

149–46 BCE	Third Punic War.
146 BCE	Macedonia becomes Roman province. Corinth is destroyed by the Romans. Carthage is destroyed by the Romans.
121 BCE	Murder of Gaius Gracchus.
88–82 BCE	Civil war between Marius and Sulla.
49 BCE	Julius Caesar starts a civil war by crossing the Rubicon.
44 BCE	Julius Caesar murdered (15 March).
31 BCE	Octavian defeats Antony and Cleopatra at Actium and becomes sole ruler.
27 BCE	Octavian receives title Augustus.
CE14	Tiberius becomes second Emperor.
CE 69	Civil war: 'the year of the four emperors' ends with Vespasian victorious.
CE 79	Eruption of Mt Vesuvius destroys Pompeii and Herculaneum.
CE 98–117	Trajan is Emperor.
CE 117–38	Hadrian is Emperor.
CE 235–84	'Third century crisis': a period of anarchy.
CE 284–305	Diocletian is Emperor.
CE 306–37	Constantine I is Emperor.
CE 410	Sack of Rome by the Goths.

There are obviously different ways of classifying the entries. Perhaps the most obvious distinction is short events of less than a year, and longer events happening over a span of time. Another way of classifying would be to say that there are broadly political entries (wars, successions of rulers, and so on) and broadly cultural entries (civilisations, artistic achievements, and so on). Or we could say that some entries are about individual people (lives, deaths) while others are about more anonymous events (wars and so on).

Obviously, choices have been made about the sorts of things to include in drawing up the timeline (in this case by the course authors). These choices have been driven by a view of what matters more and what less, but also by what can easily be put on a timeline and what can't. What sort of clothes or music were fashionable in Sparta in a particular year? When in the Roman empire were suicide rates highest? These points aren't entered on the timeline, partly because it is too difficult to apply a date to them or the necessary information is simply not available from the ancient world. Perhaps they aren't very important. But even if they are, we simply don't have the precise sort of information that would allow us to give an answer.

Effectively, we are trying to make two points, both of which you should take forward with you for future reference:

1. There is more than one way of exploring ancient Greece and Rome. Different people ask different questions, and – back to the timeline – are interested in different dates. The more you take care to ask your own questions and explore what interests you the most, the more you will get out of studying this subject. The dates on the timeline are significant, and we hope by reading through them you have already begun to learn about the Classical world, but they aren't the only important dates and they are not a definitive list of what happened in history. They are the result of a process of collection and selection. You can use the timeline to add your own selections and develop a personalised timeline.
2. Timelines need to be treated with care in another way too. They tend to privilege events for which we know a date. Since there are many things that are somehow important, for which we don't know the date, there is a risk that they get forgotten. One remedy is to introduce approximate dates, 'circa' *(c.*) or 'from … until … ', but that only goes so far. For everything you read on a timeline, and for everything you learn, it's worth asking yourself what else you're *not* reading and *not* learning because they have not been selected.

Now you'll take your next step in your work on ancient chronology.

Activity 6

Read 'People, worlds and time' from *Experiencing the Classical World* by Phil Perkins. As you read it, ask yourself how it is relevant to the timelines. Does it change the way you think about them in any way?

People, worlds and time.

Like all exploring, this is to some degree personal. So here are *our* three points. You are likely to have different ones.

1. To start with the most prosaic, there is the issue of BCE/CE. As discussed earlier, this course adopts the format BCE and CE as opposed to BC/AD, and you will have noticed this already on the timeline. The essay both explains some of the reasons (to remove the specifically Christian connotations of BC/AD), and also points out that, in a way, little is resolved, since the year everything is pegged to remains determined by traditions about the birth of Christ. The Greeks and Romans, as the essay points out, wouldn't have used anything like it, and that suggests – inevitably – that the timelines are written from our perspective, and not that of the Greeks and Romans. That's perfectly right and proper, of course, but again raises questions about what is included and what is not. There is no way of telling what the Romans or Greeks would have put in their own timeline (in fact, they would no doubt have had many different views), but one thing is sure: it would have been different from what is on your timelines now. This doesn't make the timelines invalid, but it means that you have to be aware that they will only get you so close in finding out what the Classical world was like.
2. Next, the discussion in 'People, worlds and time' of the beginning and end of the Classical world is relevant. It explains why 814 BCE is often taken as a conventional start date, and why CE 476 (and indeed later dates) serve as the end point. The timelines, though, start earlier, don't include 814 BCE and don't

end exactly in CE 476. This underlines the pertinence of the points in the essay about the difficulty of collecting and selecting a precise start and end date.

3. Our third observation concerns periodisation, the main topic of the essay. The essay discusses at some points the rationale, challenges and dangers of periodisation. However, we find the timelines don't really reflect it. Events are listed chronologically, but it doesn't group them in periods. This is a dimension that seems to be missing from them.

So let's close this gap.

Activity 7

As ‘People, worlds and time’ explains, periodisation is an important tool for getting a handle on the Classical world, and for seeing connections. Table 1.1 of the essay shows a table of periods that are often used to segment ancient chronology. Go through the part of the table labelled ‘Greece’ and try to identify markers for the end and beginning of periods in the timeline. Which entry (if any) marks the end of the Archaic period and the beginning of the Classical period? Which entry (if any) marks the end of the Classical period and the beginning of the Hellenistic period? And so on.

To start with, the earliest period (the Iron Age/'Dark Age’) appears to end at 800 BCE but this date does not appear on the timeline. There is an entry for *c*. 1100–776 BCE for the ‘Dark Age’, and then 776 BCE is listed as the date of the first Olympian Games, but presumably a slightly earlier date was selected for this imprecise boundary when the table was drawn up. The Orientalising period – within the Archaic period – does not directly appear in the timeline; there is only a mention of the Assyrian empire and a Phoenician source that may be related to anything Oriental. This is because the timeline focuses upon dates and events, while the Orientalising period is most readily characterised by its art. The end of the Archaic period coincides with the entry for 480–49 BCE, the second Persian invasion that is discussed in the essay; yet remarkably, the sack of Athens is not listed in the timeline (you could add it if you wish). A similar omission occurs with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE. Between these dates, the timeline mentions events and personalities, but it cannot on its own flesh out the character of the Classical period. This would take a more detailed investigation of some of these dates but this is outside the scope of this course. From this activity of mapping periods against the timeline, you can see that the timeline is merely a selection of events and provides an impression of clarity that serves as a framework and starting point for further exploration.

To finish off your initial work on chronology, focus on the first of these boundaries between periods: between the Archaic and the Classical period. ‘People, worlds and time’ has fixed it at the year 479 BCE.

Activity 8

Have another look at the events on the timeline surrounding the year 479 BCE. In addition, have a look at the last three paragraphs of the section on the Archaic age in the *OCCC* entry on 'Greece (prehistory and history)' (below). On this basis, consider ways in which 479 BCE is a meaningful period boundary, and what ways it might be misleading to call this year a period boundary.

Greece

As you will have noticed, the events in question come under the heading of the 'Persian Wars'. We will not go into great detail here, but we would like to say a few things now about the Persian Wars as the end of a period.

Let's start with ways in which they are indeed exactly that: the end of a period. Clearly, the essay isn't alone and the *OCCC*, too, has 479 BCE as the last date in its discussion of the Archaic period of Greece. There are good reasons. As the *OCCC* points out, the Persian Wars were immensely important to the way the Greeks understood themselves. Overnight almost, they had become the victors over a mighty empire. The essay stresses that often it is only hindsight that makes us see a particular boundary as significant. In the case of the Persian Wars, this wasn't the case – much fifth-century BCE poetry, drama, architecture, oratory and history-writing was to look back at these events as a turning point.

Yet there are some problems:

1. There is a problem with the year 479 BCE. Yes, you might say, the Greeks won major military victories in Salamis and Plataea. But this wasn't the end of the Persian Wars: further battles followed later. If you were able to ask an Athenian in the year 478 BCE about the previous year, we suspect he or she would say that a great victory had been won, but that the danger was far from over. In other words, the end of the Persian Wars wasn't short and sharp.
2. Even the Persian Wars as a whole, with their drawn-out ending, aren't in all ways the end of an era and the beginning of something new. You may have noticed in the *OCCC* that the Persian Wars were to some degree the result of something called Cleisthenes' democratic reforms (you can look them up under 'Cleisthenes' in the *OCCC* if you're curious, but this isn't necessary for the point here), which in turn were in some ways a follow-on from Solon's reforms. In other words, the new self-confidence and 'restlessness' as the *OCCC* puts it, goes back a long way. The Greek defeat of the Persians, momentous as it was, can also be seen as part of a continuous development. Finally, it is important to remember that all this is from the Greek perspective. To the Persians, these wars were no doubt a painful defeat. But it was a defeat that didn't threaten their core empire in any way. Our sources are weak here, but it is doubtful that, to them, 479 BCE was the boundary of two periods.

In summary, as soon as you hold a magnifying glass over the boundary of two periods, or indeed over many important historical dates, you find that things get messy. This isn't a reason not to have boundaries. As the essay points out, such boundaries are crucial for structuring and understanding history. But it's equally crucial not to become their slave. Between them, we hope 'People, worlds and time' and the work you have already done on the timelines will provide a foundation for your work on the Classical world. We would encourage you to return to them throughout, both to give you a sense of perspective across the ancient world, and to help you think about what it means to say that something

happened in a particular year. Finally, once more, we would encourage you to continue customising your timelines.

3.2 Ancient places

In the previous section you have been studying time: now you need to move on to that other great regulator of human activity – place. You may already have a firm grip of the geography of the Mediterranean region and this will give you a head start, but as you will discover, places in the past were not the same as they are now.

The extent of the Greeks' geographical knowledge of the world can be reconstructed from considering the regions and places mentioned by various authors, notably Herodotus (*c.450* BCE). Later, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, rather detailed descriptions of the earth's surface, including the concept of latitude and longitude, were developed in order to fix places in geographical space. If you read the *OCCC* entry for 'geography', you will soon see that the Greeks had quite complex ideas about the subject. However, this is not the place to go into such detail; for now, the important thing is to make sure that you acquire (or refresh) a knowledge of the geography of the Classical world. Knowing where places were, which places were near each other and which were distant, will enrich your exploration of the ancient world. You will be doing this largely through the study of maps, but a few introductory points need to be made before you start.

1. A first point is that the conformation of the earth's surface has changed since antiquity. A clear example of change is in coastlines, caused either by rising or falling sea level, or by alluviation – where rivers wash material downstream leading to a filling of valley bottoms and the advance of the coastline into shallow sea areas. In most low-lying areas of the eastern Mediterranean, coastlines have changed as rivers have silted up and coastal lagoons have dried up. Some of this change has natural causes (e.g. earthquakes and volcanic eruptions), but human impact on the environment, particularly deforestation and intensive agriculture, often seems to have led to changes in the landscape. A consequence of this change is that maps of the modern world do not necessarily accurately show the landforms and coasts of the ancient world. This change can be significant. For example, at Thermopylae, the scene of the battle described by Herodotus, is a narrow stretch of land between the mountain and the sea, but now the mountain is at least five kilometres from the sea and up to twenty metres of sediment have been laid down, obscuring the ancient topography and making it impossible to relate the description of the battle to the modern landforms. Generally, scientific investigations of landscape development are needed to detail such changes; in this case drilling in the valley bottom enabled the reconstruction of an approximate coastline in CE 480 (Kraft et al., 1987).
2. A second point to remember is that the names of places in the ancient world are usually different from place names in the modern world. So, for example, the site believed to be Troy is at the modern place called Hissarlik. In other cases, the modern name is recognisably related to the ancient name, so the modern Greek place name Sparti is the site of Sparta, Korinthos the site of Corinth and Athinai, Athens. Already a further complication should be evident: for many places there is a commonly used name in the English language. Sparta, Corinth and Athens are all Anglicisations of the ancient Greek place names. As if that was not enough, Greek place names and proper nouns are often 'Latinised' when they are spoken or written without using the Greek alphabet (the Latinisation can be either the name that was current during the Roman empire, or a newly-coined Latinised spelling). Thus our trio of places when Latinised becomes Sparta, Corinthus and Athenae. As mentioned

before, we have used Latinised ancient place names unless there is a commonly used Anglicised version.

The geography of the Classical world

You will now be given the opportunity to gain some background knowledge of places and regions in the Classical world. The aim is to give you a grasp of this geography so that as you learn more about the Classical world, you will be able to locate the places you study and put them in relation to one another without having to consult a map all the time.

Activity 9

Click on the link below to open Map 1

Map 1

Click on the link below to open Map 2 part 1

Map 2 part 1

Click on the link below to open Map 2 part 2

Map 2 part 2

Locate the following places on Map 1 ('Greece and the Aegean World') or Map 2 parts 1 and 2 ('The Hellenistic World') in the *OCCC*. The grid locations are provided to help you locate the places on the map, and all places are on Map 1 unless stated otherwise.

Regions: Macedonia Ba, Thrace Ca, Thessaly Bb, Euboea Bc/Cc, Boetia Bc, Phocis Bc, Attica Cc, Peloponnese Ac/Bc/Bd, Argolis Bc, Arcadia Bc, Messenia Ad/Bd, Laconia Bd, Ionia Dc, Lydia Eb, Phrygia Fb, Caria Ec.

Islands: Cyprus Cc (on Map 2), Crete Ac (on Map 2), Rhodes Ed, Samos Dc, Chios Dc, Lesbos Db, Lemnos Cb, Delos Cc, Naxos Dd, Melos Cd, Aegina Bc, Ithaca Ac, Salamis Bc.

Seas: Ionian (not named on map but west of Greece), Aegean (not named on map but between Greece and Asia Minor), Black Sea Ba/ Ca/Bb/Cb (on Map 2), Hellespont Da.

Cities: Sparta Bd, Messene Bd, Olympia Ac, Argos Bc, Mycenae Bc, Corinth Bc, Thebes Bc, Delphi Bc, Athens Cc, Marathon Cc, Troy Db, Mytilene Db, Pergamum Eb, Smyrna Ec, Sardis Ec, Ephesus Ec, Miletus Ec, Plataea Bc.

Rivers: Strymon Ba/Ca, Eurymedon, Maeander Ec.

Mountains and passes: Thermopylae Bc, Olympus Bb, Ida (as in the *BHAG* map), Parnassus Bc, Helicon Bc.

Click on the link below to open Map 3

Map 3

Locate the following places on Map 3 ('Italy') in the *OCCC*. The grid locations are provided to help you locate the places on the map.

Regions: Latium Bb, Etruria Ab, Sabina (marked as Sabines after the people who lived there) Bb, Campania Bc, Lucania Bc/Cc.

Islands: Corsica Ab, Sardinia Ac, Sicily Bd.

Seas: Tyrhennian (not named on map but west of Italy and between Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily), Adriatic (not named on map but between Italy and Dalmatia).

Cities: Mediolanum Aa, Verona Aa, Aquileia Ba, Clusium Ab, Cosa Ab, Tarquinii Ab, Ostia Bb, Rome Bb, Capua Bc, Neapolis Bb, Pompeii Bc, Paestum Bc, Elea Bc, Tarantum Cc, Panormus Bd, Selinus Bd, Agrigentum Bd, Gela Bd, Syracuse Bd, Catana Bd.

Rivers: Tiber Bb.

Click on the link below to open Map 4

Map 4

Click on the link below to open Map 5

Map 5

Locate the following places on Map 4 ('The Roman Empire (Central and Eastern Provinces)') or Map 5 ('The Roman Empire (Western Provinces)') in the *OCCC*. The grid locations are provided to help you locate the places on the map.

Cities: Carthage Ac (on Map 4), Alexandria Dd (on Map 4), Antioch Ec (on Map 4), Byzantium Db (on Map 4), Sardis Dc, Massilia Cc (on Map 5), Lugdunum Cc (on Map 5), Londinium Cb (on Map 5), Narbo Bc (on Map 5), Tarraco Bc (on Map 5), Carthago Nova Bd (on Map 5), Augusta Emerita Ad (on Map 5).

4 Conclusion

In this introductory course, we have aimed to get you started on exploring the Classical world by introducing you to the sources upon which you can build your knowledge and understanding. We have also started your exploration of both time and space in the Classical world. This is only the point of departure; from here you will go on to explore places and time in much more detail and practise more critical analysis of source materials of all types. Good luck with your studies.

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Acknowledgements

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Figure 2 Statue of Pompey Photo: © c. 1890 Alinari Archives - Anderson Archives, Florence;

Figure 3 *Pelike* (storage jar), the Lykaon Painter, Greek, Classical period. Photograph: © 2007 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston;

Figure 1.1 Photo: Alinari Archives 1985-1995

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