

Government 351
Xenophon's *Anabasis*

Skidmore College
Spring 2009
Tu Th 03:40-05:00
Library 213

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The writings of Xenophon hold special interest to students of political philosophy. Like Plato, Xenophon was a student of Socrates, and wrote dialogues about him. Unlike Plato, Xenophon also wrote non-Socratic works, including (among others) the *Hellenica* (a "history" that picks up the Peloponnesian War roughly where Thucydides' narrative leaves off), *The Education of Cyrus* (a work about Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian empire), and *The Anabasis of Cyrus*, which we will be reading in this course.

Xenophon thus comes to sight as a peculiar Socratic, one who appears to have understood the philosophic life exemplified by Socrates, and also to have had an interest in active political life. In fact, as we learn from the *Anabasis*, Xenophon himself became the leader of 10,000 Greek soldiers after their unsuccessful attempt to unseat Xerxes from the Persian throne and put Cyrus the younger in his place. He even seriously contemplated founding a Greek city in Asia Minor, rather than returning to Greece with his army. Xenophon's gripping account of his ascent to rule and his rule over the 10,000 has had a profound influence on political leaders and thinkers from Alexander the Great to Cicero to Machiavelli to Montaigne, Rousseau, Shaftesbury, and Franklin.

We therefore approach the *Anabasis* to learn from Xenophon both the fundamental principles of outstanding political leadership, and to understand better the relation between the philosophic life, to which Xenophon eventually retired, and the relation of original, Socratic wisdom to full and exemplary political life.

I. Required Text, available at the Skidmore Shop:

Xenophon, *The Anabasis of Cyrus*, translated and annotated by Wayne Ambler
(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008)

II. Course Requirements:

Attendance requirements: Miss no classes. Absences must be excused before hand, and requests for absences must be accompanied by a doctor's note or a relative's obituary. Three short essays (3-5 typed pages), due February 17, March 23, April 29. Final comprehensive (essay) exam, as scheduled. (Study questions for this exam will be distributed on the final day of class).

The term grade will be computed as follows: first essay 15%, second essay 20%, third essay 20%; class attendance and participation 10%; final exam 35%.

III. Class Schedule:

Tuesday, January 20	Introduction to the course
<i>Book I</i>	
Thursday, January 22	Chapters 1 & 2
Tuesday, January 27	Chapters 3-5
Thursday, January 29	Chapters 6-8
Tuesday, February 3	Chapters 9 & 10, Book II, Chapter 1
<i>Book II</i>	
Thursday, February 5	Chapters 2-4
Tuesday, February 10	Chapters 5 & 6; First paper Due.
<i>Book III</i>	
Thursday, February 12	Chapter 1
Tuesday, February 17	Chapters 2 & 3
Thursday, February 19	Chapters 4 & 5
<i>Book IV</i>	
Tuesday, February 24	Chapters 1 & 2
Thursday, February 26	Chapters 3 & 4
Tuesday, March 3	Chapters 5 & 6
Thursday, March 5	Chapters 7 & 8
Tuesday, March 10	Spring Break
Thursday, March 12	Spring Break
<i>Book V</i>	
Tuesday, March 17	Chapters 1-3; Second Paper Due.
Thursday, March 19	Chapters 4 & 5

Tuesday, March 24	Chapters 6 & 7
Thursday, March 26	Chapter 8; Book VI, Chapter 1
<i>Book VI</i>	
Tuesday, March 31	Chapters 2-4
Thursday, April 2	Chapters 5 & 6
<i>Book VII</i>	
Tuesday, April 7	Chapter 1
Thursday, April 9	Chapter 2
Tuesday, April 14	Chapters 3 & 4
Thursday, April 16	No class
Tuesday, April 21	Chapters 5 & 6
Thursday, April 23	Chapter 7; Third paper due.
Tuesday, April 29	Chapter 8
Wednesday, May 6	Final Exam, 1:30-4:30