

# **GREEK ORATORY**

## **ADVANCED GREEK PROSE**

**Overview of Lysias 1 – *On the  
Murder of Eratosthenes***

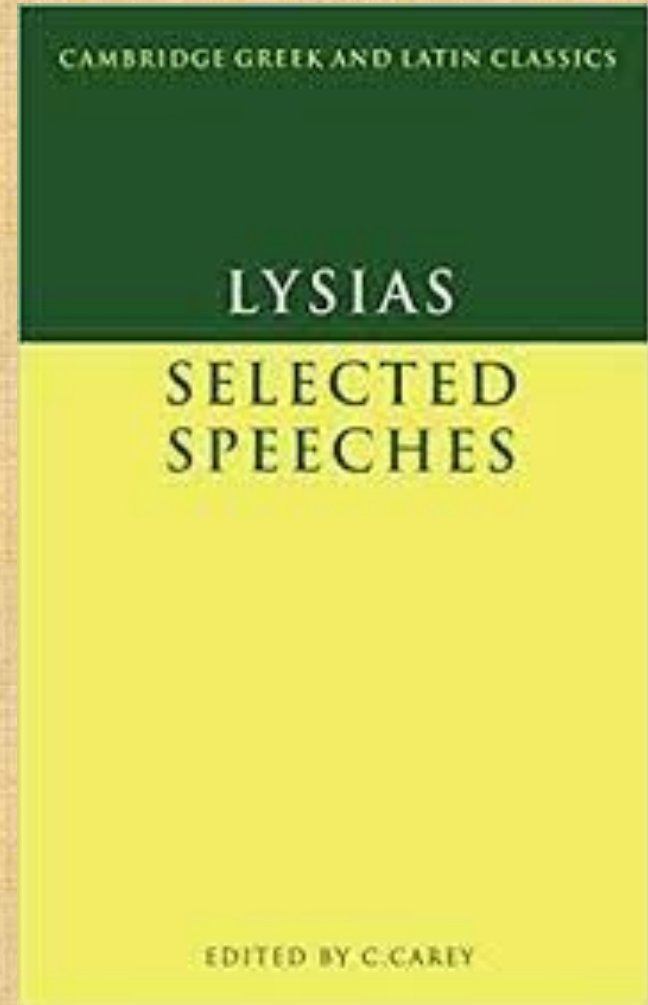
**HPGR7015/7016**

# Welcome and Key details

- ▣ **The principal text:**
  - Carey, Christopher (ed). 1990. *Lysias: Selected Speeches*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ▣ A good Ancient Greek-English dictionary will also be useful.
- ▣ I have also put other bibliographic suggestions for reading up on Moodle – this is broader contextual reading, some of which may prove of interest if you want to explore any themes further.

# Pace of Work

- ▣ Live sessions of 1 to 1 hour and 30 mins each week, across 10 weeks.
- ▣ As a baseline you should aim to do roughly 5 to 6 sections (passages) of the speech per session. Of course, there is nothing to stop you doing more if you are so inclined!
  - There are 50 sections/passages in Lysias 1 overall.



# **Non-assessed tasks**

Week 4: Lysias 1.1-2 A 1000-word  
commentary with a linguistic focus

**28/10/25**

Week 8: Lysias 1.23-26 A 1000-word  
commentary with a historical focus

**25/11/25**

# Coursework

- ▣ **Assignment 1: Linguistic commentary - deadline: 14th November, 2025**
  - 25% A 2000-word commentary of 1-2 paragraphs from the texts covered in the module. For this one you should concentrate on providing an analysis focusing on language and style (although you can bring in historical and/or literary analysis).
- ▣ **Assignment 2: Historical commentary - deadline: 2nd of January, 2026**
  - 25% A 2000-word commentary of 1-2 paragraphs from the texts covered in the module. For this one you should concentrate on providing an analysis focusing on historical and/or literary analysis (although you can bring in language and style).

# Exam

- **Assessment 3: Exam - to take place in the January exam period**
  - 50% written Exam – 2 hr duration.
  - During the course of the module, I will consult students to arrange a collective time in early January for the period in which the exam for HPGR7015, and the exam for HPGR7016, will be individually held. The time may depend on the composition of the student cohort and their respective time zones.

# Part 2

## Overview of Lysias

# Types of Oratory

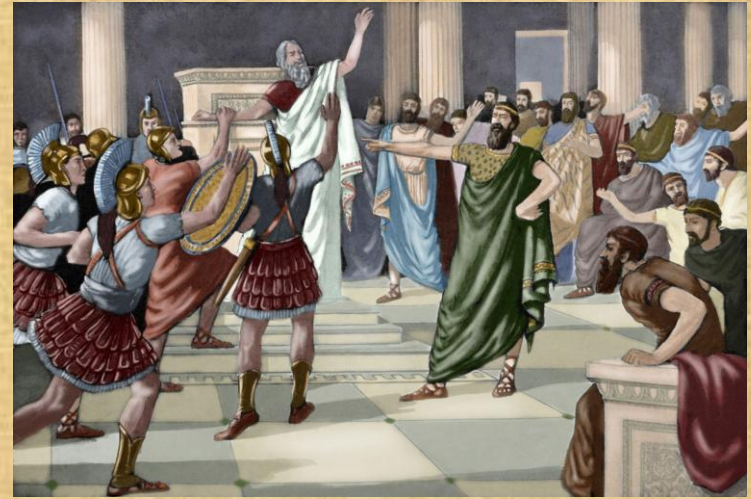
- ▣ **Deliberative oratory:** political oratory that was delivered in the assemblies, councils and public places of the Greek world. Ability to be spontaneous was important – common themes argued, expedience, practicality, justice and necessity.
- ▣ **Forensic oratory:** oratory delivered in the courts. All adult male litigants would usually speak for themselves. Could purchase a speech from a *logographos* (**most, but not all, of Lysias' speeches falls in this category**) and attempt to memorise it. Speeches need to be persuasive and emotive (and at least appear to be spontaneous).
- ▣ **Epideictic oratory:** oratory for display, usually delivered at public ceremonies and civic events, often concerned with praise or outlining a plan (see for example, Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides).
- ▣ See Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.3.

# Lysias: background

- The son of a Syracusan metic residing in Athens, he was born around the mid-fifth century (ancient biographical tradition places his birth at 459/8 BC, though many modern scholars believe it was later).

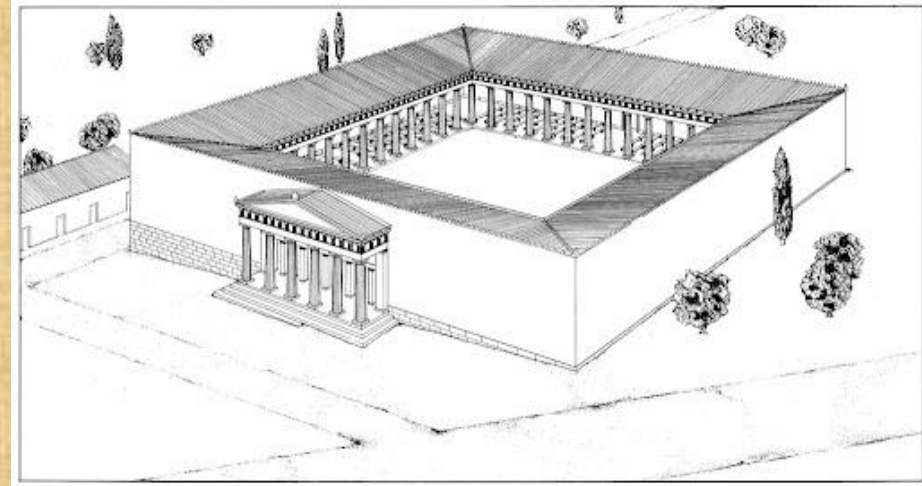


- During the period of the 30 tyrants 404/3 BC Lysias' brother Polemarchos was killed.
- Lysias helped the exiled democratic factions with money, payments for mercenaries and arms.
- This temporarily won him citizenship status in the restored democracy (decree of Thrasyboulos),
  - though this decree was later quashed.



*Thrasybulus crowned with a laurel wreath for his defeat of the Thirty Tyrants*

- After the restoration Lysias prosecuted Eratosthenes (probably not the Eratosthenes of Lysias 1), one of the 30 tyrants, for the murder of his brother.
- Lysias subsequently gained a career as a speech writer. His skill was such that later Alexandrian tradition would place him among the “Ten Attic Orators”.



| Ten Attic Orators |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Aeschines         | Hypereides |
| Andocides         | Isaeus     |
| Antiphon          | Isocrates  |
| Demosthenes       | Lycurgus   |
| Dinarchus         | Lysias     |

# Style and Works

- ❑ Lysias is often regarded as having a pure and lucid style, free of elaborate and poetic metaphors.
- ❑ His private speeches often have a running style, with a looser structure – such as long sentences with subordinate clauses.
- ❑ Dionysius and Caecilius pronounced 233 of 425 speeches attributed to Lysias as genuine – of these, 35 survive complete or in fragmentary form today – there are doubts about the attribution of some of these.
- ❑ Lysias' forensic speeches deal with both private (*dikê idia*) and public (*dikê dêmosia*) cases.
- ❑ See Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Commentaries on the Attic Orators*.

# Division of the Speeches

- **Proem (*prooimion*):** a preface or preamble to the main speech – attempts to make the audience be willing to hear the arguments of the speaker in a positive frame of mind – Lysias tailors them to specific clients.
- **Narrative (*diêgêsis*):** A summary of the events with a commentary on the thoughts and actions of those involved in these events.
- **Proofs (*pistis*):** means of persuasion by the inartificial (laws, contracts, witnesses, oaths) and artificial (use of rhetoric) – see *Aristotle Rhetoric*.
- **Epilogue (*epilogos*):** often two main features – summary and emotional appeal – themes such as interest of the community and the examples to others.
- Lysias sometimes adds an explanatory introduction to the narrative (*prothesis*).

# Lysias 1

- ❑ **Proem (1-5):** Universal disgust at adultery (1-2), and the need for Euphiletos to prove Eratosthenes was having an affair with his wife, and his retribution was therefore in line with the laws.
- ❑ **Narrative (6-26):** Euphiletos keeps an eye on his wife, but after their first child is born begins to trust her more. She proves good partner until his mother dies (6-7). Spotted at mother's funeral (8) and sleeps downstairs to keep baby safe (9). Euphiletos returns unexpectedly from countryside, joke about maid-servant, locked in bed-room (10-13). Suspicions about make-up and door banging in the night (14). Old lady reveals the adultery (15-16), the maid-servant is threatened into confession (17-20). She agrees to betray Eratosthenes (21-23); Euphiletos collects a posse and returns to the house, catching Eratosthenes in the act. The latter confesses and Euphiletos claims he kills in accordance with the laws.

- **Proofs (27-46):** refutation of claim that Eratosthenes was dragged from the street or sought refuge at the hearth (27). Arguments based on laws (28-36) – those who act against justice are liars and try to whip up anger in the listeners (28). Penalties for adulterers vs. rapists, more lenient for the latter (29-33). Jurors must support the laws by their verdict or thieves will pass themselves off as adulterers (34-36). Euphiletos does not plan to trap Eratosthenes but had dinner that night with a friend and let him go home (37-40). He had been unable to find several of his friends to act as witnesses (41-42). Euphiletos had no motives against Eratosthenes whom he had never met before (43-46).
- **Epilogue:** Euphiletos acted in the cities interests and the killing will act as deterrent to adulterers so long as they acquit him (47). Otherwise, it would be better to abandon the laws so that men such as himself will not be entrapped by them (48-50).

# Nature of the Speech

- ▣ The focus of the speech is around adultery and Eratosthenes' "violation" of Euphiletus' wife.
- ▣ However, the case actually surrounds (justifiable) homicide.
  - Held at court of the Delphinion, and heard by Ephetae rather than *dikai*?
    - ▣ From more prominent families, over 50.

Law on justifiable homicide from Demosthenes (25.53): "If somebody kills a man after finding him next to his wife or mother or sister or daughter or concubine kept for producing free children, he shall not be exiled as a killer on account of this."

– Todd (2000): 14.

# Inferring the Prosecution's claim

Lysias 1.37: But consider, gentlemen, they accuse me of doing the following: that I commanded the handmaiden, on that day, to seek out the young man.

Lysias 1.27: ...he was not sized from the street, nor sought refuge upon the hearth, as they people say...

# Euphiletus and Eratosthenes

- ▣ We only know of the defendant's name due to a change remark in 1.15.
- ▣ He appears to be a modest (but not wealthy) farmer, living in an (semi)urban area, but with land in the countryside.
  - 1 slave household.
- ▣ Eratosthenes is an uncommon name.
- ▣ Unclear if any connection with the Eratosthenes of the Thirty Tyrants (cf. Lysias 12)?
  - Familial link?
- ▣ Euphiletus too poor to afford a speech from Lysias?

# Adultery

- ▣ It is claimed in the speech that adultery (*moicheia*) is a more serious crime than rape (1.32-33).
- ▣ Strictly speaking adultery would relate to a citizen wife or daughter being in an extra-marital sexual relationship.
  - A man having sex with a slave, for example, would not count.
- ▣ Mixture of sexual partners that a husband might “legitimately” be permitted to engage with, such as hetaerae = courtesans [potentially educated and witty companions], prostitutes and flute girls.

“He was the most drunk of all the guests...But he was a hundred times more insolent than any. As soon as he had stuffed himself with a host of good dishes, he began to leap and spring, to laugh and to fart like a little ass well stuffed with barley. ... [Philocleon has run off with the flute girl] ... Do you see how opportunely I got you away from the solicitations of those fellators, who wanted you to make love to them in their own odd way? You therefore owe me this return to gratify me. But will you pay the debt?–  
**Aristophanes *Wasps* - lines 1300-1350.** [Trans. O'Neill 1938]



# Bibliography

- ▣ Carey, C. 1989. *Lysias: Selected Speeches*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- ▣ Edwards, M. 1994. *The Attic Orators*. London: Bristol Classical Press.
- ▣ Edwards, M. 1999. *Lysias: Five Speeches*. London: Bristol Classical Press.
- ▣ Todd, S. C. 2007. *A commentary on Lysias, speeches 1-11*. Oxford University Press.