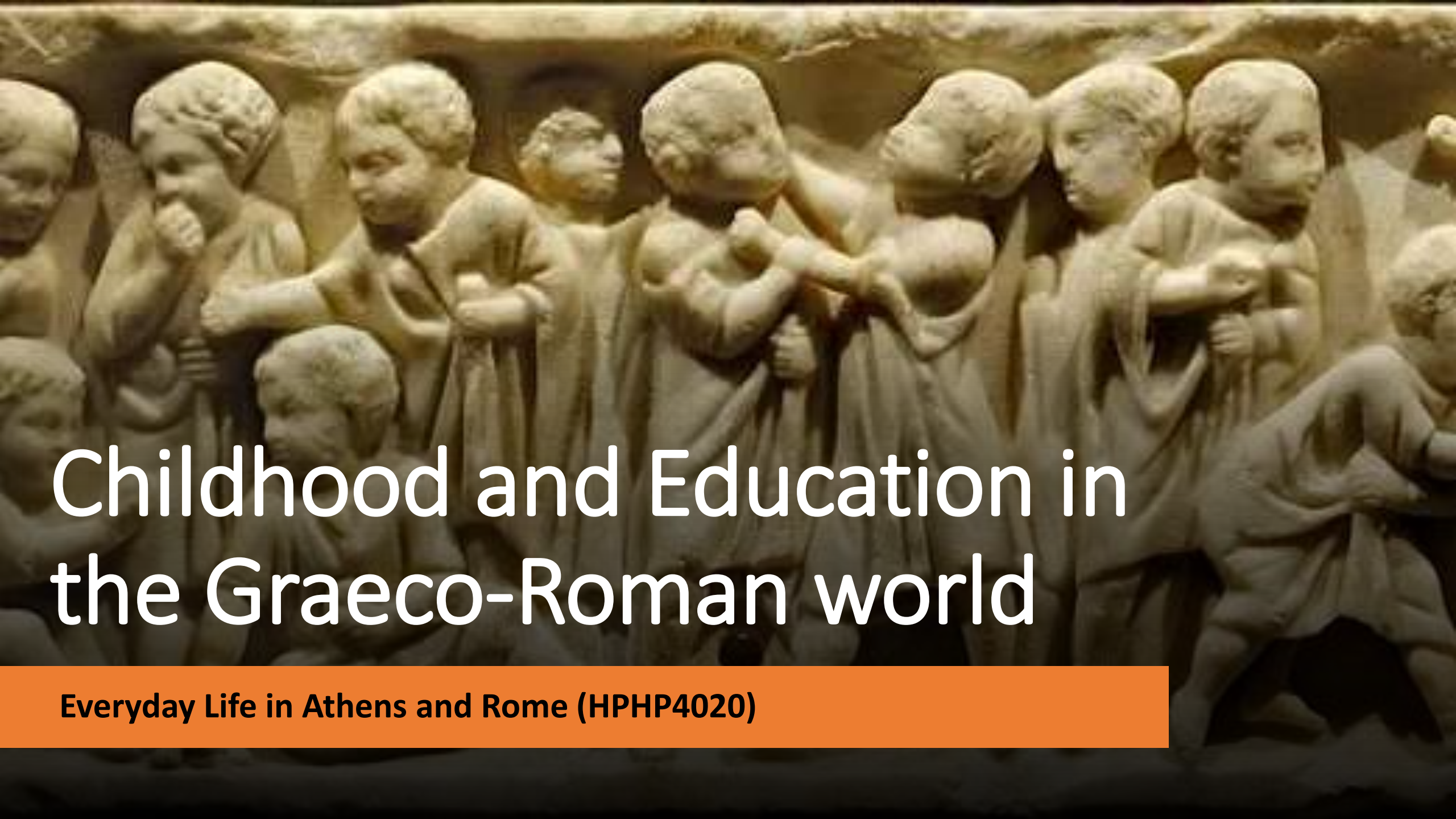




Childhood and Education in the Graeco-Roman world

Everyday Life in Athens and Rome (HPHP4020)

Birth



Athens

- Male physicians rarely present – midwives for the practical and ritual (appeasement of Artemis).
- Child on 5th day taken around the hearth.



Rome

- Payers to Diana – offerings to Juno Lucina.
 - *Lectisternium* (couch and meal) set up to Juno and Hercules.
- *Sublatus* – children acknowledged and to be raised.

Contract for a wet-nurse – 16-month period (Egypt, 13 BC):

- “Didyma agrees to nurse and suckle outside her own home... She is to receive from the said Isidora as pay for the milk and the nursing ten silver drachmas and a half-litre of oil every month.” – Selected Papyri 1, no. 16 – Loeb.

Early Childhood

- Development of the body and mind:
 - Swaddling (Soranus *Gyn.* 2.14-15, 32-35).
 - Not harshness, not indulgence (Seneca *On Anger* 2.20-21).
- Athens – 4 years old attend the *Anthesteria* (flower festival)
 - given a jug (*chous*), wreath and small cart – taste of wine.

“In the first place then, the parents are the builders-up of the children, and lay the foundation for the children; they raise them up, they carefully train them to strength, and that they may be good both for service and for view before the public.” – **Plautus *Mostellaria* 91 ff.**



Caregiving (for elite children)



“She [Timoxena] had herself, moreover, a surprising gift of mildness and good temper... For she would invite the nurse to offer the breast and feed with it not only other infants, but even the inanimate objects and playthings she took pleasure in...” – **Plutarch *Moralia* 608d.**

“You, Charidemus, rocked my cradle; you were the guardian and constant companion of my childhood... If I put on a Tyrian robe, or anoint my hair, you exclaim, “Your father never did such things.” You count my cups of wine with contracted brow, as if they came from a cask in your own cellar. Cease this conduct: I cannot abide a Cato in a freed man.” – **Martial *Ep.* 11.39.**

Play and Discipline

“[letter to Aufidius Vicotinus] He is also devoted to little birds; he delights in chickens, young pigeons, and sparrows. I have often heard from those who were my tutors and masters that I had... a passion for such things.” – **Fronto *Ep. Ad Amicos* 1.12.**

“Building doll’s houses, harnessing mice to a cart, playing odds and evens, riding a stick... that it matters not whether you play with sand like a three-year-old...” – **Horace *Satires* 2.3.247 ff.**

“...just as nurses, after giving the children a whipping, tell them a story to comfort and please them.” – **Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 4.74.**



A School Whipping? – From an original Pompeian wall painting

Discipline

- Discipline from mothers, nurses and fathers (and if can be afforded, schoolteachers).

“And if he obeys, well and good; if not, he is corrected by threats and blows, like a piece of bent or warped wood.” – **Plato *Protagoras***.



FIG. 59 Engraving from plate XLI (p. 213) of Anonymous (1762)

Toys

- How to identify “children's” toys in domestic space?
- Dice, spinning-tops, board games, knuckle-bones.
- Dolls the most well-documented “toys” of antiquity.



Pipe-clay rattle, Campania, c.AD 100-200, British Museum



Terracotta: young women playing knuckle-bones, Campania, c. 330-300 BC, British Museum



Painted wooden wheeled horse, Roman Egypt, British Museum



Transition to adulthood: Athens

- Athenian statesman Lycurgus makes *ephebeia* compulsory.
 - Two-year programme of military training.
 - Ephebic Oath: not to leave you place in the battle-line, not allow the laws to be destroyed.
 - weapons training, public exhibit of battle formations – patrol the countryside – receive shield and spear from the city (Ath. *Pol.* 42.2-43.1).
- Prepubescent ritual for girls in Athens – *arkteia* at Brauron (in Attica).
 - girls imitating she-bears (*arktoi*).
 - Hesiod suggests that a girl should marry “in her fifth year past puberty” (*Works and Days* ll. 695-699).



Transition to adulthood: Rome

- Exchanging the *toga praetexta* for the *toga virilis*.
 - Would be registered on the census list and had become a *iuvenis* and an adult citizen.
 - 17th of March a popular date (festival of Liber).
- Henceforth vote and be called up for war.
- For girls, as in Athens, marriage shortly after puberty.



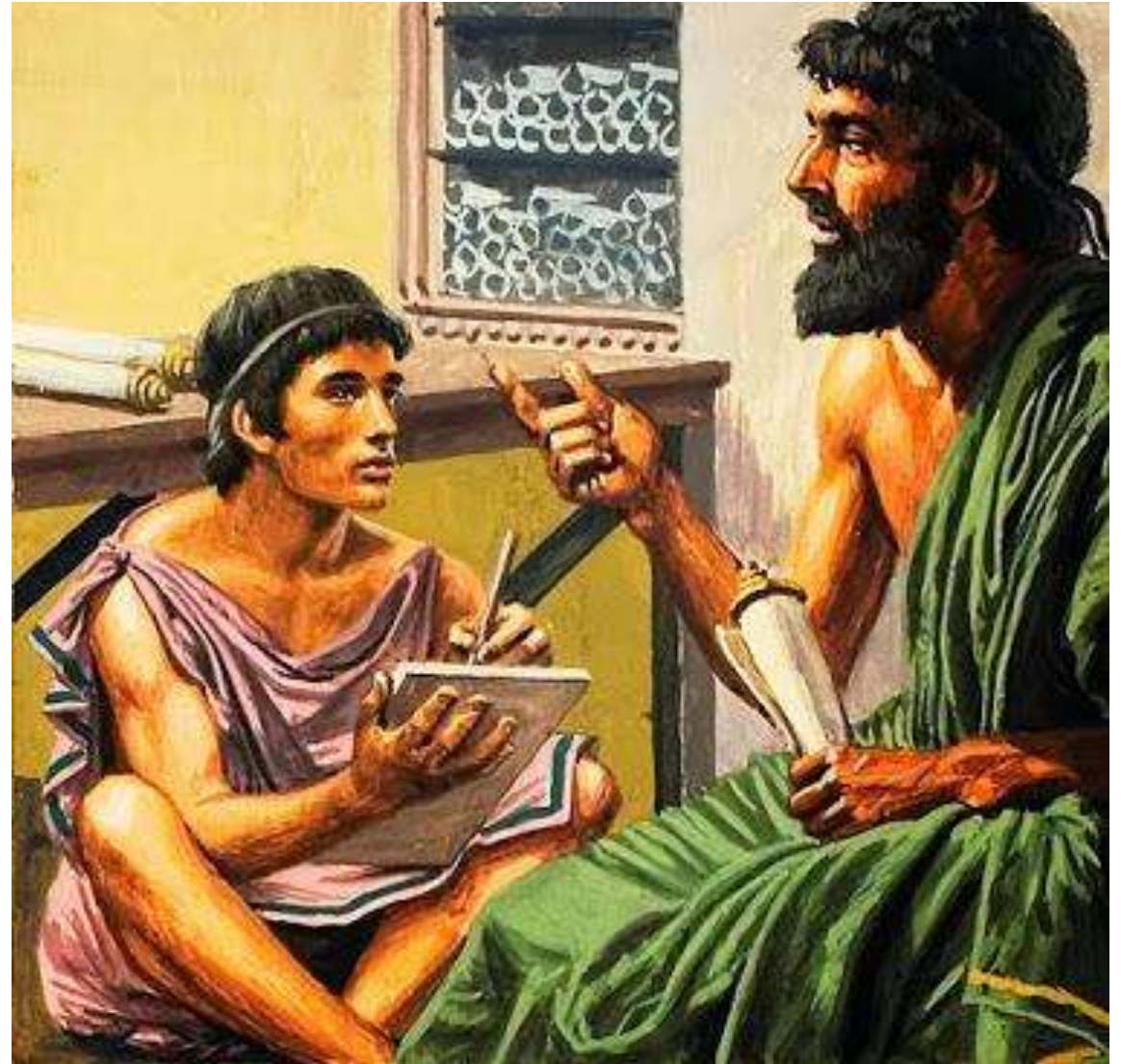


Education

Poetry and Epic

- Myths appear to be taught to young children at an earlier age in Athens.
 - Plato *Republic* book 2 (proposed censorship): “we will desire mothers and nurses to tell their children the authorised ones only... most of those which are now in use must be discarded.”

“At a later stage they send him to teachers, and instruct them to see to his manners even more than to his **reading and music**... And when the boy has learned his letters and can start to understand **writing**... they put into his hands the works of great poets.” – **Plato**
Protagoras.





Music and gymnastics

- Music and poetry for harmony and rhythm.
- Gymnastics for athletics and warfare (dexterity and self-control).
 - “Then they send them to the master of gymnastic, in order that their bodies may better minister to the virtuous mind, and that they may not be compelled through bodily weakness to play the coward in war or on any other occasion.” – **Plato Protagoras.**

How widespread was education in Athens?



- Inscribing of laws and notices on monument of the Eponymous Heroes in the Agora.
 - **Plutarch *Life of Aristides* 7.5-6.**
 - “[Sausage-seller] Mate, I can barely read or write, let alone educated! I know nothing about nothing!” – **Aristophanes *Knights* 188-189.**
- Schooling an essentially private matter (at least in Classical period), fees would be paid to a school master – may start around age 7.
 - Some regulation: Aeschines *Against Timarchos* 9-12.
 - Thracian mercenaries attacking the town of Mycalessus – **Thucydides 7.29.4-5.**
- “Apprenticeships” for passing on technical skills (*technai*) – potting, sculpture, etc.
 - Xenophon advises getting an agreement about what is taught.

Philosophical “schools”

- Sophists often taught the art of politics:
πολιτική τέχνη
 - less emphasis on knowledge of “truth” and more constructing convincing argument
 - Protagoras “man is the measure of all things”.
- More collective tutoring with fees, until late Classical/early Hellenistic period.
- Philosophical “Schools”:
 - Plato – Academy
 - Aristotle – Lyceum
 - Epicurus – epicureanism – “The Garden” (ca. 300 BC)
 - Zenon – Stoicism (ca. 275 BC)





Roman Education: private or public?

- *Ludi magister* (first stage), *grammaticus* (second stage), next step to study rhetoric under a rhetor (pl. *rhetoires*).
- Quintilian Institutes of Oratory 2.1-9 – debates the merits of home vs. public school education.
 - Morals can be just as easily corrupted by a bad tutor.
 - Best teachers often attract many pupils.
 - “I should still prefer the broad daylight of a respectable school to the solitude and obscurity of a private education”.



Girls in Education

- Papyrus letters from Egypt: Heraidous, daughter of a civil administrator “persevering with her studies”.
- Attica (daughter of Atticus) studies under Quintus Caecilius Epirota, famous grammaticus.

“When she begins with uncertain hand to use the pen, either let another hand put over hers to guide her baby fingers, or else have the letters marked on the tablet so that her writing may follow he outlines and keep to their limits without straying away.” – **Jerome *Ep.* 107.4.**



Young Elite Men

- **Rhetoric:**
 - “...we must look for a tutor in Latin rhetoric whose school shall combine a strict training along with good manners and, above all, moral standards...” – **Pliny the Younger *Letter to Cornelia Hispulla* 3.3.**
- **Politics:**
 - Young aristocrats prepare for public life (*tirocinium fori*) by following a distinguished individual: “Now, I, upon assuming the *toga virilis*, had been introduced by my father to Scaevola...” – **Cicero *Laelius on Friendship* 1.**
- **Military:**
 - Young aristocrats might expect to spend a year or so in the ranks (often under a tutor) – subsequently often aimed to become a military tribune.