

Strangers, Outsiders, and Foreign Worlds: Identity and the Other in the Greek Imagination

The field of Classics generally focuses on Greece and Rome, but the ancient world was much larger than that, and Greece was in close contact with other nearby cultures, especially Egypt and the Near East. This paper presents a course that I teach in the core curriculum, generally to first-year college students that focuses on the representation of “barbarians”, foreigners, marginalized groups, and other worlds in Greek literature, examining Greece’s complex relationship with their neighbors—whether they are real, legendary, or somewhere in between. This course uses a variety of texts to critically examine the construction of identity and its relationship to racism, exoticization, and “othering”. Alongside a variety of Greek authors and literary genres, students read Egyptian texts as a countermeasure to see how Egyptians express their own identity and to gain an Egyptian perspective on strangers and foreign lands.