Notes and Bibliography for Classical Greek and Roman Primary Sources

The following guide is adapted from the Chicago Manual of Style; for detailed information on citing other types of sources see the current style guide available from the MacEwan University library.

The Chicago Manual of Style requires a bibliography and either footnotes (at the bottom of the page where the reference occurs) or endnotes (at the end of the paper). These notes are created by using features in MSWord or other word processors.

In your research, you will come across numerous references to classical Greek and Roman (primary) sources which will look very different from your modern (secondary) sources.

➢ Page numbers aren’t always the best option...

Numerous translations exist of most of the major works of antiquity which, in most cases, do not differ substantially in content and meaning from one another. It does not really matter whether you use, for example, the Penguin, Oxford, Loeb or Landmark edition of Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War. If, however, you have used the Penguin translation but your reader only has the Loeb translation available, a page number will not be of great use.

➢ Instead, we use book #s, paragraph #s, and sentence #s

Greek and Roman primary sources are divided into “books” and “paragraphs”, usually based on the number of scrolls that were needed to contain the work in its entirety. A “book” in an ancient source is like a chapter in a modern book. The book number is usually clearly indicated in the header of a translation (though not always), but different publishers indicate the paragraph and sentence numbers in different ways. The Penguin and Oxford translations usually do so in the margins of a page. Loeb translations indicate the paragraph numbers in the text, and the sentence numbers in the margins.

Prose Work

Note: Not sure if you are reading prose? If what you are reading seems like common or ordinary speech and doesn’t have a rhythmic structure like a play or poem then you are reading prose.

Common ancient authors writing prose include Appian, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Livy, Suetonius and Tacitus.

EN/FN: Author (ancient Greek or Roman), Book Title in Italics, Book #. Paragraph #. Sentence #. (if available)

Example: Thucydides, History of Peloponnesian War, 2.15.2
This endnote or footnote refers to book two, paragraph fifteen, sentence two of the History of the Peloponnesian War by the author Thucydides.

B: Author (ancient Greek or Roman). Book Title in Italics. Name of Translator. City: Publisher, Year.

Multivolume Prose Work

EN/FN: Author (ancient Greek or Roman), Book Title in Italics, # of vols, Book #. Paragraph #. Sentence #. (if available)


B: Author (ancient Greek or Roman). Book Title in Italics. Name of Translator. # of vols. City: Publisher, Year.


Poetry and Plays

NOTE: Common authors you will come across in your Classics courses include the poets Hesiod, Homer, Horace, Ovid and Vergil and the playwrights Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Catullus, Euripides, Pindar, Plautus and Sophocles.

EN/FN: Author (ancient Greek or Roman), Title of the Poem in Italics, Book #. Line #.

Example: Homer, Odyssey, 9.102-110. This endnote or footnote refers to lines 102 through 110 of Book 9 of Homer’s Odyssey.

EN/FN: Author (ancient Greek or Roman), Title of the Play in Italics, Line #.

Example: Aeschylus, Seven Against Thebes, 830-840. This endnote or foot note refers to lines 830 through 840 of Aeschylus’ Seven Against Thebes.

B: Author (ancient Greek or Roman), Title of the Play or Poem in Italics. Name of Translator. City: Publisher, Year.


Custom Course Pack (anthology of works by Classical Greek and Roman authors)

When citing from a course pack follow the above guidelines for creating end notes/footnotes and bibliography for the type of source you are citing, i.e. prose, poetry or play and include the course number, name of the course pack and publishing information.

EN/FN: Author (ancient Greek or Roman), Title of the Poem in Italics, Book #. Line # in Course Number and Course Pack, (City: Publisher, Year).

B: Author (ancient Greek or Roman). Title of the Prose, Poem or Play in Italics. Name of Translator in Course Number Title of Course Pack in Italics. City, Publisher, Year.