

GREEK CULTURES, TRADITIONS AND PEOPLE

Paschalis Nikolaou – Fulbright Fellow Greece



Bluefield State College



- What is 'culture'?

“Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts [...] The word "culture" derives from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin "colere," which means to tend to the earth and grow, or cultivation and nurture. [...] The term "Western culture" has come to define the culture of European countries as well as those that have been heavily influenced by European immigration, such as the United States [...] Western culture has its roots in the Classical Period of the Greco-Roman era and the rise of Christianity in the 14th century.”

- What do we mean by 'tradition'?

- **1a:** an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (such as a religious practice or a social custom)
- **b:** a belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable ...
- **2:** the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction
- **3:** cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions
- **4:** characteristic manner, method, or style in the best liberal *tradition*

Some definitions

...when, to define, is to realise connections and significant overlap

GREECE: ANCIENT AND MODERN

What we consider ancient Greece was one of the main classical civilizations, making important contributions to philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The Greeks were known for their sophisticated sculpture and architecture. At its peak under Alexander the Great, Ancient Greece ruled much of Europe and Western Asia. Normally it is regarded as coming to an end when Greece fell to the Romans, in 146 BC. However, major Greek (or "Hellenistic") kingdoms lasted longer than this. A later successor was considered to be the Byzantine Empire, with its capital in Constantinople (until it fell to the Ottomans in 1453). Ancient Greece continues to influence modern cultures today.

The Modern Greek State was founded in 1830, following the revolutionary war against the Ottoman Turks, which started in 1821 and is celebrated every year on March 25th; in 2021, Greece celebrates the bicentennial of this [War of Independence](#).

[Statement from the Department of State](#)

[...and an even more important statement!](#)



An illustration, dating from the second half of the 19th century, depicts a group of upper class Athenians in typical dress. Bottom, 19th c.



A CHANGING MAP

Geographies and
the reach of Greek
civilization before
the modern era

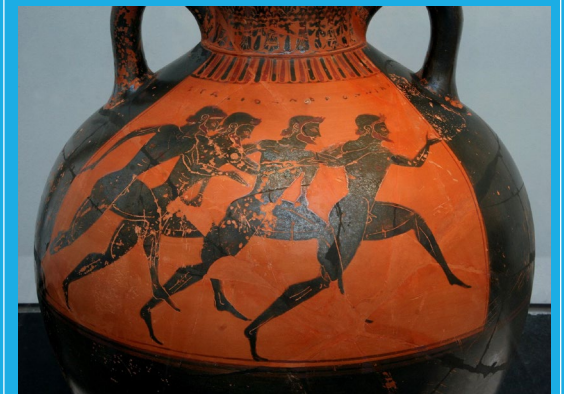
- **The Bronze Age: 3000 B.C.** - 1100 B.C. (**2000 - 1700 B.C.** Mycenaean enter mainland Greece; **1700 - 1500 B.C.** The height of Minoan Civilization is reached; **1200 B.C.** The Trojan War, civil war, and the fall of the Mycenaean.)
- **The Dark Age: 1100 - 800 B.C. (1100 - 1000 B.C.** Ionian Immigration to Asia Minor; **900 B.C.** Dorian migration to the Aegean islands, Asia Minor (area around Rhodes), and through the Peloponnesus.)
- **Archaic Period - 800 B.C.** - 500 B.C. (**800 - 700 B.C.** Monarchies begin to be replaced by Aristocratic Republics; **776 B.C.** Date of the first Olympic games.
- **Classical Period: 500 - 400 B.C. (490 B.C.** First Persian invasion of Greece, the Battle of Marathon; **480 B.C.** Second Persian invasion of Greece, Spartans are defeated at Thermopylae, Athens is occupied by the Persians. The Persians are finally defeated at Salamis; **443 - 429 B.C.** Pericles is leader of Athens during the Golden Age; **431 - 404 B.C.** The Peloponnesian War
- **Late Classical Period: 400 - 330 B.C. (395 - 340 B.C.** Warfare between rival Greek leagues; **338 B.C.** Philip of Macedonia leads the Greek City States; **336 - 323 B.C.** Alexander the Great's reign begins.
- **Hellenistic Age: 330 - 30 B.C. (323 - 148 B.C.** Greek City States remain relatively independent. Frequent warfare continues between rival leagues; **200 - 196 B.C.** First Roman victories over Greece; **146 B.C.** Romans defeat the Achaean League, destroy Corinth.
- **330 AD:** Constantine founds the new capital of the Roman Empire on the existing site of the ancient Greek city Byzantium: Byzantium was renamed Constantinople; **395:** The Roman Empire divides in half, with the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople and the Western Roman Empire based in Rome/Ravenna.
- **1071:** Defeat at Manzikert to the Seljuk Turks. Permanent loss of most of Asia Minor.
- **1054:** The Great Schism: The Latin Roman Church and the Greek Orthodox Church excommunicate each other.
- **1095:** Emperor Alexius appeals to Urban II at Council of Piacenza for help against the Turks. The First Crusade is proclaimed at Council of Clermont.
- **1204:** Fourth Crusade captures Constantinople. The Latin Empire of Constantinople is formed as well as many Byzantine successor states. The capture of Constantinople in 1204 was a blow from which the Byzantines never fully recovered.
- **1261:** The successor state of Nicaea recaptures Constantinople and restores the Byzantine Empire.
- **1453:** Fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans
- **1821-1829:** Greek War for Independence
- **1829-1932:** First Hellenic Republic and **1833-1924** Kingdom of Greece
- **1924-1935** Second Hellenic Republic and **1935-1967** Restoration of the Kingdom of Greece
- **1945-1949:** Civil War
- **1967-1974:** Military Dictatorship **1974-today:** Third Hellenic Republic: The Cyprus Issue; Changing Political Landscape; The Years of the Financial Crisis; In the Present: LGBTQ+ Rights/#MeToo, Eastern Mediterranean Geopolitical Shifts, and Responses to the Pandemic

A very, very, very long history

Some historical frames and key events

- The **Lenaia** was an annual Athenian festival with a dramatic competition. It took place in Athens and in Delphi in the month of Gamelion roughly corresponding to January. The festival was in honour of Dionysus Lenaios. ("Lenaia" probably comes from "*lenos*" 'wine-press' or from "*lenai*", another name for the Maenads (the female worshippers of Dionysus)).
- The **Anthesteria** was one of the four Athenian festivals in honor of Dionysus. It was held each year from the 11th to the 13th of the month of Anthesterion, around the time of the January or February full moon. It celebrated the beginning of spring, particularly the maturing of the wine stored at the previous vintage, now ceremoniously opened. During the feast, social order was interrupted or inverted, the slaves being allowed to participate.
- In the **Dionysia**, the central events were theatrical performances of dramatic tragedies and, from 487 BC, comedies. It was the second-most important festival after the Panathenaia. The Dionysia actually consisted of two related festivals, the **Rural Dionysia** and the **City Dionysia**, which took place in different parts of the year.
- The **Panathenaic Games** were held every four years in Athens, from 566 BC to the 3rd century AD. These Games incorporated religious festival, athletic competitions, and cultural events hosted within a stadium.

Ancient Greek Festivals



- [Epiphany](#)
- [Apokries \(Carnival\)](#)
- [Independence Day](#): The **Greek National Anniversary** and a major **religious holiday** with military parades in the larger towns and cities, celebrating Greece's victory in the war of Independence against the Turks who had occupied the country for 400 years. The 25th of March was actually the day Bishop Germanos of Patras raised the flag of national rebellion at the monastery of Agia Lavra in the northern Peloponnisos. For Greece, **the 25th of March is the equivalent to the 4th of July to Americans.**
- [Holy Week and Easter](#)
- August 15th: **The day of the Panagia (Virgin Mary)**
This is the second biggest religious holiday after Easter and on the island of [Tinos](#) this day is celebrated like on no other. Pilgrims by the thousands come here to crawl on their knees up the steps to the church that holds the holy Icon. But this day is also celebrated in almost every town and village in Greece especially those with a church dedicated to the Panagia (Virgin Mary).
- The 28th of October is **Ochi Day**, celebrating the Greek refusal to let Italy occupy the country during WWII. The Italians invaded and were driven back into Albania and nearly back to Italy. There are military parades in the major towns and cities.
- The [17th of November](#) is the anniversary of the student uprising at the Polytechnic University in Athens in 1973. The demonstrations against the military dictatorship gained momentum and were crushed when tanks crashed the gates of the university killing many students. The holiday is celebrated with the annual march at the American Embassy. If you have business at the Embassy it is a good idea to save it for another day.
- When you go to a village ask one of the locals when the *Panigiri* for a particular church is and if it happens to be during your stay, join in the celebration.

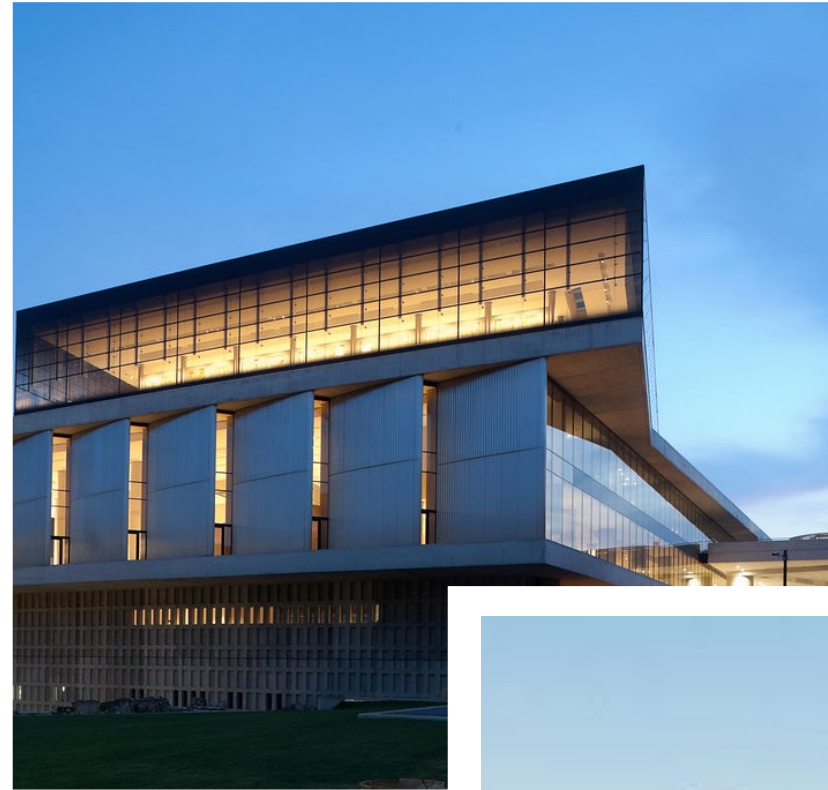
Major Holidays & Festivals

Throughout Modern Greece



From the Parthenon to Polykatoikies (...or, how rich architecture can be when a civilization spans millenia)

- [Xenia hotels project](#): a nationwide hotel construction program initiated by the [Hellenic Tourism Organisation](#) to improve the country's tourism infrastructure in the 1960s and 1970s. It constitutes one of the largest infrastructure projects in modern Greek history
- [Modern landmarks](#)



◦ Regions of Greece



THE MAINLAND

A range of cultures and
climates

A country that is 80% mountainous



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The Islands

...they come in different sizes (and large numbers)

- - over 6000 islands
- 227 inhabited
- **The Greek Archipelago** takes up 7,500 km of the country's total 16,000 km coastline, offering a highly diversified landscape
- In the Aegean Sea: the northeastern islands, the islands of the Argosaronic, the Sporades, the Cyclades, the Dodecanese (12 islands)
- In the Ionian Sea; we only have **The Ionian Islands** Zakynthos, Ithaca, Corfu, Kefallonia, Lefkada, Paxi, and Kythira which is situated opposite the southern Peloponnese (Laconia). These islands, which are the biggest of the Ionian Sea, constitute the famous **Eptanissa** (meaning *seven islands*; epta in Greek means seven).





Scenes from Painting: Domenikos Theotokopoulos (‘El Greco’, 1541- 1614)

‘View of Toledo’ (1599-1600) At
the Metropolitan Museum of Art,
NY

In this, his greatest surviving landscape, El Greco portrays the city he lived and worked in for most of his life. The painting belongs to the tradition of emblematic city views, rather than a faithful documentary description. The view of the eastern section of Toledo from the north would have excluded the cathedral, which the artist therefore imaginatively moved to the left of the royal palace. Other buildings represented in the painting include the ancient Alcántara Bridge, and on the other side of the river Tagus, the Castle of San Servando.



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SCENES FROM PAINTING: NIKOLAOS GYZIS

1842-1900

one of Greece's most important 19th-century painters. He was most famous for his work *Eros and the Painter*, his first genre painting. He was the major representative of the so-called "Munich School", the major 19th-century Greek art movement.



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SCENES FROM PAINTING: YANNIS MORALIS (1916-2009)

Member of the generation of the 30s. In the 1970s, he moved from the realistic depictions of the human form of his earlier works towards a geometric stylisation, incorporating curves. Over the years, Moralis was also involved with creating theatrical set and costume designs for the Greek National Theatre and the Greek National Ballet; illustrating poetic works by Odysseus Elytis and Giorgos Seferis; and decorating architectural works such as the façade of the Athens Hilton, the Metro-Station "Panepistimiou" and the Athens Central Station.

'Angel' (1960)

[Draft for frontispiece of Odysseus Elytis' *Six Plus One Remorses for the Sky*']



SCENES FROM PAINTING:

ALEKOS FASIANOS (1935 -)

'Zeus' (2003)

Very popular; some of his works are exhibited in public places: two large murals entitled *The Myth of My Neighborhood*, can be seen in Athens at the Metaxourgeio metro station. Sculptures exist in front of the Orthodox Church of St. Irene in Athens. A giant vertical mural can be seen in the lobby of the Electra Metropolis Hotel.



"Dromeas" Glass Sculpture by Athens Artist Costas Varotsos 31 March 2017 Athens Greece

Installations and Public Art

Costas Varotsos

'Dromeas' (1988)



Costas Tsoclis

'You, the last leper' (2012)

(but see also:

- Anthony Gormley)



Performing Arts

- Traditional dances include the hasapiko, kalamatiano, ikariotiko, pontic dances, zervodexio and variations of these across different regions
- Traditional instruments include the Byzantine lyra, the bouzouki, the Cretan lyra, the baglamas and mandolin.

TRADITIONAL GREEK INSTRUMENTS



Dances: Skalkotas, cond. Mitropoulos

Mikis Theodorakis's 'Dance of the Kites'

Manos Hadzidakis's 'Gioconda's Smile'

Eleni Karaindrou's 'By the Sea'

A Diverse Musical Culture

Greek Composers



The 2004 Olympics

◦ *(or: how things may come together and a culture reflects upon itself)*

The Athens 2004 Olympic Games marked the first time since the 1996 Summer Olympics that all countries with a National Olympic Committee were in attendance, and also saw the return of the Olympic Games to the city where they began. Having previously hosted the first modern Olympics in 1896, Athens became one of only four cities to have hosted the Summer Olympic Games on two occasions at the time (together with Paris, London and Los Angeles)

(Modern) Greek Cinema

*
and what was there before

Theo Angelopoulos



Yorgos Lanthimos

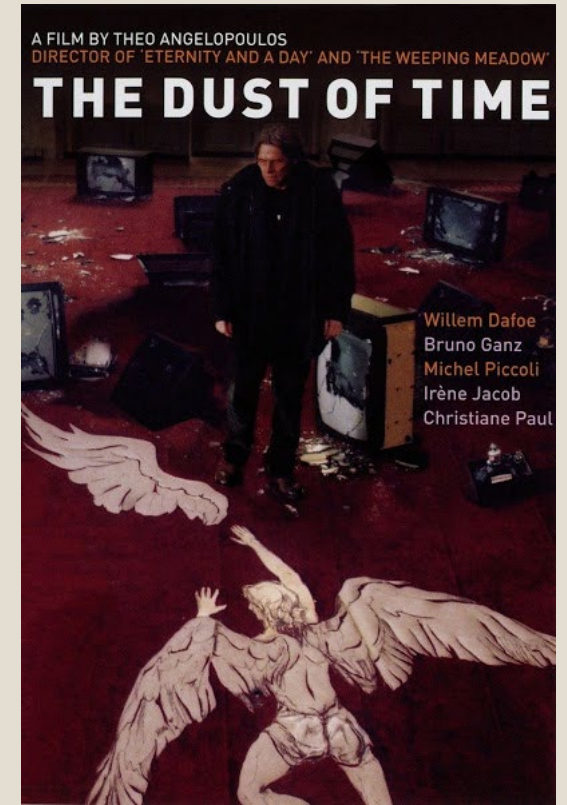
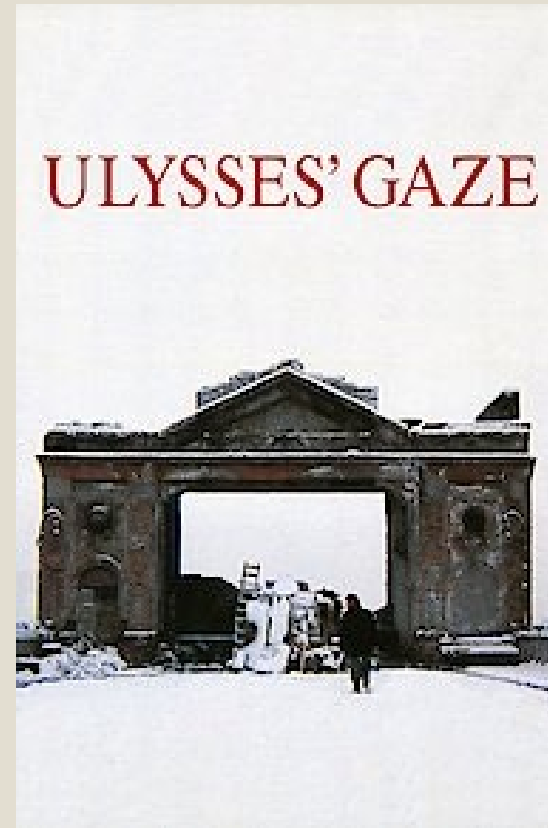
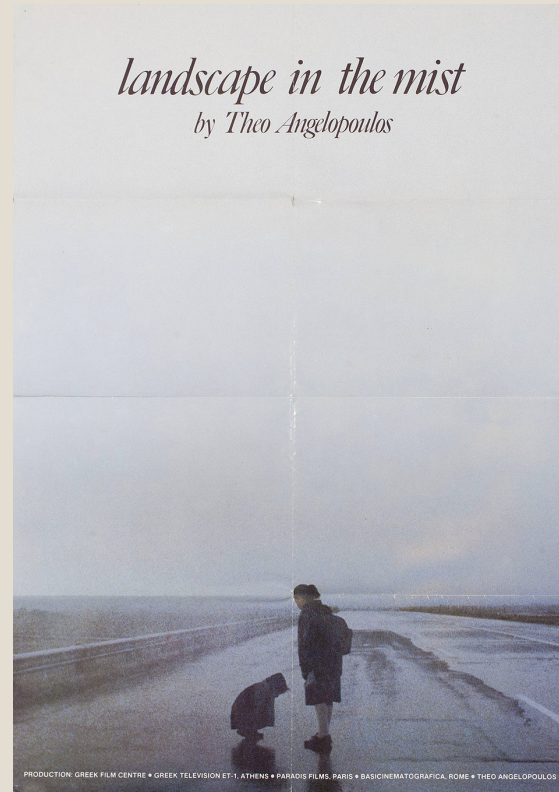
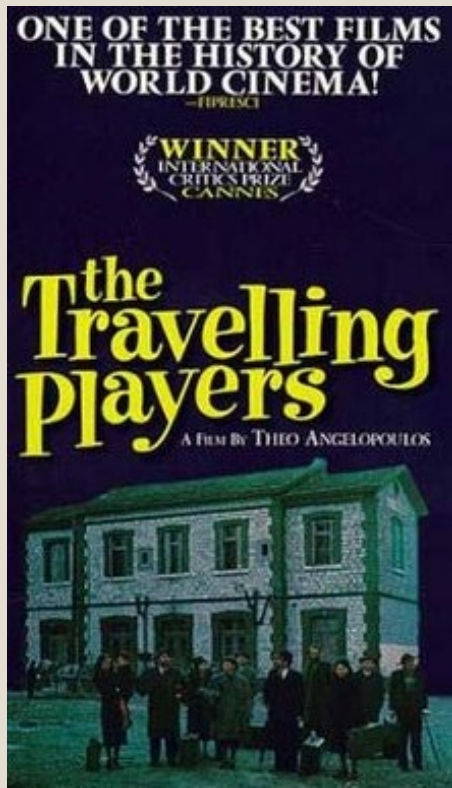




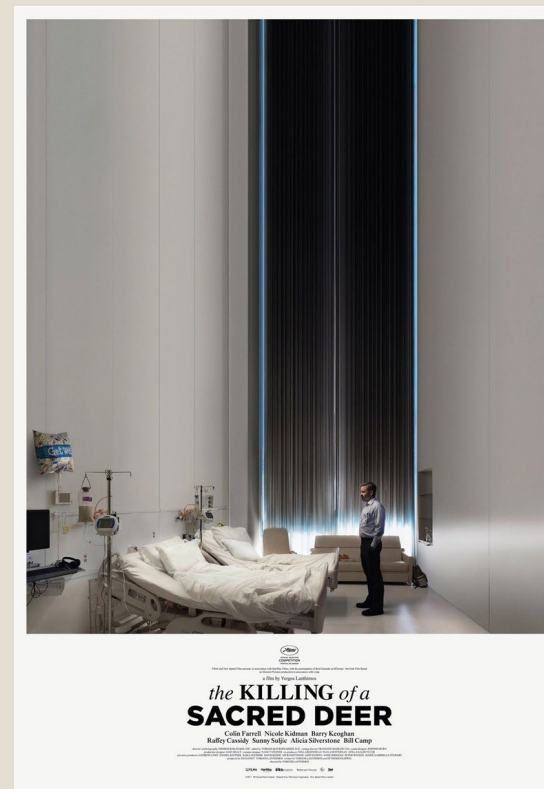
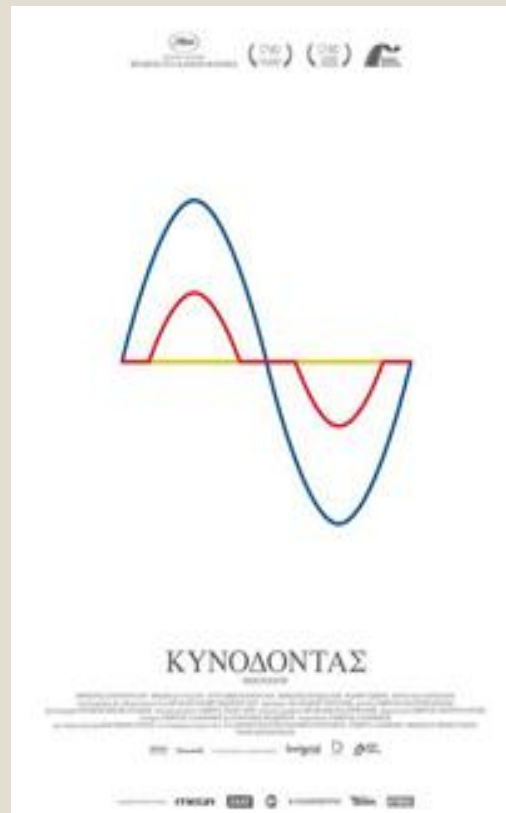
The 1950s and 1960s: A Golden Age of Greek Cinema



Theo Angelopoulos (1935-2012)



Yorgos Lanthimos (1973 –)





Greek Cuisine



Eating as a Greek: where to start?

- Cultural and geographical variety means that Greek cuisine is varied and expansive, considering size of country, and population.
- -- known everywhere: FETA, YOGHURT, MOUSSAKA, GYROS
- -- hidden magic: MPOUGATSA, RAVANI, HALVA, SAGANAKI



Destination: Corfu

- Corfu (Kerkyra), unlike the rest of Greece, never fell under the Ottoman oppression. Due to the successive dominations of the Venetians, the French and the British over the centuries, the island has primarily become part of the Western rather than the Levantine world. Their culture wielded strong influence in the city: it was here that the first Greek University (the *Ionian Academy*), the first *Philharmonic Orchestra* and the *First School of Fine Arts* were founded.
- In the beautifully preserved **Old Town** of Corfu, a UNESCO world heritage site, Renaissance, Baroque and Classical “repertoire” came to be successfully applied to local artistic traditions. Palaces, fortresses, austere public buildings of the Venetian rule uniquely blend with lines of drying washing in tiny alleyways and small secluded squares. Strolling through a complex of narrow cobbled streets with stairways and vaulted passages, the so-called “kantounia”, will make you feel as if you’ve travelled to Genoa or Naples.

Also, in Corfu: The Ionian University (and the Dept of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting)

- part of the [IONIAN UNIVERSITY](#) (1984) & its School of History and Translation
- formerly Greece's *Centre for Translation and Interpreting* (1977-1984)
- based in Corfu, northernmost of the '[Eptanisa](#)' (seven islands)
- The only [Department](#) offering [undergraduate](#) degrees in translation and interpreting in Greece; includes several research groups
- four years of study; specialization in last two, e.g. technical and scientific or literary translation
- [Modular MA in Translation](#)



Major Greek Universities

There are 22 public universities in Greece, among them, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Democritus University of Thrace, the University of Crete, the University of Ioannina, the University of Patras and the University of the Aegean. There were also –until quite recently– also 15 Technological Educational Institutes, which were first established in 1983. Concerning colleges, the constitution of Greece clearly states that tertiary level education shall be exclusively provided by public universities.

