

The Polis **(HUM 2220)**

- I. Introduction
 - A. Polis translated as “city-state”
 - B. “City-state” does not present a clear understanding
 - 1. metropolis
 - 2. Use of term polis in today’s world
 - 3. cities so named

- II. What is a polis?
 - A. In the Iliad, kings ruled over cities and kingdoms
 - B. After “Dark Ages” a different picture
 - 1. kings have disappeared
 - 2. kingdoms have gone
 - 3. Greece occupied with numerous towns with territories
 - 4. Size of cities with territories vary greatly
 - a. Plato - 5000 citizens
 - b. Aristotle – able to know all citizens
 - c. Only three cities had more than 20,000 citizens – Athens was one

- III. Formation of the towns
 - A. small settlement on the top of a hill or mountain
 - 1. for vision of oncoming enemy
 - 2. for protection in fighting
 - B. king lives and reigns on highest point – Acropolis
 - 1. acro = hill
 - 2. polis = city
 - 3. Acropolis = city on a hill
 - C. just below the highest point, the central market place – Agora
 - D. most Greeks were farmers but preferred to live in town – fellowship and social life
 - E. towns were independent units due to physical barriers of the land
 - F. walls were built around the town

- IV. Polis as a “shared community”
 - A. Polis should be seen as people instead of a state
 - B. Everyone’s duty to help the polis
 - C. Everyone know the value of the farms, the process of the economy; thus everyone was needed
 - D. Polis means the communal life of the people – political, moral, cultural, religious, etc.
 - E. Aristotle – “Man is a creature who lives in a polis.”