Ancient Greek civilization developed around the Aegean sea. With its multitude of islands, the Aegean is a unique geographical landscape. The presence of islands facilitated navigation from a very early age; ancient Greek culture developed along fragmented landscapes, not unified by a political authority. The presence of the sea therefore had a big impact on Greek culture.

How did the Greeks understand their relationship with the sea? This module explores ancient Greek conceptualisations about the sea. Homer’s ‘wine-dark’ sea was a dangerous space, but also a space that allows possibilities for commerce, land acquisition and profiteering. We shall look in depth in some key texts articulating this often problematic relationship between the Greeks and the sea, ranging from the Archaic period to the late Hellenistic world.

List of topics:
1. Introduction: The geography of the Aegean Sea
2. Sailing in the sea: Ps. Scylax’s *Periplous* and the genre of *periploi*
3. Dolphins, fish, kings and poets: The sea in Herodotus
4. Democracy and the sea: The Old Oligarch and Aeschylus’ *Persians*
5. Sea power and control of the sea in Thucydides
6. Piracy and seaborne trade
7. The sea in myth (the Black sea)
8. Salvation at sea: The Samothracian mysteries and the Dioscuri
9. Callimachus’ *Hymn to Delos* and Aelius Aristeides’ *Hymn to the Aegean*
10. Conclusions and discussion of essay topics