

Sydney Koine Greek School

An independent school promoting the study of Greek in the Koine period, based in Sydney, Australia

READING KOINE GREEK OSTRAKA 2026

A short course reading Greek ostraka will be offered by Dr John Lee via zoom this year, following courses on Greek papyri in 2024, 2025, and a course on the Greek Psalms in 2025, all of which attracted participants from around the world.

Documentary texts (papyri, inscriptions, etc.) are a rich source of Koine Greek (300 BC – 600 AD). During this period Greek underwent significant developments on its way to the modern language. The course aims to introduce participants to the main characteristics of Koine Greek and the changes that were taking place. The chosen ostraka are mainly from Middle Koine Greek (I–III AD). The discussion will focus primarily on their language, but the content is also of great social interest. Some texts are confronting. This is a general warning, which will be repeated when particularly troubling texts are about to be read. Note that this course does not offer a training in *decipherment* of original ostraka, but takes published editions as the basis, though questions about readings may be discussed if they arise.

The course is open to all. Some previous knowledge of ancient Greek is a prerequisite, but not to an advanced level. One year of learning Classical or New Testament Greek will suffice, though more would be desirable. It is hoped that students will participate by reading aloud, translating, and answering questions (no pressure). The handouts will include helpful notes.

John A. L. Lee DD FAHA was a member of the teaching staff in the Department of Greek, later Classics, at the University of Sydney from 1973 to 2001 when he retired (a little early). He has continued to engage in research and publication and to extend his knowledge of Greek. His special interest is in the post-Classical Greek language in all its varieties, including the Septuagint and New Testament. His Cambridge PhD dissertation (1970) was on the vocabulary of the LXX Pentateuch compared with that of contemporary documents. He began reading documentary texts in 1964. For his publications see his page in academia.edu.

Time and dates:

Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time), for 6 weeks

First session: Tues 26th May, 2026

Following sessions: 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th June

Length of session: approx. 1 hour

Other locations:

New York: 6:00am (Tues)

London: 11:00am (Tues)

Rome: 12:00noon (Tues)

Grenoble: 12:00noon (Tues)

Prague: 12:00noon (Tues)

Perth (Australia): 6:00pm (Tues)

Adelaide (Australia): 7:30pm (Tues)

Texts and other course material will be supplied by email, along with a zoom link, in good time for the start of the course. Participants are kindly asked to register in advance.

REGISTRATION: Send an email to John Lee at: jl3291822@gmail.com

4 May 2026