Remembering the Polytechnic

The most well-known autumnal holiday in the Greek national calendar is undoubtedly October 28, the day when Greeks everywhere remember the brave decision of Metaxas to say "No!" to Mussolini and thrust Greece onto the side of the Allies in the Second World War. Perhaps just as significant to Greek history, however, was the “No More!” that was shouted to the Dictatorship of the Colonels in late 1973, by college students occupying the Athens Polytechnic University, whose protest against the oppressive regime included the slogan “Bread-Education-Freedom!” That protest ended in tragedy in the early hours of November 17, when the Dictators sent tanks through the gates of the occupied university in order to quite literally crush the spirited opposition, resulting in the deaths of at least 24 unarmed civilians and injuries to many hundreds more. But the protest did not end in failure. cont’d on page 2
Just days after the events, the Papadopoulos regime was ousted by an even more oppressive regime led by Brigadier General Ioannidis, but the students had clearly sounded the beginning of the end of the Dictatorship with their call for Freedom and Democracy. Ioannidis’ regime fell only a few months later, after other tragic circumstances (the Turkish invasion of Cyprus) shook the nation. Democracy was restored in July, 1974.

Today in Greece, November 17 is commemorated as a national holiday with a solemn ceremony at the site of the Polytechnic uprising, during which the names of the killed protesters are read aloud, and is often accompanied by a demonstration or a march, which at times has also been marred by violence. The commemoration of the students’ protest has always been somewhat controversial, not least due to the associations the date inspires because of the adoption of the name “November 17” by a radical terrorist group that committed numerous bombings and assassinations between 1975–2002, but also because the demonstrations on that day usually end at the gates of the U.S. Embassy and are seen as a castigation of the United States Government’s perceived complicity with the Junta during its seven years in power. Nevertheless, the focus of the holiday is to remember the courage of the protesters and to honor the sacrifice of those that died in the passionate call for freedom from oppression.

Resources:

The Legendary Mikis Theodorakis

Mikis Theodorakis, the internationally renowned composer and political activist died on September 2nd, 2021. He was 96 years old. Theodorakis was born on the northeastern Aegean island of Chios in 1925. He is best known for composing music based upon the lyrics of award winning poets including Yiannis Ritsos, Odysseas Elytis, Giorgos Seferis, Pablo Neruda, and Federico Garcia Lorca. After he completed his studies in Paris in 1960, he returned to Greece to write the music for “Epitafio” (Yiannis Ritsos) “Axion Esti” (Odysseas Elytis) and “Epifania” (Giorgos Seferis).
Holiday Traditions in Greece
Material adapted from https://www.omilo.com

Celebrating Christmas and the New Year

There are many wonderful holiday traditions celebrated in Greece where families and friends gather together for food and festivities. As in many parts of the world, Greeks celebrate Christmas by wishing one another “Kala Christougenna” (Merry Christmas) and “Kales Giortes” (Happy Holidays). On the morning of Christmas Eve, children call on neighbors, asking “na ta poume” – Can we sing the [carols]?” Upon singing their carols, they receive a small gift (usually some coins and chocolates or sweets!). Once they have finished their songs, children wish revelers a “Merry Christmas” to which the adults respond “and next year again!” This basically means that they wish to celebrate Christmas next year with health and happiness.

Just like Christmas, New Year’s is a family event in Greece. On the morning of December 31st, children come together to sing traditional New Year’s carols at the homes of neighbors and friends. The New Year’s dinner culminates in the wishing of “Kali Chronia” (Happy New Year) at the stroke of midnight, while many partygoers will continue the festivities in clubs and music venues all over the country. On the 1st of January, people will gather and cut the Vasilopita (St. Basil’s Bread), which is a sweet bread that symbolizes the hope that the New Year will be filled with the sweetness of life, liberty, health, and happiness for all present. When the Vasilopita is prepared, a coin is usually placed in the dough before it is baked. Whoever receives the piece with the coin is considered blessed with good fortune. The honor of cutting the bread falls to the most senior family member, who will distribute the pieces in the following order: The first portion is (usually in religious families) offered to Jesus Christ, other portions are cut for each family member, and pieces are also offered to “the house,” and “the poor.” In recent years, more and more variations exist, according to the interests and hopes of those cutting the bread!

Christmas Carols here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtUpf41dOfU
New Year Carols here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H855IuhsSDQ

Although Greeks today decorate Christmas trees, which were introduced by the Bavarian King Otto in 1833, they also decorate boats! The boat symbolizes the centuries-old maritime identity of the country. On the islands especially, the decoration of a boat was also a kind of honor and welcome to sailors returning home to celebrate Christmas with their families. Children make their own boats, using wood and paper, and then decorate them with colorful fabrics, cotton, and twigs.
Melomakarona and Kourabiedes

The melomakarono is a traditional sweet prepared primarily during the Christmas holiday season. The melomakarono (Greek: μελομακάρονα, melomakarono plural: μελομακάρονα, melomakarona) is an egg-shaped Greek dessert made mainly from flour, olive oil, and honey. Typical ingredients of the melomakarono are flour or semolina, sugar, orange zest and/or fresh juice, cognac (or similar beverage), cinnamon, and olive oil. During rolling they are often filled with ground walnuts. After baking they are immersed for a few seconds in hot syrup made of honey and sugar dissolved in water. Finally, they are decorated with the ground walnuts as well as larger pieces of walnuts. Dark chocolate-covered melomakarona is also a more recent variation of the traditional recipe.

Kourabiedes (Greek: κουραμπιές, kourambies plural: κουραμπιέδες, kourabiedes) are almond butter biscuits, powdered with lots of icing sugar. Kourabiedes are traditional Christmas sweets which are available in bakeries and pastry shops in Greece. The root of “kourabie” is middle eastern, as we find similar sweets in Lebanon, Turkey, and other countries. In Greece, kourabiedes were introduced in the 1920s with the arrival of Greek refugees from Smyrna. The recipe quickly spread throughout Greece. In some regions, this cookie is not only made during Christmas time but also for other celebrations, such as weddings and baptisms. Together with melomakarona, these are the most popular cookies that are made during the Christmas period in Greece.

Melomakarona Recipe

INGREDIENTS
2 cups oil
1 cup sugar
1 cup orange juice
1 cup fine semolina
1 kilo flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
Lemon and Orange zest
Simple syrup: (In a pot, mix together 1 cup each of water, honey, and sugar and bring to boil while stirring constantly.)
Crushed walnuts

Preheat oven to 200c
1. Beat oil well with a mixer, then add sugar, zests, orange juice, semolina, and then, a little at a time, the flour mixed with the baking soda.

2. Form the dough into small shapes, as the pastries will expand big while baking. Make sure the oven is hot before baking, otherwise the pastries will flatten. Bake for about 30 minutes until pastries are firm and golden brown.

3. When completely cooled, arrange in rows in a pan and pour warm syrup over them. Sprinkle with crushed walnuts.
Ikaros Hellenic Orthodox Club has been an integral part of Queens College since the 1970s. It has served as a place of community for Greek, Cypriot, and the entire Queens College student body. Students have forged lifelong friendships and relationships through Ikaros. Although this year has begun remotely, Ikaros has been making an effort to host events to bring more people together to showcase Greek culture in all its facets!

Executive Board
Maritsa Koutsouras (President)
Stephanie Szpylka (Vice President)
Demi Kapetanakis (Secretary)
Theodore Pigis (Treasurer)

We encourage you to join our friendly community!
If you’d like to learn more about what we do please contact us here:
Gmail: ikaroshellenicqc@gmail.com
Instagram: ikaroshellenicqc
Facebook Group: Queens College Ikaros Hellenic Club

DON’T MISS OUT ON NOVEMBER EVENTS!

OXI Day Celebration and Remembrance of the Athens Polytechnic Uprising
November 3rd, via Zoom, during free hour

Café Night
November 4th, location TBA
GRKMD 41W - 01  Modern Greek Literature in Translation  (Katsan)  T – Th 1:40 – 2:55 p.m.  Classroom: TBA
CODE: 48372

GRKMD 41W - 02  Modern Greek Literature in Translation  (Soumakis)  M – W 9:15 – 10:30 a.m.  Classroom: TBA
CODE: 48371

(3 hr: 3 Cr) Surveys Modern Greek Literature in translation from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present. The authors and their works are examined not only for their individual stylistic and thematic elements but also within the context of European literary and cultural movements. Writing Intensive. (LIT)

GRKMD 111  Elementary Modern Greek I  (Athanasopoulou)  T – Th 10:05 – 11:55 a.m.  Classroom: TBA
CODE: 48370

(4 hr: 4 Cr) Prereq.: Permission of the department. Intended for students with no previous knowledge of Modern Greek. Designed to establish correct pronunciation, to teach the elements of grammar, to enable students to understand written and spoken Greek, to become familiar with cultural aspects of modern Greece and especially to establish a good basic vocabulary. (LANG)

GRKMD 112  Beginning Modern Greek II  (Athanasopoulou)  T – Th 12:05 – 2:00 p.m.  Classroom: TBA
_CODE: 48369

(4 hr: 4 cr) Prereq: GRKMD 111 or equivalent, or permission of the department. A continuation of GRKMD 111. Grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing skills, speaking and listening comprehension will be developed. (LANG)

GRKMD 203  Intermediate Modern Greek I  (Christoforatos)  T – Th 9:15 – 10:30 a.m.  Classroom: TBA
_CODE: 48368

(3 hr: 3 cr) Prereq.: GRKMD 112 or equivalent, or permission of the department. Continuation of GRKMD 112 with grammar review, conversation and readings in literary and cultural materials at an intermediate level. (WCGI, LANG)

GRKMD 250  Modern Greek Film and Media  (Katsan)  T – Th 3:10 – 4:25 p.m.  Classroom TBA
_CODE: 48367

(3 hr. – 3 cr.) The contributions of Greek filmmakers to the art form of cinema. Students will learn the history of cinema in Greece and will study the forms and genres of Greek film, the terminology associated with film criticism, and how to write a film analysis. The course will examine how Greeks have been portrayed in the cinema of the last half-century, both in Greece and in Greek–America. Films will also be discussed and analyzed for their specific thematic and filmic content. (CE) (HYBRID)
EURO 120 -01  Writing About European Literature and Culture  (Soumakis) M – W 10:45 a.m.– 12:00 p.m  Room TBA  CODE: 48434

(3 hr. – 3 cr) Fulfills the Pathways College Writing 2 requirement. EURO 120 builds on the basic college writing skills of English 110 by helping students to practice the craft, rhetoric, and process of critical thinking and writing effectively in the discipline of European Literature and Culture. In each permutation of this variable topics course students read, discuss, and write about authentic French, German, Italian, Modern Greek, and/or Russian literary and cultural materials. Students develop analytical and writing skills by performing close readings of primary texts, contextualizing their interpretations through discussions of secondary texts, and developing their own original theses on European literary and cultural productions. Individual writing assignments (at least 20 pages over the semester) vary in length and range from informal/ungraded to formal/graded. Students are expected to revise drafts of formal/graded assignments multiple times and to participate in in-class writing workshops and peer-reviews.

PLEASE see or write to Dr. Katsan regarding placement and/or overriding prerequisites: gerasimus.katsan@qc.cuny.edu  Office: Queens Hall 200 (718) 997-5981  ELL Main Office: (718) 997-5980

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!