

**Coming Soon (19 September)**  
**MPC-Gentrain Book Group:**  
**Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War***  
**Karl Walling, Discussion Leader**

**What:** A no cost, no credit reading group for those whose best friends are often good books and those who love to converse about them. In the Spring of 2012, we read the novels of Jane Austen together. This summer, we read the Founders' Constitution, a collection of debates over framing, drafting, and ratifying the U.S. Constitution in 1787. This fall, we will read Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* at a pace of ca. 80 pages per week for ca. ten weeks.

**Why:** Thucydides' account of the great war between Athens, head of the Delian League, and Sparta, head of the Peloponnesian League, at the end of the Fifth Century, B.C., in Ancient Greece is commonly considered the greatest account of war ever written. In no small part that is because Thucydides believed the Peloponnesian War was a microcosm of all war. If you understood his account of the Peloponnesian War, you would understand something about all wars. So Thucydides proceeded to explain what he considered to be universal in this particular war, such as the causes of war, the sorts of speeches statesmen give to justify going to war, forming and maintaining alliances, the problem of escalation, the difficulty of making peace – even when it is the best interest of the belligerents, and the breakdown of social conventions and moral restraint under the stresses of war. Of particular interest to Thucydides was the ways in which this war undermined free government in ancient Athens, and conversely, how the democracy in ancient Athens influenced its strategy and tragic overextension in the ill-fated Athenian expedition to Sicily, where Athens lost the cream of its army and navy, thus setting the stage for its ultimate defeat. Thucydides establishes a context for understanding Ancient Greece's greatest philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) and dramatists (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes), who wrote in the shadow of this twenty-seven-year long war. He thus helps us understand the foundations of our civilization in the Greek experience with and reflection upon war, politics, and human nature.

**Who:** Anyone from the local area may participate, with preference for those who are now or have been involved in the MPC Gentrain program. Space is limited to twenty participants. Karl Walling is a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School who has written and lectured on Thucydides for over thirty years.

**When and Where:** First session will meet Wednesday, 19 September, from 7:00-9:00 PM, in room 201 of the Social Science Building (near the Lecture Forum) at Monterey Peninsula College. We will meet each Wednesday at the same time and place until we finish the text.

**How:** For our conversations to succeed, we need to use the same text, *The Landmark Thucydides*, ed. Robert B. Strassler (New York: Touchstone Books, 1998) ISBN: 0-684-82790-5 (Pbk). Copies will be available at the MPC bookstore. You may also order them online from Amazon (\$15.97 new/\$10.37 used). Amazon says you can download the text to Kindle, though it is recommended that you purchase a paper copy instead because of the useful maps. Email Karl Walling at [wallingk@yahoo.com](mailto:wallingk@yahoo.com) to sign up.