

HRS 114
"THE CULTURE OF CLASSICAL ROME"
GE AREA C4
SPRING 2008
MENDOCINO 4004
W 5:30-8:20
DR. NYSTROM

COURSE TITLE: The Culture of Classical Rome

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Study of Roman culture and its influence. Emphasis on art, architecture, literature, history, philosophy, and religion of Rome from the early Republic to the end of the Western Empire.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Students will gain an understanding and appreciation of the basic features of Roman culture, the beliefs, values, and ideals that gave it its distinctive character, and the more important ways in which it influenced later western civilization.

ASSIGNMENTS: Midterm (50 points multiple choice, 50 points essay), Final (50 points multiple choice, 50 points essay), and a 7-8 page interpretive essay (100 points).

TEXTS:

Peter Jones and Keith Sidwell, *The World of Rome*
Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*
Virgil, *The Aeneid*
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
Nystrom and Spyridakis, *Ancient Rome: Documentary Perspectives* (on reserve)

WEEKLY COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1: Introduction; the Greek background; Overview of Roman history
Week 2: Overview of Roman history
Week 3: Overview of Roman history; Religion
Week 4: Religion
Week 5: Religion
Week 6: Philosophy
Week 7: Philosophy; Law
Week 8: Midterm
Week 9: Private life; Background to Virgil's *Aeneid*; Poetry
Week 10: Poetry; Virgil's *Aeneid*
Week 11: Virgil's *Aeneid*
Week 12: Astrology; Comedy
Week 13: Art, architecture, city-planning
Week 14: Art, architecture, city-planning
Week 15: Rise of Christianity; Fall of Rome

GRADES:

Course grades will be based primarily on your scores on the midterm exam, final exam, and interpretive essay and will be assigned according to the following scheme:

A	93-100% of the possible points for the course	C	73-77%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	88-89%	D+	68-69%
B	83-87%	D	63-67%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	78-79%	F	59% and below

Participation may be a factor in the determination of your course grade. Attending class regularly, making constructive contributions to class discussions, and being prepared to answer questions about assigned readings are important and can raise your grade by one-half (e.g., from a B to a B+). Conversely, irregular attendance, disruptive behavior (talking, allowing cell phone to ring, text messaging), etc. may lower your course grade by one-half.

Please do not tell me at any point during the semester what grade you might need.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND EXAMS:

MARCH 17: MIDTERM (50 points multiple choice and 50 points essay) on all lectures; Jones and Sidwell, chapters 1-5, 8; Suetonius, *Julius Caesar, Augustus, Gaius Caligula, Nero, and Domitian*; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*; Nystrom and Spyridakis:

- “The Story of Cincinnatus”
- “The Roman Constitution”
- “Cato and Carthage”
- “Tiberius Gracchus’ Land Reforms”
- “The Legislation of Gaius Gracchus”
- “Optimates”
- “The Achievements of Augustus”
- “Caracalla’s Extortions”
- “Sacrifices”
- “Divination”
- “The Cult of Isis”
- “A Roman Epicurean”
- “On Facing Difficulties”
- “A Stoic’s Views on Slavery”
- “Epictetus on God and Life”

APRIL 7: Complete your reading of the *Aeneid* by this date and bring your copy to class.

MAY 12: INTERPRETIVE ESSAY (100 points) due in class.

MAY 19: FINAL EXAM (50 points multiple choice, 50 points essay) on all lectures since the

beginning of the course, all readings assigned prior to the midterm, and the following readings: Jones and Sidwell, chapters 7, 9-10, and the epilogue, "The Ghosts of Rome"; Virgil, *Aeneid*; Nystrom and Spyridakis:

"Roman Comedy"

"A Poet of the Augustan Age"

"Echo and Narcissus"

"Instruction in Seduction"

"Trimalchio's Feast"

"Satire"

"Downtown Rome"

"Constantine's Vision"

INTERPRETIVE ESSAY:

Choose one of the assigned texts by Roman authors (any single life or combination of lives from Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, or Virgil's *Aeneid*) and write an essay in which you explain how it evinces distinctively Roman beliefs, values, ideals, attitudes, and concerns.

Good examples of *distinctively Roman values and ideals* would include *pietas*, or a sense of "duty" or "faithfulness"; *gravitas*, "seriousness" or "dignity"; *dignitas*, "dignity" or "prestige"; republicanism; prudence; diligence; service to the state, perhaps involving some form of self-sacrifice; the equality of all citizens before the law; self-control; and direct, straightforward speech (as opposed to clever arguments, evasive responses, etc.)

Good examples of *distinctively Roman beliefs* would include belief in national destiny; belief in the glories of Rome's past; belief in the gods' guidance of the Roman people and the Roman state; belief in the importance of the family; belief in the importance of respecting and honoring the gods; belief in the importance of revering one's ancestors?

Does it express or address *distinctively Roman concerns* (e.g., the flood of non-Italian immigrants to Rome; excessive superstition; the undermining of republican institutions; the importance of imposing Roman institutions on conquered peoples)?

Papers must be double-spaced, written in Times New Roman 12-point font, have one-inch margins on all sides, and be between 7 full pages and 8 full pages in length. In fairness to other students, I cannot read material beyond the 8-page limit. Your paper's title and your name should appear on a separate title page, which does not count as part of the 7-8 page requirement. Citations of sources should be gathered at the end of your paper (i.e., as end notes) and composed in accordance one of the following style sheets: Chicago, MLA, Turabian. **Papers are worth 100 points and are due in class on May 12.**

Some General Grading Criteria for Papers:

“A” papers clearly state their topic and how it will be addressed. They make good points that demonstrate familiarity with the material and support them with appropriate examples. “A” papers are logical and correct in their grammar and word usage. Although “B” papers possess these strengths to a lesser degree, their arguments are generally clear and reasonably well supported. “B” papers make few mistakes in grammar and word usage. “C” papers may be rather weak in stating and supporting their theses and in their grammar and word usage. These deficiencies can make passages in a “C” paper difficult to understand and the argument as a whole ineffective. “D” papers possess the same weaknesses as “C” papers but to a greater degree. As a result, “D” papers can be difficult to understand and usually give the impression that the author has little understanding of his/her subject.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

Prior to the Midterm:

- What were the essential aims and features of Roman government?
- What were the essential aims and features of Roman religion?
- What were the essential teachings of Roman schools of philosophy?
- What values, beliefs, aims, and ideals were shared by Roman religion and philosophy?
- In what ways did Roman religion and philosophy have influence within the Roman government?
- What kinds of influence did Roman philosophy have on Rome’s ruling (upper) class?
- In what ways did the Eastern religions that came to Rome differ from traditional Roman religion?
- The Romans have a reputation for being a practical people who had an intense interest in promoting the security and material welfare of citizens. How do we see this interest in government, religion, philosophy, and law?

Prior to the Final (and in addition to the questions above):

- To what extent was Roman civilization during the *pax Romana* truly Roman? In other words, what elements of what we call “Roman” civilization were actually contributed by Greeks, Africans, and Asians? Which elements were “homegrown” Roman?
- In what ways did Roman poets support or undermine the Roman state and its beliefs and values?
- What images of ideal Romans (historical or not) have we encountered? What qualities, admired by the Romans, do we see in these individuals?
- What images of anti-Romans (historical or not) have we encountered? What qualities, which other Romans found objectionable, do we see in these individuals?
- If you were asked to name a quintessential Roman, who would it be? What qualities make him or her quintessentially Roman?
- In what ways did the lives of Romans differ from the lives of typical Sacramentans today?
- What are the most important elements of Rome’s legacy to Western civilization?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES:

HRS 114 is a lecture/discussion course. It has no prerequisites. For Humanities and Religious Studies majors, it is an elective that may be used to satisfy the requirements for the major. It can also be used to satisfy the 3-unit General Education Category C3 requirement.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the campus policy on academic dishonesty at www.csus.edu/admbus/umannual/UMA00150.htm.

No electronic devices are to be used in class. The only exception is laptop computers, which may be used only in the back row of the classroom. Using a laptop for any purpose other than notetaking will be considered disruptive behavior.

Students who leave the room during exams will not be allowed to return. If this policy creates a documentable difficulty for you, please make necessary arrangements with the Testing Center.

Make-up exams can be scheduled only for compelling and documented reasons.

A grade of “Incomplete” may be assigned at a student’s request if, in the words of the University catalog, “required coursework has not been completed and evaluated during the course due to unforeseen but fully justified reasons.”

Students with disabilities who require special arrangements for examinations should contact me during the first week of the semester.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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