

URI FCCE, Winter J-Term 2025

Classics 396

The Myths of Rome

ONLINE

January 2, 2025 – January 17, 2025

Instructor:

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Required texts:

Poems of Catullus, trans. Peter Whigham (Viking Penguin, 1980)

Livy: The Early History of Rome, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt
(Penguin USA, 1960; reprint 2002)

Virgil: The Aeneid, Second Edition, trans. Frank Copley
(Bobbs-Merrill & Macmillan, 1975; reprint 1988)

Ovid: Heroides, trans. Harold Isbell (Penguin USA, 1990; reprint 2004)

Ovid: Metamorphoses, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Indiana, 1955;
renewed 1983)

Petronius: The Satyricon, trans. William Arrowsmith (Meridian, 1994)

Seneca: Apocolocyntosis, trans. J. P. Sullivan (Penguin USA, 1986)

Apuleius: The Golden Ass; Or: Metamorphoses, trans. E.J. Kenney (Penguin USA, 1999)

Recommended text:

Peter Jones & Keith Sidwell, ed., *The World of Rome* (Cambridge, 1997)

Course description:

Nature and function of myth in Roman society; origins and influence of *Romanitas* as found in Roman literature: history, epic, lyric, novel. Roman religion: magic, animism, anthropomorphism, gods and goddesses. Readings in English translation.

Introduction:

The tales of Roman Mythology are over two thousand years old, surviving from their particular religious and socio-political cultures. This course will explore how the Romans adopted Greek myths and adapted, modified, or altered them outright to reflect Roman sensibilities. We will see the diversity of media through which Roman myth was expressed: poetry (epic, lyric), prose (history, novel), art and architecture. In the hands of authors whose talents had been culled and cultivated by those supreme patrons of the arts, the emperors, Roman myth became the ideal political statement of the divine sanction of Roman imperial power.

The course is intended to be an introduction to Roman Mythology. No prior background or reading is expected from the students. My teaching philosophy is to encourage the students to read the primary texts critically and to draw their own observations and conclusions. They are not expected to conduct rigorous scholarly research. Always my own presentation of the texts ought to be seen as one of many possible explanations; absolute knowledge in this field of study is usually not possible, nor even desirable.

Roman myth is essentially an articulation of *Romanitas*, defined by Professor Ann Suter of URI as “the psychological and emotional forces which enabled Rome to conquer and rule the ancient world, and which justified such activity (or attempted to) to the Romans themselves.” Although Roman literature spans nearly eight decades, we will focus our attention on the period when *Romanitas* receives arguably its most brilliant exposition: the reign of the first emperor Augustus, marked by the careers of the epic poets Virgil and Ovid. Octavian, the future Augustus, came into power by defeating his enemies in war, Mark Antony and Cleopatra, at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. Thereafter, his rule transformed the moribund Republic into the mighty Empire, and the turbulence of civil war abated into the Golden Age, a period of lasting peace. Roman myth was the natural means of celebrating the grand achievement of *Romanitas*, and Virgil and Ovid obliged with two of the most fundamental epic poems in literary history. But as one reads further, one finds that these texts have troubling contradictory aspects to them that raise doubts about their overall laudatory purpose. The students will examine the Roman myths with the aim of understanding the complexities of these myths’ final message.

Goals of the Course:

- (a) To introduce the students to a selection of Roman myths and the imperial society that produced them.
- (b) To allow the students to learn what questions to ask as they read works of literature or view works of art, and what methodology to use to go about answering their questions.
- (c) To enable the students to read the myths critically, to draw their own observations from the ancient readings, and to present these ideas coherently in class.

Objectives for Students:

(a) To comprehend the concept of *Romanitas* as conveyed through Roman myth. To appreciate the endurance of these works of literature that have survived through twenty centuries of war, unrest, and decay.

(b) To distinguish between primary (ancient) and secondary (modern scholarly) literature, and to read both critically. To perceive the different genres of myth through which the Romans communicated their ideas and philosophical outlook on themselves and the cities and peoples around them.

(c) To address questions posed to them by making observations and drawing conclusions that are based on the *evidence of the primary texts*. To use their observations to determine the agenda of the authors of the myths: was the myth intended, for instance, to entertain, inform, educate, persuade, or inspire?

(d) To share their findings online, including giving feedback to other students' submissions, thereby working as a team to determine the messages which the Roman myths are designed to convey.

(e) To apply their greater understanding of Roman myth to the broader context of the Roman world at large and to the Western world down to our own time.

Mythology *LINKS*:

- (a) Greek and Roman Mythology, A-M & N-Z [glossary]
(<http://www.ii.uj.edu.pl/~artur/enc/TOCD1A.htm> [A-M])
(<http://www.ii.uj.edu.pl/~artur/enc/TOCD1B.htm> [N-Z])
- (b) Myth Search: Greco-Roman Myth
(<http://www.MythSearch.com/grecoroman.html>)
- (c) Univ. of Vermont, Hope Greenberg: Ovid Project [art]
(<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/ovid/index.html>)
- (d) Vergil's *Aeneid*
(<http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/netshots/vergil.htm>)
- (e) Encyclopedia Mythica
(<http://www.pantheon.org>)
- (f) MYTHMEDIA — Mythology in Western Art
(http://lib.haifa.ac.il/www/art/MYTHOLOGY_WESTART.HTML)
- (g) Internet Sacred Text Archive
(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/index.htm>)
- (h) BookRags
(<http://www.bookrags.com>)
- (j) PERSEUS (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>)

Format:

1. The format for each class session (Mondays through Saturdays except Exam days) is that students will get online at least once each Session. By the time they get online, they should have read the assigned readings, and if they have questions about them, they should contact me online or by phone, text, or e-mail IN ADVANCE of the day itself so that they will be able to complete each online assignment with enough understanding of the text. This includes being able to CITE SPECIFIC PASSAGES FROM ANCIENT TEXTS when requested to be able to support their views – an indispensable skill for writing Essays on the Midterm and Final Exam deserving of high grades.
2. The daily procedure online is as follows:
 - a. Each student logs on each day class is in session (Monday through Saturday starting on January 2, 2025).
 - b. The students go through the outline in the Schedule and watch all videos under You-Tube Video Links for that day. In addition, they must complete in writing answers to ONE of any Discussion Questions assigned that day and submit their answers in direct print (not attached) on the Brightspace Forum. Each student may choose whichever question he/she wishes to answer. For instance, on Friday 1/3/25, the student will answer one question from Discussion Questions Session 2. (TIP: Even if you choose not to write out an outline from Question #1, you should still make an outline for yourself to be sure you know each play's plot.)
 - c. IMPORTANT: After completing his/her own work, the student is REQUIRED to ENTER A RESPONSE to AT LEAST ONE other student's entry (preferably multiple such) for that Session. (You may also use that opportunity to add responses to prior Sessions, and these can be used to catch up if you were unable to complete this commitment any prior Session.) This class is meant to encourage far more dialogue among you the students than between you and me the instructor. For that reason, I will keep my own intervention in the conversations to a relative minimum. Students' responses will be tabulated on the Gradebook on Brightspace.

The students' responses to other students' entries count as attendance in class for that Session. Failure to provide a student response any Session counts as an unexcused absence for that Session. Entering ZERO student responses through the course will disqualify the student from receiving a Course Grade and the student will automatically receive NW or F.

(Dialogue among students is expected to maintain decorum and mutual respect at all times, with use of appropriate language. Any violation thereof, including but not limited to use of foul, abusive, or insulting language, will be grounds for disciplining the offending student, to the extent of expulsion from the class if that is called for.)

- d. On days on which **EXAMS** are due, the students complete Exams at their own pace, but are expected to complete the Exams if possible in a **SINGLE SITTING**. Once finished, the students must e-mail Exams as **SINGLE COMPLETE DOCUMENTS** to me by the end of each **DAY OF THE EXAM** to avoid getting Late Deductions (these are assessed, at the Professor's discretion, as 10 points off for each day late). Exams preferably should be in Word or PDF document format.
- e. On days on which ***** PRESENTATIONS ***** are due (Characters or the Debate/Trial about Ovid), the students may complete their compositions in advance and submit them online on the Brightspace Forum in direct print (not attached). These are due in by their **DAYS** listed on the Calendar below and specified in their descriptions (the file under Assignments).
- f. **IMPORTANT**: As an alternative to written-out answers, students are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to submit answers in video format on the Forums. Additionally students are encouraged to reach out to me and arrange time with me in person (preferably at URI Providence) or by online chat session to deliver his/her answers or other discussion about the class content. Students who wish to arrange this should reach out to me to schedule mutually convenient times.

3. BE ADVISED!

- a. Grade deductions will be taken for unexcused absences (which occur if a student fails to enter at least one response to another student's entry any Session) and for Forum Assignments entered late on the Forums (after the Friday due date listed on each Forum) or missed altogether. The **MIDTERM EXAM**, if missed, may be made up only at my individual discretion, and only with a 10-point deduction taken off the **MIDTERM EXAM** grade for each session late.
- b. **MIDTERM** and **FINAL EXAMS** are to be submitted by e-mail to me directly. The students **MUST** get the Exams in to me by the end of the day on the due dates, or start incurring 10-point deductions for late submission. Each Exam will be accessible to students under Resources on Brightspace after its Review date.
- c. Both the **MIDTERM EXAM** and the **FINAL EXAM** include an **OPEN-BOOK** essay, which counts 60% of the grade and usually runs 5-6 typed pages (1.5 or 2-line space, 12 or 14 font). You may use whatever materials you wish – books, notes, etc. – to prepare the essay. However, you must give proper credit for any source you use – aside from class texts – with a footnote or endnote and bibliography at the end. Additionally, on the first day of class every student must initial the Oath of Academic Honesty stored in the Brightspace Forum. Failure to observe Closed-Book protocol constitutes cheating, and failure to provide proper credit for sources used constitutes **PLAGIARISM**, and....
- d. Suspected **PLAGIARISM** is grounds for failing an Exam.

e. On the more positive side, there are opportunities for EXTRA CREDIT, including (but not limited to) submitting written essays on agreed-upon topics, or doing other online projects. In addition, at my discretion, a student may be allowed one time to retake an unsatisfactory **MIDTERM EXAM**, with a new improved grade supplanting the older grade completely. Students interested in either of these may contact me. All Extra Credit projects (and make-up projects if permitted) are due in by the last session of the course before the **FINAL EXAM**, and will NOT be accepted at any time thereafter.

f. HELPFUL WINTER J-TERM HINT: For the purposes of grading this winter Course, the student is not required to pass in any assignments for the week until the Friday at the end of that week. **THIS INCLUDES THE TWO SATURDAYS**, whose work may wait until the following Friday. If he/she passes all the week's assignments by that Friday, the assignments will be accepted without any Late Penalty. In addition, I will accept the Midterm Exam by Monday 1/13/25. The Final Exam, on the other hand, **MUST BE IN TO ME** by Friday 1/17/25.

g. Students with documented disabilities should contact me privately about any necessary accommodations.

4. Near the end of the course students will choose a video to watch online or on their own: possibly *Gladiator*, *Centurion*, *I, Claudius*, or *History of the World, Part I* (other suggestions are welcome). The BBC production *Hannibal* is on YouTube and its link is included in a module under Content.

Grading: 20% performance in class (including attendance by student response, plus the general impression the student has made on me through the class; however, SEE IMPORTANT NOTES BELOW)
40% **MIDTERM EXAM**
40% **FINAL EXAM**
(Bonus Points are added to the total # of course points before the average is taken.)

IMPORTANT: If a student fails to turn in a COMPLETE Midterm, OR makes zero responses to other students' entries, by the last day of the course before the Final Exam, the student may automatically receive an NW or F grade. This also applies if the student fails to turn in a COMPLETE Final Exam before grades are due in to the University. The instructor reserves the right to enforce this policy strictly or to mitigate it based on extenuating circumstances.

IMPORTANT: The instructor also reserves the right, after calculating a Course Grade mathematically, to shift the result up or down based on his own personal judgement of what the student really deserves, or if there are unusual circumstances warranting the shift.

Bonam fortunam, discipuli discipulaeque! (Good luck, students!)

Syllabus of Assignments

PART I: REPUBLIC INTO EMPIRE

- Session 1
Thurs. Jan. 2 Introduction
- Session 2
Fri. Jan. 3 Catullus *Carmen* 64 (Whigham 140-60)*
BRIGHTSPACE: Handout #1 (Catullus)
Discussion Questions, Session #2
Map, Ancient Italy
Map, Roman Empire
- Session 3
Sat. Jan. 4 Livy *Early History of Rome* Book 1 (Sélincourt 29-104)
BRIGHTSPACE: Handout #2 (Livy)
Discussion Questions, Session #3
Dramatis Personae of Livy
Mythical History of Rome
- Session 4
Mon. Jan. 6 Ovid *Heroides* I, IV, VII, IX, X, XII
(Isbell 1-9, 28-38, 56-66, 76-95, 103-115)
BRIGHTSPACE: Special Project, Session #4
- Session 5
Tues. Jan. 7 Virgil *Aeneid* Books 1-3 (Copley 3-69)
BRIGHTSPACE: Handout #3 (Virgil)
Dramatis Personae of *Aeneid*
Discussion Questions, Session #5
- Session 6
Wed. Jan. 8 Virgil *Aeneid* Books 4-6 (Copley 70-142)
BRIGHTSPACE: Discussion Questions, Session #6
Aeschylus Persians 589-842
- Session 7
Thurs. Jan. 9 Virgil *Aeneid* Books 7-12 (Copley 143-290)
BRIGHTSPACE: Discussion Questions, Session #7
Presentation, Sessions #11-12, 14
Midterm Exam Review Sheet (after class)
Review for **MIDTERM EXAM**
- Session 8
Fri. Jan. 10 **MIDTERM EXAM** (due in by Monday 1/13/25)

* All #'s on this page and the next are page #'s.

PART II: THE EMPIRE IN ITS GLORY

Session 9

Sat. Jan. 11 Ovid *Metamorphoses* Books 1-5 (Humphries 3-128) ***
BRIGHTSPACE: Handout #4 (Ovid)
Hesiod *Theogony* 1-170

Session 10

Mon. Jan. 13 Ovid *Metamorphoses* Books 6-11 (Humphries 129-284) ***

Session 11

Tues. Jan. 14 Petronius Arbiter *Satyricon*
Seneca the Younger *Apocolocyntosis*
Apuleius *The Golden Ass*, "Cupid & Psyche"
BRIGHTSPACE: Handout #5 (Petronius)
Handout #6 (Seneca)
Handout #7 (Apuleius)
Hesiod *Theogony* 404-452
Discussion Questions, Session #11
Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.1-3
Horace *Sermones* 1.9

Session 12

Wed. Jan. 15 Ovid *Metamorphoses* Books 12-15 (Humphries 285-392) ***

Session 13

Thurs. Jan. 16 Video
Review for **FINAL EXAM**
BRIGHTSPACE: Final Exam Study Guide (after class)

Session 14

Fri. Jan. 17 **FINAL EXAM** (due THAT NIGHT)

The Roman Myth **MIDTERM EXAM** and
FINAL EXAM will each consist of two sections:
the first will be closed-book, the second open-book.