

Roman Poetry and Philosophy

CC 348 [32678] / WCV 320 [48573]
The University of Texas at Austin
Fall Semester, 27 Aug to 03 Dec 2009
TuTh 9.30–11.00a, UTC 4.120

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Course Website: webpace.utexas.edu/~crm697/www/cc348.htm

Required Texts

Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, ed. Smith (Hackett)
Horace, *Satires*, ed. Rudd (Penguin)
Virgil, *Georgics*, ed. Ferry (FSG)
Ovid, *The Erotic Poems*, ed. Green (Penguin)
Cicero, *On Obligations*, ed. Walsh (OWC)
Seneca, *Dialogues and Essays*, ed. Davie (OWC)
Epictetus, *Handbook*, ed. White (Hackett)
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, ed. Grube (Hackett)

Course

“We have to discover not only what each author says, but also what he thinks, and even what his reasons are for thinking as he does” —Cicero, *De Officiis*

This course studies eight authors of didactic classical Roman poetry and philosophy (mostly from 55 BC to 65 AD, but up to 180 AD). Each aims at about the same goal—making their readers better at living; we will work to make sense of and differentiate their methods. This will take attention to the persuasiveness and reasonableness of claims, the use of imagination and reminders, the nature of reading and writing, and the range of exercises of self-cultivation and self-knowledge. We practice reconstructing and assessing arguments. We learn something about the Epicureanism and Stoicism schools of philosophy, in their expression in both poetry and philosophy, and see them in the context of the more mundane range of ethical models in Roman and provincial society. And we sort out the ways literature can improve its reader. While this course is neither a survey of Latin literature nor a systematic study of Hellenistic philosophy, it will be helpful for any future study in philosophy, literature, or classics.

Work

This course aims to develop your skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking, especially as concerns ancient argumentative and didactic literature.

Writing

Because this course is not a one-on-one tutorial, writing serves as the principal way by which you develop and articulate your thoughts about the reading and class discussion. And because this course contributes to the liberal arts curriculum of the Bachelor's degree, it has the obligation to help you improve those skills implied by a successful completion of that curriculum.

To get a C on an assignment, your work must be mostly responsive to the prompt, acknowledge relevant portions of the texts in question, have relatively clear exposition, and show some personal reflection. Getting a B takes complete responsiveness to the prompt, fully substantiated claims and citations, good structural organization, and demonstrated serious thoughtfulness about the issue. Getting an A- requires the above, plus excellent command of the reading, multiple modes of argument and preemptive counter-argument, crystalline structural organization, and both rigor and imagination in confronting the issues in question. An A paper exceeds an A- especially in its rigor (analytic sharpness and systematicity) and imagination (creative and exploratory and comprehensive ways of answering the prompt).

Twice a semester (or so) your paper will not receive credit the first time I read it. I will return it to you with comments and, usually, a request to meet in office hours by a certain date. You will think about the comments, we will talk in detail about problems with your old draft and your plan for reworking it, and then you will resubmit a dramatically revised version or section of the original paper by another specified date. We may have to work on the use of textual evidence, the premises and inferences of your argument, the transparency of organization, the ability to deal with potential counter-positions, or any of the other virtues of a serious paper in the liberal arts. After reading this revision, I may require yet another sequence of revisions; refusing or failing to try to make adequate revision will prevent your paper from receiving credit.

My request for a revision does not at all mean that your paper would have otherwise earned an F. It much more likely deserves a B or C+ or even an A-. A request means only that your writing has some weakness I think necessary for you to confront. But because each revision can work on only *some* weaknesses, you should not expect to receive an A at the end of every revision sequence. You must be careful not to misinterpret what you take to be a low score on a paper. Do not think to yourself, "But I put so much time into this paper; I thought about it from every direction; this is very unfair!" Mastery of these written exercises may take much more than time: they take the development of certain skills, ways of arranging your notes, reading the texts, and rereading and editing your written work. So a low score simply measures your having not yet acquired all these

skills, or not having yet been able to apply those skills to the prompt. My job as a teacher is to help you isolate your weaknesses and aid you in strengthening your abilities. I expect your grade through the semester to reflect your gradual improvement in these various areas.

Assignments

There will be eight written assignments; contrary to the online course description, there will be no in-class midterm exams. I will distribute detailed prompts before each due-date. Unless mentioned in the prompt there is no specific page-length requirement.

6 x 10%

HW I: Articulating self-knowledge, following Marcus Aurelius' model.

HW II: Locating, paraphrasing, organizing, and assessing arguments from Lucretius.

HW III: Explaining the value of Virgil's vivid poetry for urging on a way of life.

HW IV: Talking productively about virtue, with reference to Cicero.

HW V: A close reading of one *Satire* to discuss poetry's ethical considerations.

HW VI: The centrality of love poetry to the human condition, and its modes in Ovid.

2 x 20%

"Aeneid": A cumulative response to listening to Virgil's epic over the semester.

"Ways of Life": An interpretative, analytic, and comparative essay, with revision.

"Aeneid" assignment

We will be *listening* to a recited version of Virgil's *Aeneid* this semester. I will distribute some copies of a 10-disc CD version (which you will should copy to your computer and then share with classmates); I may also post mp3s to our class website for you to stream. You will be responsible for listening to about one hour per week. You may find paying close-enough attention to the recitation difficult at first; part of the point of this assignment is to become practiced at it. The syllabus dedicates three class-periods to conversation about the epic. You should take ample notes on each listening session; I will eventually distribute notes about specific aspects of the recitation you should think about. The attendant paper consolidates your discoveries from your listening sessions.

"Ways of Life" assignment

While at 1500 words this paper may be no longer than your others, you are expected to give this one the most attention, both to your argument and to the fullness of your reference to our reading and discussion over the semester. You should treat the "draft" due on 24 November as the principal version of the paper, and thus the one responsible for most of the paper's overall grade; but the quality of your revision, esp. how you respond to my comments, may improve (or lower) that overall grade significantly.

Submission of Assignments

Assignments will always be due in class at the beginning of class. I will accept assignments only by hardcopy, never by email, unless you are explicitly told on the syllabus or prompt to email them. You must staple and paginate multi-sheet assignments, and include full heading information (full name, course number, name of the assignment, and the date it is due); failures will lower the grade.

Late assignments will not be accepted except by my discretion and if you have a good faith reason. In this case your assignment will lose a grade letter every two calendar days it is late. (There may be some time-sensitive assignments for which no reason will be adequate to allow me to accept your paper.) For example, if your printer broke thirty minutes before class and you want to run the paper over to my office after class, I will likely accept it, but you will still receive a grade-letter reduction. Or if you forget an assignment due Thursday and drop it by my mailbox the following Monday before 9.30a, you will receive a two grade-letter reduction.

Attendance

Much of the activity and value of the class comes through our twice-weekly discussions. Accordingly, your final grade will take into account your attendance, which I will spot-check. Repeated tardy arrivals may count as absences. You must submit appropriate paperwork to excuse any absence. Use the following table to determine by how many grade-points to adjust your overall course score.

Absences Adjustment

0 days	+0.1
1 day	0.0
2 days	-0.10
3 days	-0.33
4 days	-0.66
5 days	-1.00
6 days	-2.00
>6 days	-3.00

Grades

Your course grade will represent the precision, accuracy, comprehensiveness, care, thoughtfulness, and effort demonstrated by your participation in the course activities. This course will use +/- grading. You will receive the grade nearest to your average numerical score; for example, a 3.9 will be an A; a 3.47 will be a B+.

A 4.0 – Excellent	B- 2.66	D+ 1.33
A- 3.66	C+ 2.33	D 1.0 – Pass
B+ 3.33	C 2.0 – Average	D- 0.66
B 3.0 – Above average	C- 1.66	F 0.0 – Fail

Further Logistics

Technology

Please check class-related emails each weekday, and respond promptly. I will do the same. I will email you additional readings and assignments if I do not distribute paper copies. This course will not use BlackBoard; please check with fellow students to ensure you have not missed any handouts, which include paper-prompts and notes.

Classroom Policies

Please do not read or write txt or other electronic communications during our official meeting time. You should take notes every day, about what your classmates or I say, not just what's written on the board. I will expect your papers to reflect familiarity with what we've talked about, whenever it's appropriate. You may use your computer for note-taking, but for that purpose only; please do not use it for in-class research. Bring at least the current and the previous text to class every day.

Cheating

Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for this course shall be grounds for failing the entire course and communication of dishonesty to the University. This includes, but is not restricted to, any plagiarism on any paper, or cheating on any portion of the homework. Plagiarism includes, among other things, not citing text, paraphrases, or ideas taken from any assigned or unassigned reading, or other students' comments or papers. Please ask about any case you're concerned about.

University Honor Code

"The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

Accessibility

"The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone)."

Reading and Assignment Schedule

August

Th 27 "Sayings." Syllabus Overview.

September

Tu 01 *Meditations* Bks I-IV. Student Introductions.

Th 03 *Meditations* Bks V-VI.

Tu 08 *Meditations* Bks VII-IX. **HW I.**

Th 10 *Meditations* Bks X-XII.

Tu 15 *Nature of Things* Bk I.

Th 17 *Nature of Things* Bk III.

Tu 22 *Nature of Things* Bk IV. **HW II.**

Th 24 *Nature of Things* Bk V.

Tu 29 Discussion of *Aeneid* Bks I-IV.

October

Th 01 *Georgics* Bk I.

Tu 06 *Georgics* Bk II-III.

Th 08 *Georgics* Bk IV. **HW III.**

Tu 13 *Obligations* Bk I.1-114.

Th 15 *Obligations* Bk I.115-161. **HW IV.** Midpoint Course Evaluation.

Tu 20 *Obligations* Bk II.

Th 22 *Obligations* Bk III.

Tu 27 Horace *Satires* I.1-4, 6, 10; II.2-3, 6.

Th 29 Horace *Satires* II.1, *Ars Poetica*. **HW V.**

November

Tu 03 Discussion of *Aeneid* Bks V-VIII.

Th 05 Ovid *Amores* Bk I.

Tu 10 Ovid *Amores* Bks II-III.

Th 12 Ovid *Cures for Love; Facial Treatment*. **HW VI.**

Tu 17 Seneca "On The Shortness of Life," "On the Happy Life"

Th 19 Seneca "Consolation to Marcia"

Tu 24 *Handbook*. "**Ways of Life**" draft. [Final due Dec W 09]

Th 26 NO CLASS [Thanksgiving]

December

Tu 01 Discussion of *Aeneid* Bks IX-XII. Receive comments on Ways of Life paper.

Th 03 *Handbook* (reread). Course summary. "**Aeneid**." Course Evaluation.