

Stanford University—Department of Classics—Classics 84 / History 102A

THE ROMANS—DISCUSSION SECTION

Spring 2019

Introduction

This syllabus complements the main class syllabus, and details the requirements, expectations, and elements necessary for a smooth, productive, and respectful learning experience. While it is intended to be as clear and exhaustive as possible, it does not replace direct contact with your instructors and should not be treated as gospel; on a case-by-case basis, exceptions will be made.

The TA is available by email (talug@stanford.edu) and will make every effort to respond in a timely, comprehensive, and respectful manner, usually within 24 hours. Office hours are Tuesday and Thursday 12:30 to 13:20 and by appointment in the upstairs TA Office in the Classics Department (Bldg. 110, Main Quad), and you are welcome to drop in whether or not you have a presentation, paper, or other issue to discuss.

Inclusivity and Classroom Culture

This is an inclusive classroom. Everybody has a name and a pronoun. I am committed to referring to you with the correct name and pronoun. Please feel free to correct me if I make a mistake, both in public and in private.

This subject matter of this section can be challenging emotionally as well as intellectually, as it will include discussions about class, slavery, gender, imperialism and war, religion and religious persecution, and the lasting legacy of the Roman empire today. Students and the TA collectively set the tone for the course community. This includes, among other things: treating others with respect and not causing hurt or discomfort intentionally; giving each other the benefit of the doubt; listening actively; speaking from one's own experiences instead of generalizing ("I" instead of "they," "we," and "you"); participating to the fullest of one's ability—community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice; helping self and peers to become more self-reflective; Confidentiality—respecting the confidentiality of personal disclosure; Supporting one another if someone needs clarification, a chance to speak, a chance to quietly gather thoughts, or time to think / reflect before responding to a question.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://oae.stanford.edu>).

First-Generation and Low-Income Resources

Students of all backgrounds are welcome in Classics 84. If a student has concerns about costs associated with obtaining the textbook or other class-related expenses, they should contact the TA. There are also numerous resources for students on campus. Incoming first-year students can inquire about the Welcome Grants through the Financial Aid Office. The Stanford Diversity and First-Gen office is managed through Student Affairs, and provides different forms of assistance (<http://diversityandfirstgen.stanford.edu/resources>). The Stanford First Generation and/or Low Income Partnership (FLIP) builds and empowers a community of FLI (first generation and/or low income) students and supporters, and offers resources as well (<http://www.stanfordflip.com/resources.html>).

Course Goals and Objectives

The weekly discussion sections are designed to introduce you to ancient texts (in translation) in order to get a first-hand experience of our source material, to get a deeper understanding of key issues, and to provide room for discussion. To make the most out of this course, students are encouraged to ask questions, participate in discussions, and to engage critically with the texts as well as the statements made by the instructor and TA.

History is not the simple memorisation of facts, nor is all already established and set into stone. On the contrary, history is made anew every single day, with every new critical interpretation of the evidence. Thus, apart from a few very basic issues, answers to historical questions are not ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ but persuasive or unpersuasive, coherent or incoherent, well- or poorly justified. In consequence, the discussion section is not intended to simply ‘teach’ Roman history, but to teach the skill required for students to do so themselves. By the end of this course, students will be able to: distinguish between, evaluate, and employ various types of historical evidence (e.g. textual-primary, textual-secondary, archaeological, etc.); read textual-primary sources, in particular, closely and critically; formulate persuasive, coherent, and well-justified answers to a variety of historical questions; express those answers clearly and concisely, in both oral and written formats; respond critically (but nonetheless respectfully) to the answers of others, through in-class discussion.

To ensure students develop these skills and techniques, students are encouraged to read slowly, carefully, and for detail; look up unfamiliar words and concepts; highlight words or phrases that seem historically significant; note the context: Who is the ‘author’? Who speaks? To whom is they speaking? Where does the author get their evidence? What is the author’s general context (*i.e.* time period, socio-economic class, cultural / ethnic background, geographical location, etc.)? How might their background affect the way in which readers (should) interpret the text?

In your analysis of the texts, ask and attempt to answer the following (and other) questions: What is historically interesting / important / problematic about the text? How does the passage relate to other primary accounts (whether textual or archaeological) of the historical event / society / time period? What is the significance of the similarities/differences? How does the passage relate to the secondary sources (e.g. textbook and lectures)? Do they complement one another? Contradict one another? What patterns (e.g. repetitions, emphases, contradictions) do you see within the text itself? Does the passage shed light on broader historical themes or concepts discussed in class? Once you’ve performed your analysis, synthesise your insights in your papers and presentations.

Student Responsibilities and Grading

Participation in section accounts for 40% of your final grade. Your grades will be based in equal shares on attendance, participation in discussions, weekly response papers (max. 1 page each), weekly preparatory questions, and one oral or written report: “All students will present *either* an oral *or* a written report on the readings for a particular week. Oral reports should be supported by brief handouts and/or slides” (from the main syllabus, p. 5).

Oral Reports

There will be eight opportunities in each section for oral presentations of *c.* 10 minutes each, which can be given either alone or in groups of two. Presenters *must* meet with the TA the week before their presentation to discuss the content of their presentation and to develop the weekly response question for their fellow students in collaboration with the TA. Each presentation must include at least one question or hypothesis for the 20-minute discussion part after the presentation. The presenters are free in how they would like to structure that discussion (small groups, debate, plenary discussion, etc.) but must clear it with the TA in the mandatory meeting the week before their presentation.

Each (group of) presenter(s) will be responsible to develop a *c.* one-page handout to be sent to the TA 48 hours before section, so it can be distributed amongst all students and read in preparation. This handout should contain your research question, and your discussion question or hypothesis, and, as necessary, explain key terms, list the most important dates, give a brief biography of the presentation’s main figures, give necessary background knowledge, etc.

A second *c.* one-page handout should contain the most important and salient source excerpts from the assigned reading which the presenter(s) deem(s) most useful either for the presentation or the discussion. This, too, must be sent to the TA 48 hours in advance.

A grading rubric for oral presentations is available on Canvas.

Written Report

For those students who prefer not to give an oral report, or for whom there is no space left, there is the option of submitting a written report instead: “Written reports should contain at least 500 (3 units), 1,000 (4 units) or 1,500 (5 units) words and must be handed in *prior to* the relevant session” (from the main syllabus, p. 5). Students opting for this option will sign up for when they’ll hand in their report, and write it on the same topic as they would if they were to give an oral report. You are free to focus on what you find most interesting within the bounds of the assigned reading for the section, just make sure that you don’t simply summarise the reading, but develop an argument as if you were answering to a question or hypothesis in the discussion after an oral report.

Written reports must be submitted to the TA by email—either as an attachment or in the main body, no links to external sites such as Google Drive—at least 24 hours before the respective section.

A grading rubric for written presentations is available on Canvas.

Weekly Response Paper

In collaboration with the TA, the presenters for each week will develop an analytical question (*i.e.* more like ‘What is the connection between Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita* and Vergil’s *Aeneid*?’ and not so much like ‘When was the Second Punic War?’) on the readings assigned for their section to be

answered by all students. This question will be uploaded on Canvas a week prior to the respective section, and must be answered by all students, excluding the oral presenter(s), and sent to the TA at least 24 hours before the respective section (E.g. the presenters for Friday 12 April meet with the TA on Thursday 4 April to develop the question for the weekly response paper. The TA then uploads the question later the same day, and all students must submit their responses until Thursday 11 April at 10:30 am / 11:30 am / 1:30 pm).

Response papers should be *c.* one page long and answer the question based upon the weekly readings, knowledge the students developed in prior lectures and sections, and other scholarly writing.

These response papers are intended to promote active engagement with, and focused responses to, the primary sources. In order to answer the questions, I would suggest the following approach: first, develop a testable hypothesis. Second, provide specific, textual evidence in support of your hypothesis. Third, identify alternative hypotheses and possible counter-arguments. And, fourth, examine the case both for and against these competing interpretations of the evidence.

Weekly Preparatory Questions

Students are required to have done all the assigned readings, both textbook and primary sources. These readings will provide the basis for each week’s discussion, which not only enables the students to pose one question themselves and answer the question posed by the presenter(s) and the TA as well as to understand and be able to explain Roman history, society, and culture.

In preparation for each week, each student except the oral presenter(s) must submit to the TA an analytical or comprehension question 24 hours before the respective section. This question can concern issues that puzzled the student, cause and effect relationships, source analysis and criticism, the Big Picture, or other issues the student would like to discuss in class. As far as time and other factors permit, these questions will inform the discussions in section.

Attendance

Students are expected to be present at each section. Section attendance will be taken, and if students miss more than one session without prior approval of their TA, they will lose one part of a letter grade for each additional session they miss (*i.e.* an A becomes an A minus, an A minus becomes a B plus, and so on). This also applies to students taking the course for credit / no credit.

If there is an unavoidable conflict, due to e.g. doctor’s appointments, job interviews, athletic events in which the student is participating, etc., please let the TA know in a timely manner. If a student has to miss a section with an excuse, they are required to submit until the beginning of the missed class a short essay on the assigned readings for the class (in addition to the weekly response paper), *c.* one page, and to see the TA at their earliest convenience to discuss their essay and what they have missed.

Participation

Active participation is expected of all students. While this does not mean that each student must engage extensively in every discussion every week, students will not be able to make the most from the course if they do not debate different interpretations of evidence and discuss concepts explaining why things happened the way they did. Participation will be graded partially on the basis of the student’s engagement in class.