

Department of Classical Studies
Course Outline
CS 9450B: DRESS AND THE BODY IN ROMAN ANTIQUITY
Winter 2027



INSTRUCTOR: Kelly Olson (kolson2@uwo.ca) she/her

OFFICE: Lawson Hall 3227 (661-2111 x 84525)

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 4:00-5:00 PM or by appointment

TIME AND PLACE OF CLASS: Wednesdays, 2:30-5:30, LAH 3220

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Readings are on our OWL site: click on the 'course readings' button

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The body is articulated socially through clothing and ornament: these are what makes the human body culturally visible. This graduate seminar is designed to uncover the role played by dress and the body in the historical construction of ancient identity, and to consider fashion and material culture more generally as playing a fundamental role in the shaping of the past. We will examine dress and the body in Roman antiquity starting from a body of literary and artistic evidence. Topics such as the toga and *stola*, tattooing, 'barbaric' dress practices, body ideals, the construction of clothing, color, dyes, and fabric, body ideals, and 'big hair' will be studied alongside modern theories of fashion and self-presentation.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- To become familiar with the main evidence (visual, literary, and archaeological) for ancient gender and clothing categories
- To become familiar with modern theories and definitions of fashion, the history of the study of dress, and with gender theory
- To become aware of the problems with and limitations of that evidence.
- To investigate modern reactions to, interpretations of, and preconceptions about that evidence.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:

- To develop critical, analytical and problem-solving skills through the writing of an essay and through the close analysis of ancient texts and artefacts in seminars.
- To gain a knowledge of the different types of evidence available for this area of ancient history, primarily the main literary texts and the archaeological evidence.
- To gain an appreciation of the historiographical and analytical skills needed to handle these sources.
- To gain an ability to use these different sources together to assess the main issues in the interpretation of ancient society.
- To develop and enhance skills in oral presentation through participation in seminars.
- To develop the skills necessary for conducting in-depth research.
- To develop an ability to discuss these issues in written work with coherent and logical arguments, clearly and correctly expressed.

GRADES:

Essay	40%
Presentation	20%
TWO 15 min article reviews (15% each)	30%
Questions on presentations:	5%
Class participation	5%
	<hr/>
	100%

REPORTS AND ESSAYS:

- **Essays** should be 5000 words, and are due by **WEDS APR 28th**.
- I encourage you to write the essay on a topic of interest to you (in consultation with me). Although we cover many topics pertinent to dress in ancient society in the class readings and discussion, some we simply do not have time to examine (e.g., dress in the Roman Near East or Egypt; dress in late antiquity).
- **Presentations** should be about 15-20 minutes in length (in other words, conference-paper length, or **8-10** double-spaced typed pages). You will choose a date for your presentation in the first week or two of classes; if you need to cancel or change your date **you must find a classmate willing to take your place.**

- Your essay should incorporate and address questions, suggestions, and comments raised during your presentation; thus, the essay and presentation are on the same topic.
- **Article reviews:** students are required to choose **TWO** of our readings in advance and prepare questions and comments for discussion in class. (My own work is **excluded** from these). For each article presentation, in 10-15 minutes:
 1. please summarize the article in question
 2. tell us what the author set out to do, and using what evidence
 3. if s/he achieved this, in your opinion
 4. Tell us what you liked or didn't like about the article or chapter.
 5. Please also pose questions to us about the content
 6. Please type up your report and turn it in to me (it should be 1-2 double-spaced typed pages, or thereabouts).

IMPORTANT POLICIES:

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#) . Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.
 Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:
https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:
<https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

SOGS

Additional student-run support services are offered by SOGS, <https://sogs.ca>

Academic Consideration

Students must familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs posted on the Academic Calendar:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for attempted or completed work, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult Accessible Education.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

Use of AI:

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, etc.) **is prohibited**. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

COURSE OUTLINE: