



Department of Classical Studies

CS 3904G: The Life and Legacy of Julius Caesar

Course Outline

Course Description

From antiquity to Shakespeare to HBO's Rome, the figure of Julius Caesar continues to fascinate. Through close readings of ancient sources, modern scholarship, and examination of later uses (and abuses) of Caesar's image, we will examine the many facets of one of ancient Rome's most famous individuals. Among the topics to be considered are: Caesar's life and career, his literary output, his influence on imperial ideology, and his reception and legacy in modern Western culture.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course successfully will have read closely in translation a survey of texts by and about Julius Caesar. They will have become familiar with the political, literary, and cultural history of the late Roman republic. In addition, they will gain knowledge of the ways in which the figure of Julius Caesar has been deployed and appropriated by later cultures from the Roman imperial era through the twentieth century. They will be able to evaluate evidence from ancient and modern texts and visual culture, and gain awareness of the ways in which ancient history informs modern history.

Learning Outcomes

Successful students will develop their skills in the close reading, analysis, and interpretation of ancient texts and the modern reception of such texts. They will gain expertise in developing a research question and appropriate avenues for investigating it. Students will gain experience in writing, both in the context of a formal research paper, and in short responses to the assigned readings and/or visual material. Students will develop their interpersonal communication skills through small group discussion and responses to directed readings on the topic of the figure of Julius Caesar.

Contact Details

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:15 and by appointment

Class Meetings

The course meets MWF from 2:30-3:30 in Physics & Astronomy 117.

Course Texts and Resources

1. Caesar, *The Gallic War* (trans. Carolyn Hammond). Oxford Paperbacks. 2008. ISBN 978-0199540266.
2. Caesar, *The Civil War* (trans. John Carter). Oxford Paperbacks. 2008. ISBN 978-0199540624
3. Plutarch, *Roman Lives: A Selection*. (trans. Philip Stadter). Oxford Paperbacks. 2008. ISBN 978-0199537389
4. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* (trans. Catherine Edwards). Oxford Paperbacks. 2008. ISBN 978-0199537563
5. Lucan, *Civil War* (trans. Matthew Fox). Penguin. 2012. ISBN 978-0143106234.
6. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*. Folger Shakespeare Library. 2004. ISBN 978-0743482745
7. Other materials will be made available on the Course site at OWL.

(textbooks will be available at the Western Bookstore, the Used Bookstore or online retailers)

Grade Assessment

Students will be evaluated based on the following components:

1. Essay proposal and annotated bibliography: 10% (due February 23)
2. Reading quizzes: 10% (weekly, each Friday)
3. Term test: 15% (February 11)
4. Primary Source responses: 20% (various dates)
5. Research Essay: 20% (due March 23)
6. Final Exam: 25% (scheduled by Registrar's office)

Grade Assessment: further details

Essay proposal and annotated bibliography: this assignment will provide a foundation for the research leading to the essay due in March.

Term test: this will focus on short passages selected from the readings for identification and commentary. Students will be expected to apply their knowledge of both assigned texts and key concepts learned in the classroom.

Reading quizzes: weekly five minute quizzes (each Friday) on the week's assigned readings.

Primary Source responses: each student will compose (ca. 500 words) a focused analysis of two of the primary source readings over the course of the semester and post these to the course blog on OWL. Students will be expected to comment in a substantial way (3-5 sentences) on the content of the posts, thus engaging in a respectful scholarly discussion. The quality of the posts and the responses will be assessed as 20% of the overall grade. More information to come.

Research essay: a research paper of about 2000 words; more information to come.

Final exam: similar to the term test, in that it will consist of a selection of short passages from the semester's readings for identification and commentary. There will also be a choice of essay questions, all of which will require a focused, comparative analysis of the texts we will have studied.

Schedule of Readings and Seminar Topics

(subject to change)

Week 1 (Jan. 5-9): Introduction; Life and Culture in the Roman Republic

Reading assignment: Introductions to editions of *BG* [=Gallic Wars] (xi-xlix) and *BC* [=Civil Wars] (vii-l). *BG* Books 1-4 (pp. 3-88)

- M: Intro to course, understanding reception, popular ideas of Caesar
- W: Roman politics and culture; putting Caesar in his historical context
- F: Background to Caesar as an author; Roman literature in context; understanding ancient sources

Questions to consider this week: What 'general' knowledge do we have about Caesar? From where does this knowledge come? How has the image of Caesar evolved over the centuries? How accurate is our current understanding? What factors are involved in the reception of Caesar? How does Roman culture inform or affect our understanding of Caesar? How much is Caesar a product of his political and cultural environment? Why did Caesar write down his account of the Gallic War? Consider the literary reasons as well as the political or military ones.

Week 2 (Jan. 12-16) Caesar in his own words

Reading assignment: *Gallic Wars* Books 5-7 (pp. 89-174); *Civil Wars* 1-2 (pp. 3-75)

- M: Background to the Gallic War as a historical event
- W: Reading the Gallic War: Caesar vs. "Caesar"
- F: The meaning of Roman victory: effect of Caesar's conquests on his reputation at Rome

Questions to consider this week: Why does Caesar say he went to war against the Gauls? What other reasons might there be? What is your opinion of "Caesar"? What is your opinion of the *Gallic War* as a piece of literature? What genre would you say it is (history? autobiography? something else?)? What events, characters, descriptions, or literary features stand out to you? What would you expect the reaction in Rome to be to Caesar's victories and losses? What was the political fallout from the conquest of Gaul?

Week 3 (Jan. 19-23) Caesar in his own words, continued

Reading assignment: *Civil Wars* Book 3 (pp. 76-139)

- M: Background to the civil war as a historical event; differences between foreign and civil wars
- W: Comparison of "Caesar" in the *BG* and in the *BC*; structure of the narrative; portrayal of enemies
- F: The other side of civil war; Caesar's other writings

Questions to consider this week: What events led up to the outbreak of civil war? Who are Caesar's enemies? Is it personal enmity or political? How does Caesar present his side of the conflict? What other interpretations are possible? How does the narrative of the *Civil War* differ from that of the *Gallic War*? What characteristics make "Caesar" stand out in this work? How are the Pompeians portrayed, both individually and as a whole? What features of the work are memorable to you? How would you sum up Caesar from his own writings (i.e., what does he want his readers to think of him)? Can you think of a few adjectives that you would use to describe Caesar based on your reading of his works?

Week 4 (Jan. 26-30) The Biographical Tradition: Suetonius and Plutarch

Reading assignment: Introduction to Suet. (pp. vii-xxx); Suetonius, *Life of Caesar* (pp. 3-42)

- M: Later sources for Caesar's life; biography as a literary genre; background to Suet. and Plutarch
- W: The *Life of Caesar* in its context: understanding Suetonius' "Caesar"
- F: Close reading and interpretation of passages from the biography

Questions to consider this week: How does biography differ from history? What does it mean to have written the *Commentarii* – do they fit into the category of biography? What factors influenced Suetonius in his choice to write biographies of the "Twelve Caesars" (and what does that title imply about Caesar)? What features are notable to you in your reading of Suetonius (i.e., what aspects does he focus on? Can you think of anything he leaves out?); What is your overall impression of Caesar, based on Suetonius' account?

Week 5 (Feb. 2-6) Suetonius and Plutarch, continued

Reading assignment: Introduction to Plutarch (pp. ix-xxxviii); Plutarch, *Life of Caesar* (pp. 297-359)

- M: Comparing Plutarch to Suetonius
- W: Close reading and interpretation of passages from the biography
- F: No class today; assignment: listen to the BBC podcast *In Our Time: Julius Caesar* (available on OWL)

Questions to consider this week: How does Plutarch's concept of biography differ from that of Suetonius? What is the aim of Plutarch's overall project? How does Plutarch's own cultural heritage inform his literary work? What aspects of Caesar's life and career does Plutarch emphasize? How is the biography organized? Can you think of anything that Plutarch has omitted? What is your overall impression of Caesar, based on Plutarch's account?

Week 6 (Feb. 9-13) Ancient Responses/Reactions: Politician, General, Lover

Reading assignment: midterm: Wednesday Feb. 11; Readings TBA

- M: Caesar's reputation as a politician and general in contemporary Rome
- W: Midterm
- F: Caesar the lover : "every woman's man and every man's woman"?

Questions to consider this week: What would you say are Caesar's main accomplishments in his political career? Which of his acts was most controversial? Would you have supported his reforms? Did Caesar wish to be king? What arguments did his enemies make against him? What evidence did they have? Consider Caesar's personal reputation: is it positive or negative that he was thought to be such a prolific lover? What implications did this reputation have? According to our sources, who were Caesar's lovers? What status did they have in contemporary Rome? What effect did their have on Caesar's political reputation? Can the sources be trusted?

Reading Week (no classes)

Week 7 (Feb. 23-27) Ancient Responses continued; the Ides of March in Rome and beyond

Reading assignment: Readings TBA

M: Events leading up to the Ides of March [essay proposal and annotated bibliography due]

W: "Et tu Brute?": ancient accounts of the assassination (close reading and comparison)

F: *Divus Julius*: a new god and a new Republic?

Questions to consider this week: How do the different accounts of conspiracy and the events of the Ides of March match up against each other? What were the concerns of the assassins? Were they justified? What was Cicero's role in the event and the aftermath? What were the short- and long-term effects of the assassination? How much does this event affect our perception and interpretation of Caesar?

Week 8 (Mar. 2-6) Reception in the Imperial Era: 'new' Caesars, Lucan

Reading assignment: Lucan *Civil War*: Introduction to the edition (pp. xi-xlix), Books 1-5

M: "Caesar" as founder of the Principate; background to Lucan's life and works

W: The blood and the beauty: civil war in poetic form

F: Epic echoes: heroism and patriotism, and a new reality

Questions to consider this week: How is the image of Caesar used to solidify the new political system established by Augustus? What aspects were changed or omitted by Augustus and later Julio-Claudians? What aspects were emphasized, and for what purpose? How does Lucan's life and career influence his choice of literary form and subject? What other literary influences are evident in Lucan's poem? How does Lucan use history and myth? Can we compare Lucan's epic poem with other epic poetry (Homer, Vergil, Ovid)? How does Lucan construct the narrative of his poem?

Week 9 (Mar. 9-13) Lucan, continued

Reading assignment: Lucan *Civil War* Books 6-10

M: Rewriting Caesar: comparing the *Civil Wars*

W: Close reading of passages from Lucan;

F: More close reading; later receptions of Caesar in the Empire

Questions to consider this week: How closely does Lucan's account of the civil war match Caesar's account? What are the major differences (tone, style, events, structure, character, etc.)? To what can we attribute these differences? Is there a hero in Lucan's text? Who is it? How does Lucan characterize Caesar (and why)? From what perspective is Lucan's *Civil War* told? Does Lucan's portrayal of Caesar affect later accounts of the events of the civil war? How do later emperors use the image of Caesar?

Week 10 (Mar. 16-20) Caesar in the post-classical period: Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and beyond

Reading assignment: Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (all); selections from post-classical drama (TBD)

M: Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

W: Caesar in the dramatic and literary tradition (Chapman, Shaw)

F: Caesar as the ideal statesman: nationalism, Caesarism, Napoleonic Caesars

Questions to consider this week: How does Shakespeare portray Caesar in *Julius Caesar*? How does this compare to ancient representations of Caesar? Is the portrayal of Caesar in this period generally positive, or negative? What factors influence Caesar's later portrayal in these ways? How is Caesar portrayed in the context of the Renaissance more generally? How about in the Enlightenment? What aspects of Caesar's life and character remain prominent in these later periods? How does Napoleon rework the image of Caesar, especially in the context of the latter's conquest of Gaul? What elements of Caesar's legacy most appeal to later statesmen?

Week 11 (Mar. 23-27) Caesar in the modern era; Caesar in the media

Reading assignment: TBD

- M: Caesar in the ideology of American history [research essay due]
- W: Caesar as a model for modern fascism
- F: Caesar in popular culture in the 20th and 21st centuries

Questions to consider this week: How were the founders of American independence influenced by Caesar's legacy? What does Caesar represent for early American politicians? How is Caesar's example and legacy used by later autocrats (or dictators, or tyrants) such as the Russian Czars, Hitler and Mussolini? What reactions occur in the media as a result of their use of his image? How does Caesar appear in popular media (stage, advertising, literature, film, and television) in post WWII popular culture?

Week 12 (Mar. 30-Apr. 1) Caesar's legacy in the modern world: the USA as new Rome

Reading assignment: Readings TBA

- M: Caesar in HBO's *Rome* and other television series
- W: American politics and a new Caesarism
- F: GOOD FRIDAY: NO CLASS

Questions to consider this week: How is Caesar portrayed in popular visual culture? Which version of Caesar that we have studied does the Caesar of HBO's *Rome* most resemble? What elements of Caesar's legacy stand out as particularly important for a television audience? How does Caesar feature in media representations of American politics and foreign policy in the 21st century?

Week 13 (Apr. 6-8) Retrospective; Review and Catch-up

Reading assignment: Readings TBA

- M: Caesar in retrospect: looking back through two millennia of Caesars
- W: Review and wrap-up

Important Policies for all Western Courses

Note from the Dean of Arts and Humanities

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

[downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> [under the Medical Documentation heading].

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Office of the Dean of their home faculty and provide documentation.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION CANNOT BE GRANTED BY THE INSTRUCTOR OR DEPARTMENT

Accessibility Policy

Western has many services and programs that support the personal, physical, social and academic needs of students with disabilities. For more information and links to these services: <http://accessibility.uwo.ca/students/index.htm>

Western Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.