

LATIN MYTHOLOGICAL EPIC



The University of Western Ontario
Classical Studies 3905G, Winter 2015
Kyle Gervais

INSTRUCTOR

My name is Dr. Kyle Gervais and I'll be your instructor for this course. I'm the newest Assistant Professor of Classics at UWO: I moved here just this year after writing my Ph.D. thesis in Latin literature at Otago University in New Zealand. Before that, I studied at Queen's (that other great university in Ontario). In my research I focus on Roman epic poetry of the Flavian period, especially Statius' *Thebaid* (a fantastically dark poem about the sons of Oedipus, who kill each other in a war for their father's throne). But I love (almost) all Latin poetry, including every poem we'll be reading this winter. I'm particularly interested in how we (that means you and I) respond to the ancient world and its literature; I hope we'll be able to learn some things about that this semester. Teaching is both my job and my pleasure, so please contact me in or out of class if you have any questions or thoughts about Latin epic poetry or the ancient world in general.

CONTACT DETAILS

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Office Hours: Monday, 11am-12pm; Wednesday, 4pm-5pm; Friday, 11am-12pm

CLASS TIMES

Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 12:30-1:30pm; University College 30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will read the most ambitious and enduring literature of the Roman Empire: the epic poems of Vergil, Ovid, Statius, and Claudian. These poets, writing in times of change and conflict at the Empire's beginning, middle, and end, thought and spoke about their contemporary worlds by turning to Graeco-Roman myth, including the stories of Achilles, Aeneas, Oedipus, Perseus, Orpheus and Eurydice, and Hades and Persephone. We will explore in particular how the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*—two contrasting poetic visions from the “Golden Age” of Augustan literature—were developed in later periods. We will read each epic in modern English translations by contemporary poets. Some issues we'll pay attention to in class, on tests, and in your essays are: the contemporary relevance of the epics; the common features of the epic genre; the depiction of women and men in epic; the role of family, religion, and politics; the function of violence; the allusive links between the epics; and the difficulty of translating them into English.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course I expect you will have gained or improved:

- an appreciation of Latin epic poems and literary themes
- knowledge of various issues important to modern Latin literary criticism
- a basic knowledge of Roman culture
- skill in scholarly research and writing
- skill in analyzing both ancient literature and modern arguments about that literature
- organized study habits

REQUIRED TEXTS

I have ordered the first four required texts for the UWO bookstore. You may obtain these texts however you wish, but it is your responsibility to get them. If you choose to obtain these texts from somewhere other than the UWO bookstore, please make sure you get the correct translation (there are many different translations of each of these poems). The final required text is available free of charge online. All five required texts are on course reserve at the Weldon library.

Virgil. *Aeneid*. S. Lombardo (translator) and W. R. Johnson (introduction). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 2005. ISBN: 0872207323

- available at the UWO bookstore and on Kindle

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. S. Lombardo (translator) and W. R. Johnson (introduction). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 2010. ISBN: 1603843078

- available at the UWO bookstore and on Kindle

Statius. *The Thebaid: Seven against Thebes*. C. S. Ross (translator). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2007. ISBN: 0801886368

- available at the UWO bookstore and on Kindle

Statius and Claudian. *Broken Columns: Two Roman Epic Fragments. "The Achilleid" of Publius Papinius Statius and "The Rape of Proserpine" of Claudius Claudianus*. D. R. Slavitt (translator) and D. Konstan (afterword). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1997. ISBN: 081221630X

- available at the UWO bookstore

Valerius Flaccus. *Argonautica*. J. H. Mozley (translator). Loeb Classical Library Volume 286. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1934. ISBN: 0674993160

- available free of charge at <http://www.theoi.com/Text/ValeriusFlaccus1.html>; we will use a small part of this text for one lecture only (Friday, February 13).

RECOMMENDED TEXT

~~I have ordered the following recommended text for the UWO bookstore. Although you may find it to be helpful, it is NOT mandatory. It is also available on course reserve at the Weldon library.~~

~~Valerius Flaccus. *The Voyage of the "Argo": The "Argonautica" of Gaius Valerius Flaccus.* D. R. Slavitt (translator). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1999. ISBN: 0801861780~~

Readings

Before most of our classes I'll ask you to read between one and three books of the epic poem that we'll be discussing (ancient epics were divided into "books" instead of chapters). Our in-class discussion of these readings will often be based on an article or book chapter written by a modern scholar; although I won't require you to read these secondary materials or test you on them, I will make them available electronically. Reading them will increase your appreciation of the poems we study, familiarize you with Latin literary scholarship, and potentially help you develop your essay.

ASSESSMENT

Your assessment will consist of a test (covering about half the course), an exam (covering the entire course), and a 3000-word essay on a topic of your choosing (I'll suggest various topics, but you may go beyond my list). An important skill to develop for your university career and your life afterwards is responding to constructive criticism. Thus, I'll ask you to submit an outline of your essay, followed by a first draft and final draft revised in light of my comments.

- 25% One in-class test (Wed., Feb. 25th, 2015)
- 35% Essay: 5% Outline and bibliography (Fri., Feb. 13, 2015)
- 20% First draft (Mon., Mar. 9th, 2015)
- 10% Final draft (Mon., Mar. 30th, 2015)
- 40% Final exam (scheduled by the Registrar)

Essay

Your essay will focus on the two epics we study in the first half of the course: Virgil's *Aeneid* and Statius' *Thebaid*. In order to explore the important relationship between these poems, you'll **compare and contrast how the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid* portray or make use of ONE of the following:**

- battle scenes
- ecphrases
- family
- the future and past
- gods
- heroism
- power and politics
- similes
- women (and men)
- youth

This list of topics is not exhaustive. If you wish to focus on another theme or feature of these two epics, please ask my permission *before preparing your outline and bibliography*. There have been many more books and articles written on the *Aeneid* than on the *Thebaid*; accordingly, I have placed some books on the *Thebaid* on 3-day library reserve to ensure fair access, but have not done so for books on the *Aeneid*. **Nevertheless, I encourage you to borrow library books for as short a time as possible.**

You'll write your essay in three stages:

- 1) *Outline and bibliography* (February 13). In 300-500 words, list the major sections of your planned essay and provide a brief description of each section. Append a preliminary bibliography with at least 6 items written after 1970. *Note:* for the bibliography of your final draft, 6 items will be a bare minimum, so plan to continue researching. I'll return your outlines with brief comments on **February 20**, during Reading Week.
- 2) *First draft* (March 9). Submit a complete, polished, and proofread essay of 3000-3500 words (including footnotes but excluding bibliography) on the topic you chose for your outline, and taking into account my comments on that outline. I value clarity and good presentation in writing, so please leave yourself adequate time to proofread your essay. You may use any bibliographic style you wish (MLA, APA, etc.), as long as you do so consistently. *Note:* although called a "first draft", your essay should be fully worked out, with all sections of the text, footnotes, and bibliography complete and proofread. I'll return your draft with specific and general comments on **March 23**.
- 3) *Final draft* (March 30). Submit a revised version of your essay, taking into account my specific and general comments on your first draft. Although you're welcome to go beyond my comments to improve your essay in small ways, I neither expect nor encourage major revisions that haven't been requested in my comments.

Late policy

Each stage of the essay must be submitted by **11am** on the due date (Feb. 13, Mar. 9, or Mar.). Submission should be by **email** (kgervai2@uwo.ca) **as both a Word document and PDF**. I will notify you by **noon** if there is a problem accessing the file; if so, you have until **6pm** to submit a working file or a paper copy. I am willing to accept paper submission in exceptional circumstances—please discuss this option with me. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized **5% per day** (there is no maximum penalty).

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: 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.

WESTERN 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/>

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.

SCHEDULE

Lecture	Date	Topic	Readings (book number[s])
1	Monday, January 5	Introduction	
2	Wednesday, January 7	<i>Aeneid</i>	
3	Friday, January 9	<i>Aeneid</i>	1
4	Monday, January 12	<i>Aeneid</i>	2–4
5	Wednesday, January 14	<i>Aeneid</i>	6–7
6	Friday, January 16	<i>Aeneid</i>	8
7	Monday, January 19	<i>Aeneid</i>	9–11
8	Wednesday, January 21	<i>Aeneid</i>	12
9	Friday, January 23	<i>Thebaid</i>	
10	Monday, January 26	<i>Thebaid</i>	1
11	Wednesday, January 28	<i>Thebaid</i>	2–3
12	Friday, January 30	<i>Thebaid</i>	4
13	Monday, February 2	<i>Thebaid</i>	5
14	Wednesday, February 4	<i>Thebaid</i>	7–8
15	Friday, February 6	<i>Thebaid</i>	9–10
16	Monday, February 9	<i>Thebaid</i>	11
17	Wednesday, February 11	<i>Thebaid</i>	12
18	Friday, February 13	<i>Argonautica</i>	2.72–428; OUTLINE DUE
	Mon–Fri, February 16–20	READING WEEK (outline returned Feb. 20)	
19	Monday, February 23	Historical epic	
20	Wednesday, February 25		TEST
21	Friday, February 27	Translation	
22	Monday, March 2	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	
23	Wednesday, March 4	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	1
24	Friday, March 6	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	3–4.668
25	Monday, March 9	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	4.669–5.289; DRAFT DUE
26	Wednesday, March 11	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	5.290–6.830
27	Friday, March 13	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	8.1–625, 9.1–304, 9.519–10.846
28	Monday, March 16	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	11–12
29	Wednesday, March 18	<i>Metamorphoses</i>	13.752–15.992
30	Friday, March 19	<i>Achilleid</i>	1.1–545
31	Monday, March 23	<i>Achilleid</i>	1.546–2.168; draft returned
32	Wednesday, March 25	<i>Achilleid</i>	
33	Friday, March 27	<i>De Raptu Proserpinae</i>	
34	Monday, March 30	<i>De Raptu Proserpinae</i>	1; FINAL ESSAY DUE
35	Wednesday, April 1	<i>De Raptu Proserpinae</i>	2
36	Monday, April 6	<i>De Raptu Proserpinae</i>	3
37	Wednesday, April 8	Review	