

# CLASSICS AND POP CULTURE



University of Western Ontario  
CLASSICS 3800F / ARTHUM 3391F, Fall 2017  
Dr. Kyle Gervais

**INSTRUCTOR**

My name is Dr. Kyle Gervais and I'll be your instructor for this course. I moved to UWO in 2014 after completing my Ph.D. 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'm particularly interested in how we (that means you and I) respond to the ancient world, and what we can learn by comparing ancient and modern cultures. This is what this course is about. 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 course material or Classics (and pop culture) in general.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Office: Lawson Hall 3226

Email: [kgervai2@uwo.ca](mailto:kgervai2@uwo.ca)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm, or by appointment

**TEACHING ASSISTANT**

Sarah Shaughnessy, Lawson Hall 3218, [sshaugh2@uwo.ca](mailto:sshaugh2@uwo.ca)

Office hours (in Lawson Hall 3209): Tuesdays 11:30-12:30, or by appointment

**CLASS TIMES**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 10:30-11:30am; SH 2355

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course we'll discuss how Western pop culture in the 20th and 21st centuries has explored, adapted, and appropriated topics and themes from ancient Greece and Rome. Media considered in class and assignments may include: films, TV, theatre, novels, comic books, music, online media, or anything falling within a broad definition of "pop culture". Our focus will be on not only texts that deal directly with antiquity, but also those that are preoccupied with some of the same fundamental questions about the world that preoccupied the ancients. The lectures this year will be divided into three broad topics (each a 3-4 week module): Classics for All, Dreams of Rome, Classics in the Age of Trump.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of this course I expect you will have gained or improved: appreciation of the relationship between the ancient world and contemporary pop culture; knowledge of various critical approaches to the study of Classics and pop culture; some knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman cultures; skill in scholarly research and writing, and informal public speaking; skill in analyzing both ancient culture and modern pop culture; organized study habits .

**TEXTS****Primary**

We'll discuss several films, TV shows, and comic books in class; see the course schedule below. Because you may have seen or read many items on this list, and because most are easily available for purchase online, I haven't ordered anything from the UWO bookstore (please note that for

comic books, the website [www.comixology.com](http://www.comixology.com) is a good resource). In addition, the comic books and novels on this list are available to be borrowed as a 1-day reserve at the Weldon library and the films and TV shows on this list are available for viewing at the Arts and Humanities Film Resources Library (located in AHB 1G19; [http://uwo.ca/arts/tech/video\\_resources\\_library.html](http://uwo.ca/arts/tech/video_resources_library.html)). When finding an assigned film to watch, pay attention to the date: in some cases, several movies will have the same title (the various *Hercules* movies, for instance).

### Movies

- *300* (2006) [will be shown in class]
- [Hercules \(1958\)](#) [the link is free; relevant scenes will be described in class]
- *Hercules* (1997) [a relevant clip will be shown in class]
- *Hercules* (2014) [an abbreviated version will be shown in class]
- *The Hunger Games* series (2012-15) [we'll focus on the first movie]
- [Quo Vadis \(1951\)](#) [link for renting the film; relevant clips will be shown in class]
- The *Star Wars* series (1977-) [relevant scenes will be described in class]
- *Wonder Woman* (2017) [relevant scenes will be described in class]

### TV shows

- *Caprica* (2010)
  - Episode 1: "Pilot" [will be shown in class]
- *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966-69)
  - Season 1, Episode 14: "The Balance of Terror" [will be shown in class]
  - Season 2, Episode 25: "Bread and Circuses" [will be shown in class]

### Music [all links are free]

- ["Alexander the Great"](#)
- ["I, Caligvla"](#)
- ["The Sign of Prime Creation"](#)

### Comic books

- *300* (1998)
- *Hercules: The Thracian Wars* issues 1-5 (2008)
- *Ody-C* (2014-) [an excerpt will be provided; issues 1-12 available in my office]
- *Three* (2013-14)
- *Wonder Woman* (2011- ) vol. 1: Blood and vol. 2: Guts

### Novels/Plays

- *The Hunger Games* vol. 1 (2008)
- *The Aeneid* (2007/2016) [a copy will be provided]

## **Secondary**

I've made various scholarly articles and chapters available on OWL; these sources will help you more fully understand the lectures, prepare for the tests, and possibly think about your essay. The schedule of readings is included in the course schedule below (note the importance I assign to each reading).

## ASSESSMENT

Your assessment will consist of three tests (each covering one third of the course) and a 2500-3000-word essay on a topic of your choosing. 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 5-minute oral presentation, first draft, and final draft revised in light of my comments. **Note: instead of an essay, you may propose to complete a creative project of your own design. If you wish to explore this option, please come to me with an informal proposal as early as possible (October 6 at the latest); I reserve the right to reject any project proposals that seem unsuitable for the course.**

50%	Tests:	20%	Test 1
		15%	Test 2
		15%	Test 3
50%	Essay (or project):	5%	Outline and bibliography
		5%	Short oral presentation
		25%	First draft
		15%	Final draft

### Tests

Three tests will assess your comprehension the assigned readings and the topics discussed in class. Course material is not cumulative: each test will only cover the material from one module. You will be given a list of short answer questions at the start of each module and asked to answer some of those questions on the test. The first two tests will be held in class; the final test will have the same format as the others but must be held during the exam period in accordance with university regulations.

### Essay

In your essay you may examine any pop culture text or texts (movie, TV show, novel, comic book, music, something online, etc.) that fits within the loose definition of "Classics and pop culture" used in this course. Besides a strict word limit and restrictions on topics we cover in class (*see below*), I will not dictate how you write your essay (you may find this a good thing or a bad thing), but examples of methodologies you might follow are:

- Apply a particular theory or interpretive technique to a pop culture text on a Classical topic
- Apply a particular theory or interpretive technique to a pop culture and a related Classical text
- Apply a theory or interpretive technique from pop culture criticism to a Classical topic
- Apply a theory or interpretive technique from Classical criticism to a pop culture topic
- Compare and contrast two pop culture treatments of the same Classical topic
- Trace how the portrayal of a particular Classical topic changes over time or space
- Discuss how a particular Classics pop culture text is adapted from one medium to another

**If you're not sure whether your topic or approach is suitable, please run it by me BEFORE preparing your outline.**

**IN PARTICULAR: if writing on one of the pop culture texts we discuss in class, your approach must be substantially different from mine. Please CHECK WITH ME IN ADVANCE.**

**IF YOU PLAN ON A CREATIVE PROJECT instead of an essay, remember to submit an informal proposal to me by October 6 at the latest.**

You'll write your essay in four stages:

1. *Outline and annotated bibliography* (October 20). In **300-500** words, list the major sections of your planned essay and provide a brief description of each section. Append a **preliminary annotated bibliography** with at least 4 items ("annotated" means that after each bibliographic item, you should write 1-2 sentences explaining how the item is relevant to your essay's argument). I'll provide brief comments on **October 27**.
  - *Note 1:* for the bibliography of your final draft, 4 items will be a bare minimum, so plan to continue researching.
  - *Note 2:* unlike many other Classical subjects, it may be that some/most of your secondary sources aren't found in traditional places (books, book chapters, or journal articles), but rather on blogs, websites, online magazines, etc. I still expect you to use traditional sources, but I support careful use of other sources too.
2. *Short oral presentation* (November 13, 15, 17). Deliver a **5-minute** oral presentation to the class (or the professor), very briefly outlining your topic and main arguments. The purpose of these presentations is to share with the class as a whole the range of topics and approaches possible in Classics and pop culture.
  - *Note 1:* you may use a maximum of three Powerpoint slides, which must be submitted via OWL at least 24 hours before your presentation.
  - *Note 2:* the 5-minute time limit is firm. After 5 minutes I will (gently) ask you to end your presentation.
  - *Note 3:* Although I expect you to put an appropriate amount of effort into your presentation, keep in mind that it's a small part of your overall essay component, and due around the same time as the more important first draft. I'll take this into account when assessing the presentations.
3. *First draft* (November 17). Submit a complete, polished, and proofread essay of **2500-3000 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. I'll provide specific and general comments on **November 29**.
  - *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.
4. *Final draft* (December 8). 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.

### **Essay late policy**

Each written stage of the essay must be submitted by **10pm** on the due date. Submission should be **made on OWL as both a Word document and PDF**. I will notify you by **10:30pm** if there is a problem accessing the file; if so, you have until **midnight** to submit a working file. 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** (to a maximum penalty of 35%). Of course, late penalties don't apply to the presentation: except in cases of illness, a missed presentation will receive a grade of zero.

### **CAN I HELP?**

It's important to me that you meet your goals in this course, and I'm eager to help either in or out of class with any academic matters. Moreover, I'm especially aware that there are many challenges (physical, cognitive, emotional, or personal) that can prevent students from performing to their full potential. In some cases, I may be able to make accommodations; in some cases, Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>) can help. No matter how big or small the problem, the sooner you speak to me (or the appropriate person), the more likely it is that we'll be able to find a good solution.

**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/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform\\_15JUN.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform_15JUN.pdf)).

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.**

**UWO 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/>

**MENTAL HEALTH:** 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

The following is a preliminary schedule for lectures, assigned readings/viewings, and assessments; I'll let you know if anything changes. I've indicated how helpful each reading/viewing may be to you using a letter: C = somewhat helpful; B = more helpful; A = most helpful.

	Date	Lecture Topic	Readings/Viewings
1	Fri., Sept. 8	Introduction	Broder 2013 (C)
2	Mon., Sept. 11	Comic books	Kovacs 2011 (B) <a href="#">Ody-C #3-4 excerpt</a> (A) [.cbr reader required]
3	Wed., Sept. 13	Ancient and modern Hercules	Blanshard 2005 (C); Bernstein 2017 (B); <a href="#">Hercules (1958)</a> (B); <i>Hercules</i> (1997) (B)
4	Fri., Sept. 15	<b>Viewing:</b> <i>Hercules</i> (2014)	
5	Mon., Sept. 18	<i>Hercules: The Thracian Wars</i>	<i>Hercules</i> (2014) (A); <i>Hercules: The Thracian Wars</i> (A); <a href="#">Kovacs 2014</a> (B)
6	Wed., Sept. 20	Classical epic and epic fantasy (Randall Pogorzelski)	Suvin 2016 (1979) (A); Weiner 2017 (A)
7	Fri., Sept. 22		
8	Mon., Sept. 25	Wonder Woman	<i>Wonder Woman</i> vols 1-2 (A); <i>Wonder Woman</i> (2017) (B); Mayor 2014 (B)
9	Wed., Sept. 27	Wonder Woman	<a href="#">Kahn, Smith</a> and <a href="#">Abad-Santos</a> (B)
10	Fri., Sept. 29	NO CLASS (instructor away)	
11	Mon., Oct. 2	Fan fiction (Sarah Shaughnessy)	Wandtke 2012 pp. 28-33 (A); <a href="#">Gabaldon 2010</a> (A); <a href="#">Pearl 2017</a> (A)
12	Wed., Oct. 4	Heavy metal (Andrew Bresch)	<a href="#">Fletcher 2015</a> (A); “ <a href="#">Alexander the Great</a> ”, “ <a href="#">I, Caligvla</a> ”, and “ <a href="#">The Sign of Prime Creation</a> ” (A)
13	Fri., Oct. 6	NO CLASS	
	Oct. 9-13	<b>FALL READING WEEK</b>	
14	Mon., Oct. 16	<b>TEST 1</b>	
15	Wed., Oct. 18	<i>Star Wars</i>	The <i>Star Wars</i> movies (B); Malamud 2004 (A); <a href="#">Wickman 2015</a> (B); Mann 2008 (B)
16	Fri., Oct. 20	Modern Roman Empires	<b>OUTLINE DUE</b> Stone 1999 (B); Losemann 1999 (B)
17	Mon., Oct. 23	Modern Roman Empires	<a href="#">Quo Vadis (1951)</a> (C); Winkler 2001 (B); Fitzgerald 2001 (C)
18	Wed., Oct. 25	<b>Viewing:</b> <i>Star Trek</i> , “Balance of Terror”	
19	Fri., Oct. 27	Space Romans in <i>Star Trek</i>	
20	Mon., Oct. 30	<i>The Hunger Games</i> : “Panem...”	<i>The Hunger Games</i> series (C);
21	Wed., Nov. 1	<b>Viewing:</b> <i>Star Trek</i> , “Bread and Circuses”	Makins 2015 (A);
22	Fri., Nov. 3	<i>The Hunger Games</i> : “...et circenses”	Harrisson 2015 (A); Edwards 2007 (B)
23	Mon., Nov. 6	<b>Viewing:</b> <i>Caprica</i> , “Pilot Part 1”	
24	Wed., Nov. 8	<i>Caprica</i>	
25	Fri., Nov. 10	<b>TEST 2</b>	
26	Mon., Nov. 13	<b>PRESENTATION DAY</b>	

27	Wed., Nov. 15	<b>PRESENTATION DAY</b>	
28	Fri., Nov. 17	<b>PRESENTATION DAY</b>	<b>ESSAY DRAFT DUE</b>
29	Mon., Nov. 20	<b>Viewing: 300 (2007)</b>	
30	Wed., Nov. 22	White Marble	<a href="#">Bond 2017</a> (A); <a href="#">Quintana 2017</a> (A); Painter 2010 (B)
31	Fri., Nov. 24	----- Red Pill	----- <a href="#">Zuckerberg 2016</a> (A); <a href="#">“Quintus Curtius” 2016</a> (A); Skidmore 1996 (B); Braund 2002 (B); Moses 1993 (C)
32	Mon., Nov. 27		
33	Wed., Nov. 29	<b>Viewing: 300 (2007)</b>	
34	Fri., Dec. 1	<i>The Aeneid</i>	<i>The Aeneid</i> (Kemeid)
35	Mon., Dec. 4	<i>The Aeneid</i>	
36	Wed., Dec. 6	<i>300</i>	<i>300</i> (1998) (A); Kovacs 2013 (B)
37	Fri., Dec. 8	<i>Three</i>	<b>FINAL ESSAY DUE</b> <i>Three</i> (2013-14) (A); Gervais 2014 (B)
<b>EXAM PERIOD</b>		<b>TEST 3</b>	