

Department of Classical Studies  
Course Outline  
CS 9450B: THE ROMAN FAMILY



**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. K. Olson ([kolson2@uwo.ca](mailto:kolson2@uwo.ca))

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

**OFFICE HOURS:** Thursdays, 4:00-5:00 PM

**TIME AND PLACE OF CLASS:** Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30, LAH 3220

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

S. Dixon. 1992. *The Roman Family*. Johns Hopkins.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course will analyze the different ways in which, from 200 BCE -200 CE, Romans lived together as families. We will examine the strategies they developed to secure the continuation of the family and its property; how families and their constituent members fitted into public life, and how these issues affected individuals of different social backgrounds. It will study what concepts like childhood, adolescence, or familial affection meant to Romans; what sentiments were invested in the various family-related roles and how these sentiments differed from our own. We will also look at such topics as slavery, adultery, and the dissolution of marriage, and their effects on family.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- To become familiar with the main evidence for the Roman family in the central period.

- 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 Roman 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 the Roman family.
- 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%
<b>TWO</b> article reviews (20% each)	40%

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100%

This will be a discussion-based seminar which will require participation from **all** students. I do not give a 'participation grade' as such, but factor a willingness to speak up in class into the final grade.

### ESSAY AND PRESENTATIONS:

- **Essays** should be 5000 words, and are due by **FRIDAY APRIL 24th**.
- 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 women in ancient society in the class readings and discussion, some we simply do not have time to examine. One of those may be appropriate for your paper: for instance, the Roman family and the house; the family in art; the early Christian family; domestic religion and the family, etc.
- **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. (Dixon is excluded from these). You will choose your articles in the first week or two of classes; if you need to cancel or change your choices **you must find a classmate willing to take your place.**

**COURSE OUTLINE:** (\***please note:** I own most of the readings listed. If you're having trouble getting hold of a book or article **please see me**).

**Jan 7<sup>th</sup>: Introduction/demography: size and shape of the Roman family:**

**Questions for discussion:**

**A.** “The ratio of hard work to intellectual reward is lamentably meager” (K. Hopkins). Is this a fair assessment of the attempts made to study ancient demographic trends using ancient ‘statistical’ evidence?

**B.** What were the important demographic patterns in Roman antiquity? How would they have affected Roman family experience?

**Reading:**

- Parkin 1992: 91-133
- Parkin 2011
- Hopkins 1987
- Frier 1999
- Scheidel 1996: 139-163
- Meyer 1990

**C.** How did the Romans define ‘family?’ Should we reconstitute the Roman family as nuclear or extended?

**Reading:**

- Dixon 1992: 1-35, 133-59
- Saller 1994: 71-101
- George 2005
- Nielsen 1999
- Dixon 1999
- Kampen 2012

**Jan 14<sup>th</sup>: Transmission of property and patterns of inheritance:**

**Questions for discussion:**

A. “The will is in essence a vehicle for moderated deviance from the rules of intestacy.” Does this adequately convey the importance and purpose of Roman will-making?

**Reading:**

- Dixon 1992: 36-60
- Crook 1967a: 98-138
- Corbier 1991
- Saller 1994: 155-180
- Gardner 2011
- Gardner 1999

B. Under which circumstances could women inherit in Roman antiquity?

**Reading:**

- Crook 1986
- Gardner 1986: 163-204
- Saller 1994: 204-224
- Pölönen 1999
- Hopwood 2009
- Dixon 1985a

C. Law problems (handout)

Jan 21<sup>st</sup>: *Patria potestas* and its implications:

**Questions for discussion:**

A. What were the legal rights of the *pater*? Were these mitigated in any way by social or demographic considerations, and if so, how?

B. “Half of Roman men no longer had a father by the time they were twenty and were *patres familiae* in their own right; others remained minors until they were at least twice that age. The juxtaposition of these two realities must have aggravated resentment and revolts” (P. Veyne). Do you agree?

**Reading:**

- Crook 1967b
- Saller 1986
- Saller 1994: 181-203
- Harris 1986
- Shaw 2001

C. What were the implications of *tutela* for women’s legal, social, and economic position?

**Reading:**

- Dixon 1986
- Gardner 1986: 5-30

- Thomas 1992

#### **D. Law problems (handout)**

**Jan 28<sup>th</sup>: Marriage and marriage patterns:**

##### **Questions for discussion:**

**A.** What were the main types of marriage, for the Romans? Did marriage patterns vary according to class?

##### **Reading:**

- Dixon 1992: 61- 97
- Hopkins 1965
- Syme 1987
- Shaw 1987
- Saller 1987
- Scheidel 2007
- Martin 1996
- Crook 1990
- Treggiari 1991: 3-36
- Saller and Shaw 1984

#### **B. Law problems (handout)**

**Feb 4<sup>th</sup>: The sentimental idea of the Roman family and the idea of companionate marriage:**

##### **Questions for discussion:**

**A.** “The effort to write Roman family history in terms of trends of affection is methodologically misconceived.” Discuss.

##### **Reading:**

- Dixon 1997
- Dixon 1991
- Rawson 1966
- Treggiari 1991: 183-261
- Bradley 1998

**Feb 11<sup>th</sup>: Divorce and remarriage:**

##### **Questions for discussion:**

**A.** How frequent were divorce and remarriage in Roman society? Did it depend to some extent on class? What were the factors encouraging divorce and remarriage?

##### **Reading:**

- Bradley 1991: 125-204

- Treggiari 1991: 435-482
- Corbier 1991

## B. Law problems (handout)

**Feb 25<sup>th</sup>: Augustan legislation, propaganda, and the visual representation of the family:**

### Questions for discussion:

A. What types of rewards and penalties did the Augustan marriage legislation set out? How did Augustus' legislation on marriage and sexual behavior fit into his wider social and political programme?

### Reading:

- Cohen 1991
- Treggiari 1991: 60-80
- McGinn 1991
- Edwards 1993: 34-62
- Ramsy and Severy-Hoven 2007
- Kleiner 1978

**Mar 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

**The Roman father and the Roman mother:**

### Questions for discussion:

A. How can we define *pietas*? What were the Roman ideals surrounding this quality?

B. What were the ideals of parenting, for Roman authors?

### Reading:

- Eyben 1991
- Saller 1997
- Saller 1999
- Saller 1988
- Dixon 1988: 71-103, 141-67
- Evans-Grubbs 2011

**Mar 10<sup>th</sup>: Childbirth, *expositio*, infanticide:**

### Questions for discussion:

A. Was *expositio* the same thing as infanticide? What were the factors influencing the decision to expose a newborn?

### Reading:

- Dixon 1992: 98-132
- Engels 1980
- Evans-Grubbs 2010

- Dasen 2011

**B.** What methods of birth-control were available in antiquity? How effective were they?

**Reading:**

- Riddle 1992: 1-15, 57-65, 74-86
- Frier 1994

**Mar 17<sup>th</sup>: Attitudes to children and childhood:**

**\*Student presentations (last hour of class)**

**Questions for discussion:**

**A.** “The Romans had no concept of childhood.” Discuss.

- Manson 1983
- Garnsey 1991
- Laes 2004:13-49
- Rawson 1997
- Laes 2017

**B.** Did the ancients care when their children died?

**Reading:**

- Golden 1988
- Huskinson 2007
- Carroll 2012

**Mar 24<sup>th</sup>: Slavery and the Roman family**

**(Student presentations: last hour of class)**

- Edmondson 2011
- Perry 2014: 43-68
- Penner 2012
- Joshel and Petersen 2014: 24-86.
- Mouritsen 2011

**Mar 31<sup>st</sup>: Old age and death in the Roman family:**

**\*Student presentations (last hour of class)**

**Questions for discussion:**

**A.** Is it possible to reconstruct the Romans’ emotional attitudes towards death?

**B.** What was old age like in the ancient world? Which factors influenced what kind of an old age one had?

**Reading:**

- Hopkins 1983: 201-256
- Hope 1997
- Parkin 1997
- Parkin 2003: 203-35
- Harlow and Laurence 2011