



Department of Classical Studies

Latin 9903B: Tacitus' *Agricola*

Course Outline

Course Details

This Latin prose seminar is sort of historiography, sort of biography, and maybe just a bit diatribe (looking at you, Domitian!). The text we'll read is Tacitus' *Agricola*—ostensibly a biography of Tacitus' father-in-law, but also a text that resists categorization by genre. The *Agricola* explores not just Roman Britain, but also the ways in which it is possible for a man of *virtus* to live well under a tyranny. Some possible topics for discussion: the concept of literary genre; Tacitus' style and its influence; historiographical and biographical convention; domestic and foreign politics in the 1st c. CE; ethnography, imperialism and colonialism; text vs. artifact in the recreation of Roman Britain; post-colonial reception and criticism. For the text, vocabulary and commentary, we'll use the text located at the Dickinson College Commentaries website [[link](#)].

Students can expect (1) to read a substantial amount of Latin prose each week, with attention to matters of style, composition, and structure; and (2) to develop their skills in scholarly reading, critical analysis, and research methods.

Contact Details

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Office Hours: I don't have set office hours, but am happy to set up meetings as needed

Class Meetings

The course meets Mondays from 1:30-4:30, online to start and then we'll see.

Course Texts and Resources

There are no required books for the course; our main text of *Agricola* is available at the Dickinson College Commentaries website: <https://dcc.dickinson.edu/tacitus-agricola/preface>. This edition is a compendium of older commentaries co-created by students under the watchful eye of Latin prose scholar extraordinaire, Professor Cynthia Damon. If you are keen to have a very detailed philological and literary commentary, I recommend the [Cambridge Green and Yellow edition](#), edited by A.J. Woodman and C.S. Kraus.

Other important resources:

1. OWL: the bulk of the secondary readings will be posted to OWL.
2. Hypothes.is: this is a social annotation tool which we'll use to collectively annotate the readings and stimulate seminar discussion.

Grade Assessment

Commenting/Hypothesis:	15%
Midterm (February 14)	15%
Presentation	15%
Research Paper (due April 15)	30%
Final Exam (to be scheduled)	25%

Course Policies

Attendance and Assigned Readings

Students are expected to prepare the Latin assignment for each week in advance. By ‘prepare’ I mean that students should read the Latin sentence-by-sentence, looking up any unfamiliar words or forms and making notes about these for future reference, or for asking questions regarding syntax or usage in the seminar meeting. Once students have mastered the Latin grammar of the assigned passage, they should go over it again with an eye to identifying elements of interest with regard to style, content and/or literary and thematic patterns. Students should likewise come prepared to discuss the historical context and literary aspects of the Latin assignment. For assignments of secondary literature, students should come prepared to contribute actively to the discussion: a good rule of thumb is to have prepared in advance at least two observations and one question about the assigned scholarly work and its relationship to the ancient text(s). These contributions will be noted and count towards the participation grade (see below).

Class Procedure

We will begin each class working on some sight translation practice (individually, written), followed by a discussion of strategies and techniques for improving Latin reading at speed. This will take about 30 minutes. Then we will turn to the topics for the current week, discuss any issues arising from previous class sessions, and I will spend a bit of time introducing topics or thematic/scholarly material that is relevant to the week’s assignment (ca. 30 minutes). We will then read the Latin text (1 hour), have a short break (10 mins), and finish by reading more Latin from the week’s assignment. I will call on students at random, so you should be prepared and attentive throughout the seminar meeting.

Course Objectives

The overall goal of this course is to provide an opportunity for students to become familiar with the characteristics of Latin prose as written by Tacitus. Through completion of reading assignments in Latin, students will develop their speed and comprehension in reading Latin prose. In addition, this course will acquaint students with the historical period of the early empire. Students will become familiar with various approaches to Tacitus’ style and arguments, and will engage in close reading of passages to identify structural and stylistic elements of Tacitean style.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course students will be familiar with the career of Cn. Iulius Agricola. Students will have practiced and improved their ability to read Latin, gaining familiarity with the literary features of Tacitus’ prose style and the characteristics of early imperial Latin. Students will have developed their skills at scholarly research and writing, learning to read and analyze critically both primary and secondary sources. Students will practice and develop their skills in organizing, researching and communicating their ideas and arguments in a logical and persuasive manner. More broadly, students will have sharpened their skills in analytical and critical thinking.

Exam Information

The midterm and the final exams are designed to test your skills in two crucial areas for reading Latin literature: (1) your knowledge of the Latin language (diction, morphology, syntax) and (2) your ability to interpret and analyze the literary, thematic and stylistic elements of the works that form the content of our reading. The exams will ask you to translate passages from our readings and to comment on the literary/historical significance of each, in the context of our work with *Agricola*. The Latin passages on the exams will test your knowledge of *Agricola* and your expertise in Latin grammar. You can expect an essay question on the final exam that will ask you to consider the text in a meaningful and analytical way, incorporating what you have learned in the scholarly readings.

Classroom Engagement and Hypothesis

One of the best aspects of graduate seminars is the fact that they foster a community of scholars and the exchange of ideas in a lively and respectful environment. Each participant brings to the table a unique set of interests and experiences in ancient language and culture; together we will develop these established interests and uncover new ones. To a large extent, this will happen in our seminar meetings. I have chosen a new way to foster discussion – amenable, hopefully, even to introverts! – is to use Hypothesis as a graded component of the course. Using Hypothesis, you will be expected to comment in advance on the assigned readings (particularly the secondary readings, for the graded component) but you will also be able to comment on, and ask questions about, the Latin text. We will then use these comments as a starting point for discussion in our seminar meetings.

Presentation and Research Paper

Presentation: students will present their preliminary research at seminar meetings beginning March 21, 2022. The presentations should be ca. 15 minutes in length, followed by discussion, in the manner of a conference paper. Presenters must assign in advance materials to be read by the rest of the class (normally one article or book chapter, together with a focused reading of at least one passage from *Agricola*), and supply questions to direct and focus the class's reading of these materials. ***This assignment must be sent to the class (via email or OWL) at least one week prior to the student's presentation.*** Students should prepare a paper to read rather than speak extemporaneously, and must also provide (and submit electronically to the instructor) either a handout or a PowerPoint, or both, along with relevant bibliography. Non-presenters must be prepared to contribute to the discussion by asking questions and offering feedback to the presenter. The comments and feedback received in the discussion period should be incorporated into the final research paper. Since the content of the presentation will be revised and argued more fully (incorporating feedback received from the presentation), the grades will be weighted more towards the delivery and organization of the oral presentation.

Research Paper: The research papers submitted in April (**due April 15 via OWL**) are expected to be more fully developed versions of the preliminary ideas sketched out and given a test-run in the seminar presentation. The length of these papers should be approximately 3000 words. You will thus have more room in the research paper to address the contributions of previous scholarship as well as to examine more closely the evidence for your arguments from the texts we've studied (and comparable texts, where appropriate). Your references in the paper should not just indicate the source of scholarly evidence you use in the paper, but should also provide sources for further reading to a curious reader (i.e. me). You should make sure to include your own translations into English of all passages of Greek and Latin used in your paper. For formatting and stylistic guidelines, please adhere to the guidelines set forth in the "Notes to Contributors" and "Style Sheet" sections of the website for the journal *Phoenix*. For any other aspects of formatting, please consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Important Policies for all Western Graduate Courses

Accessible Education (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Accommodation Policy

Staying healthy – physically and mentally – is an essential part of achieving your academic goals. There are many resources on campus available to help you maintain your health and wellness (start here: <http://wec.uwo.ca/> and <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>). Please contact the Graduate Chair if you have any concerns about health or wellness interfering with your studies.

If academic accommodation should become necessary at any point, students should contact their course instructor(s) and/or supervisor, as appropriate. Students should also contact the Graduate Chair in most cases, and especially if accommodation is needed for:

- more than one course
- more than one week
- any tests, exams, and/or assignments worth 10% or more of a final grade
- any program milestone (comprehensive exams, thesis, etc.)

In these cases, the Graduate Chair may request that a student work with Student Accessibility Services (<http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>) to arrange a plan for accommodation (see SGPS Regulation 14: http://www.grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/14.html).

Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Classical Studies, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Health/Wellness 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.

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). Plagiarism-detecting software may be used in this course.

Schedule of Readings and Seminar Topics

(Note: primary and secondary readings must be completed in advance of each class meeting)

Week 1 (January 10)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 1-3

Seminar Plan: Introduction to the course, Tacitus, *Agricola*

Seminar Reading: Dylan Sailor, 2012. "The *Agricola*," in *A Companion to Tacitus*, ed. V. E. Pagán, (Malden, MA), 23-44.

Week 2 (January 17)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 4-8

Seminar Topic: Early Life of *Agricola*; Roman biography

Seminar Reading: A.D. Leeman, 1972. "Structure and Meaning in the Prologues of Tacitus," *Yale Classical Studies*, 23: 169-208. [read only 169-73 and 199-208]

Week 3 (January 24)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 9-12

Seminar Topic: The Geography of Roman Britain

Seminar Reading: Katherine Clarke, 2001. "An island nation: re-reading Tacitus' *Agricola*," *Journal of Roman Studies* 91: 94-112.

Week 4 (January 31)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 13-17

Seminar Topic: History of Roman Britain

Seminar Reading: Richard Hingley, 2017. "The Romans in Britain: colonization of an imperial frontier," in *Frontiers of Colonialism*, ed. Christine D. Beule, (Florida, Univ. Flor. Press), 89-109.

Week 5 (February 7)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 18-22

Seminar Topic: *Agricola* in Britain

Seminar Reading: Myles Lavan, 2011. "Slavishness in Britain and Rome in Tacitus' *Agricola*," *Classical Quarterly* 61.1: 294-305.

Week 6 (February 14) MIDTERM: translation, analysis/commentary for *Agricola* 1-22

[READING WEEK Feb. 19-27]

Week 7 (February 28)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 23-28

Seminar Topic: Military maneuvers: the march north

Seminar Reading: David Braund, "Agricola and Tacitus, Trajan and the Flavians," in *Ruling Roman Britain: Kings, Queens, Governors and Emperors from Julius Caesar to Agricola*. Routledge. 147-76.

Week 8 (March 7)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 29-32

Seminar Topic: Speech of Calgacus

Seminar Reading: Richard Rutherford, "Voices of Resistance," in Christina S. Kraus, John Marincola and Christopher Pelling, eds., *Ancient Historiography and its Contexts: Studies in Honour of A.J. Woodman*. 312-330 (plus notes).

Week 9 (March 14)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 33-36

Seminar Topic: Speech of Agricola; Battle of Mons Graupius, Phase I

Seminar Reading: Rhiannon Ash, "Tacitus and the Battle of Mons Graupius: A Historiographical Route Map?", in John Marincola, ed. *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, (Malden, MA), 413-19.

Week 10 (March 21)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 37-40

Seminar Topic: Victory at Mons Graupius; the return to Rome

Seminar Reading: student presentations

Week 11 (March 28)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 41-43

Seminar Topic: The Problem of Agricola -- Domitian

Seminar Reading: student presentations

Week 12 (April 4)

Latin Assignment: *Agric.* 44-46

Seminar Topic: Conclusions and Wrap up

Seminar Reading: Tim Whitmarsh, 2006. "This in-between book: Language, Politics and Genre in the *Agricola*," in B. McGing and J. Mossman, eds., *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (Swansea), 305-33.