INSTRUCTOR: Kelly Olson (kolson2@uwo.ca) she/her

OFFICE: Lawson Hall 3227 (519-661-2111 x 84525)

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays, 4:00-5:00 or by appointment (in-person or Zoom)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Various articles and chapters found elsewhere (under the 'course readings' button on our OWL site)

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Dirt: dust, soil, refuse, excrement, bacteria, filth, sleaze, slime, smut— the word easily changes its meaning from the physical to the moral. Dirt, the cause of pollution, contamination and the taboo, is interpreted according to pre-existing anxieties and social norms, including those of religion, empire, individualism, race, gender, and class: different ideas of how the world works result in different notions of contamination, filth, and how the body is susceptible or impervious to its surroundings. How was pollution policed and controlled in Roman antiquity? How did Roman culture construct and negotiate dirt and filth? Topics to be discussed include toilets and waste disposal methods in Roman
antiquity; mortality, disease, and poverty; religious pollution and miasma; apotropaism and the evil eye; curse tablets and sexual graffiti; filth and the senses (taste, smell, and sight); and pollution and death.

IMPORTANT POLICIES:

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.

Religious Accommodation
When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at:


Accommodation Policies
Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:


You may not use a generative AI program to create a final draft of your essay.

Academic Counselling
Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (https://uwo.ca/health/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence
Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, here. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.
LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- knowledge of critical vocabularies, methods of analysis, histories and concerns related to social and material pollution
- the ability to apply this knowledge to contemporary discussions of social contamination and ecological pollution
- To become aware of the problems with and limitations of using ancient archaeological and literary evidence.
- To investigate modern reactions to, interpretations of, and preconceptions about that evidence.
- understand the cultural importance of dirt, pollution, and waste disposal and explain how each is both a reflection and an influence on a society

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:

- an advanced understanding of the importance of historical perspective, and how social norms and customs and the construction and consumption of material culture (e.g. architecture, sculpture and painting) is a product of time, events and context;
- an understanding of how iconography/symbolism in any historical period may be used *inter alia* to signify cultural identity, political power, state nationalism, and historical memorial
- the ability of critical visual analysis of archaeological evidence, and the results of such analysis, to formulate, develop, and argue an hypothesis/thesis based on this primary evidence;
- a developed understanding of the limits of archaeological evidence in the reconstruction of ancient societies and the restrictions the material record places on our ability to formulate hypotheses and interpretations;
• advanced oral communication skills through the oral presentations of a scholarly argument/hypothesis using the archaeological and written evidence, the ability to lead and direct class discussion, and meet the challenge of questions/criticisms of seminar content;
• to have advanced written communication skills in the clear and organized presentation of an argument/hypothesis within the prescribed limits of the writing assignments; among the basic research skills acquired are the ability to collect relevant bibliography on a prescribed topic, critically engage with the scholarly literature with an assessment of the relative merits of an argument, and write a thesis in a format that includes a clear introductory statement of intent, a well-constructed and logical presentation of the argument including the relative merits of various scholarly opinion, and a conclusion that gives an assessment of the evidence and the author’s own evaluation of the evidence.

GRADES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student questions on essay presentations</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWO article reviews (15% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This will be a discussion-based seminar which will require participation from all students.

ESSAY AND PRESENTATIONS:

• **Essays** should be 5000 words, and are due **TUESDAY DEC 17th**
• 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 Roman filth and pollution rituals in the class readings and discussion, some we simply do not have time to examine. You can also move outside Rome proper and write about another ancient city or area (Pompeii, Ostia, ancient Britain).
• **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. (Our textbook is excluded from these). For each article presentation, in 10-15 minutes:

1. please summarize the article in question
2. tell us what the author set out to do, and using what evidence
3. if s/he achieved this, in your opinion
4. Tell us what you liked or didn’t like about the article or chapter.
5. Please also pose questions to us about the content
6. Please type up your report and turn it in to me (it should be 1-2 double-spaced typed pages, or thereabouts).

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

**Tues Sept 10:**

- **Introduction to course**
- **Theories of dirt and ideals of cleanliness**

**Reading:**


Tues Sept 17:
- Dirt on the body
- Bathhouses and fulleries
- Women’s dirt

Reading:


Tues Sept 24:
- Dirt and the senses: smell and sight (*squalor, sordes* and mourning)

Reading:


Tues Oct 1:
- Pollution & waste disposal


**Tues Oct 8: Mortality and disease**

**Reading:**


**READING BREAK: OCT 14-18: NO CLASS**

**Tues Oct 22: Insulae, poverty & destitution**


**Tues Oct 29: Miasma and purity**


**Tues Nov 5: Apotropaism, demons, the Evil Eye**


Tues Nov 12: Sexual ‘filth:’ curse tablets, sexual graffiti, the os impurum, masturbation


Tues Nov 19: Pollution, poisons, and death


Tues Nov 26: Student presentations
Tues Dec 3: Student presentations