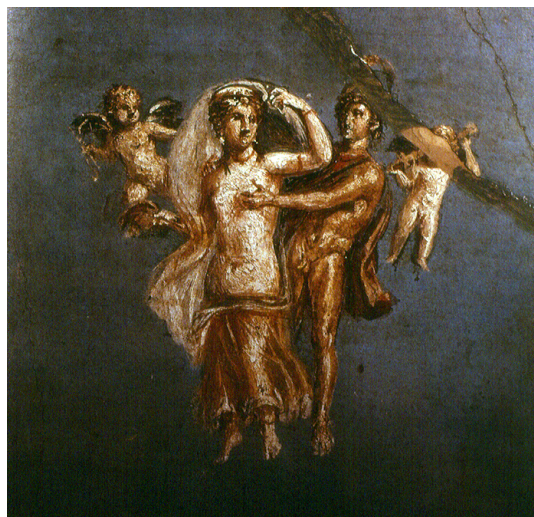


**DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL STUDIES  
COURSE OUTLINE  
CS 3355G: ANCIENT ROMAN SEXUALITY  
WINTER 2026**



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

**OFFICE:** LAH 3227 (661-2111 x 84525)

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays, 4:00-5:00 in LAH 3227 or by appointment

**COURSE OBJECTIVES** This course is designed to give honours-level students insight into ancient Roman sexuality and categories of gender using primary sources. The wide body of artistic evidence available from the ancient world on this topic (in the form of sculpture, wall-paintings, and everyday objects) is supplemented by a close reading of literary sources in translation.

**Antirequisite:** Classical Studies 3300F/G

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- C. Vout. *Sex on Show: Seeing the Erotic in Greece and Rome* (Berkeley, 2013, \$51)
- J. Clarke. *Looking at Lovemaking: Constructions of Sexuality in Roman Art, 100 B.C. - A.D. 250* (Berkeley 1998, \$57.95).
- *Primary Sources* (on our OWL site; to be posted). Please note the study questions for each day.
- **All other readings:** please go to the 'course readings' section of our OWL site.

**\*\*In addition, a useful website to look at is Diotima: Women and Gender in the Ancient World (<https://diotima-doctafemina.org>)**

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

On successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- have acquired a knowledge of ancient Roman sexuality and sexual activities, be able to describe in detail the sexual 'blueprint' of Roman antiquity, and be able to outline how ancient sexual categories differ from our own
- identify both iconography and subject matter, and be able to visually analyze ancient Roman art which depicts ancient sexual activities
- address the possible symbolism and meaning of content/subject matter in ancient art within its specific and larger social/historical context
- to understand the discourse surrounding the male and female body in the ancient Roman world
- read, comprehend, and sum up ancient literary sources in translation concerning sexuality
- have acquired an understanding of the importance of historical perspective, and how social norms and customs, and the construction of sexuality, are products of time, events and context
- have acquired a developed understanding of the limits of primary evidence as embodying actual historical fact

### LEARNING OUTCOMES/TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:

Students completing this course are expected to have acquired:

- an understanding of the importance of historical perspective, and how social norms and customs, and the construction of sexuality, are products of time, events and context
- a developed understanding of the limits of primary evidence as embodying actual historical fact

### GRADES:

TWO in-class writing assignments	40%
Midterm	20% (**Please note that this assessment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment <u>will be required to provide formal supporting documentation</u> . Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with an opportunity to write a makeup exam).
Final exam (scheduled by the Registrar)	40%

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=100%

### WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS:

The midterm and the final exam are designed to test the students' visual memory, knowledge of textbook reading, and lectures. Details on the in-class writing assignments TBD.

### NOTES TO STUDENTS:

1. Since tests are given in class time, there can be no conflicts. **More than one test on the same day does not constitute a conflict.** Plan your schedule ahead of time.
2. Those who miss classes or parts of classes remain responsible for the material they have missed. I will not review the contents of lectures or repeat announcements for those who arrive late or miss classes. I post **very** basic powerpoints on OWL, but class attendance is still **essential** to understand the details of the lecture.

3. The final grade is calculated on the basis of your performance on the tests, the essay, and final examination **only**. **You cannot do an extra assignment to make up for a poor performance on a test or the final examination.** Nor can I re-weight grades unless I hear from your academic counsellor.
4. If a lecture and its readings appears on the syllabus, **that lecture and readings will appear on the midterm and final exam**, regardless of whether the lecture is given in-person, uploaded as a document to our OWL site, or recorded and uploaded to the OWL site.
5. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

#### **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.

#### **Use of AI:**

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, etc.) **is prohibited**. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

#### **General information about missed coursework**

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

[https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic\\_considerations/](https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/)

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make **one Academic Consideration request without supporting documentation in this course**. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore **always require** formal supporting documentation:

- Examinations scheduled during official examination periods
- **The midterm for this course**

### **Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Counselling office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write a Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

### **Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education**

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity.

“Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” [https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

### **Academic Offences**

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

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

### **Academic Advising**

Your Home Faculty's 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/facultyacademiccounselling.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](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### **Learning Development and Success**

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

### USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Mon Jan 5:** Introduction; source problems

**Weds Jan 7:** Source problems con't

**Frid Jan 9:** Prudery

### **Reading:**

- *Primary Sources*: 1-4
- Vout 204-237
- P. Lawton, "For the gentleman and the scholar: scatological references in the Loeb Classical Library," in S. Harrison and C. Stray (eds) *Expurgating the Classics: Editing Out in Greek and Latin* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012) pp. 175-196
- K. Fisher and R. Langlands, "The censorship myth and the secret museum," in S. Hales and J. Paul (eds) *Pompeii in the Public Imagination from its Rediscovery to Today* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011) pp. 301-15.

**Mon Jan 12:** What is sexuality?; history of the study of sexuality; continuity and change

### **Reading:**

- *Primary Sources*: 5
- Clarke 7-18
- Vout 8-41
- D. Halperin et al., "Introduction," in D. Halperin et al., eds. *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) pp. 3-20
- D. Kamen and S. Levin-Richardson. Revisiting Roman sexuality: agency and the conceptualization of penetrated males. In M. Masterson et al (eds) *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World* (London and New York: Routledge 2015), 449-60.

**Weds Jan 14:** What is sexuality? con't

**Frid Jan 16:** Phallicism/ the male body: masturbation, impotence, penis as instrument of aggression

### **Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 6-14
- Vout 75-89, 197-201
- J. N. Adams, "Attitudes to male genitalia," in *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 77-79

- B. Kellum. "Weighing in: the Priapus painting at the House of the Vettii, Pompeii." In D. Dutsch and A. Suter (eds). *Ancient Obscenities: Their Nature and Use in the Ancient Greek and Roman Worlds* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2015):199-217.

**Mon Jan 19:** Phallicism con't

**Weds Jan 21:** The female body

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 15-25
- E. d'Ambra. "The calculus of Venus: nude portraits of Roman matron.," In N. B. Kampen, ed., *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 1996), pp. 219-32
- D. Kamen and S. Levin Richardson, "Lusty ladies in the Roman imaginary." In R. Blondell and K. Ormond, *Ancient Sex: New Essays* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2015), 231-52.

**Frid Jan 23:** The female body con't

**Mon Jan 26:** Intersex bodies

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 26-27
- Clarke 49-55
- Ajootian, A. "Monstrum or daimon: hermaphrodites in ancient art and culture." In Brit Berggreen and Nanno Marinatos (eds). *Greece and Gender* (Norwegian Institute at Athens, Skrifter utgitt av det Norske institutt i Athen; Bd. 2, 1995), pp. 93-108.
- Shannon-Henderson, K. E. "Life after transition: spontaneous sex change and its aftermath in ancient literature." In A. Surtees and J. Dyer (eds). *Exploring Gender Diversity in the Ancient World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press 2020): 67-78.

**Weds Jan 28:** Transgender bodies

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources*, pp. 28-33
- R. Pinto and L.C. Pinto. "Transgendered archaeology: the galli and the Catterick transvestite." In A. Bokern et al. (eds). *TRAC 2012: Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013): 169-81.
- R. Begum-Lees. "Que(e)r(y)ing Iphis' transformation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*." In A. Surtees and J. Dyer (eds). *Exploring Gender Diversity in the Ancient World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press 2020): 106-117.

**Frid Jan 30:** Heteroerotica

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 34-41
- Clarke 49-55; 91-118, 145-153, 161-177
- Vout 109-127

**Mon Feb 2:** Heteroerotica II

**Weds Feb 4:** Heteroerotica III

**Frid Feb 6:** Oral sex

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 42-46

**Mon Feb 9: IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1**

**Weds Feb 11:** Erotic objects

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 47

**Frid Feb 13:** Sexual graffiti

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources*, pp. 48
- S. Levin-Richardson, "Fututa sum hic: female subjectivity and agency in Pompeian sexual graffiti." *Classical Journal* 108 (2013): 319-45
- C. Williams, "Sexual themes in Greek and Latin graffiti." In T. Hubbard (ed) *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities* (Blackwell, 2014), pp. 493-508.

**Mon Feb 16 -Frid Feb 20: READING BREAK. NO CLASSES.**

**Mon Feb 23:** Erotic curse tablets

**Reading:**

- R. G. Edmunds III. *Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World* (De Gruyter/Brill, 2019): 91-115.
- P. Ripat. "Cheating women: curse tablets and Roman wives." In K. B. Stratton and D. S. Kalleres (eds.), *Daughters of Hecate* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014). 340-64.

**Weds Feb 25: IN-CLASS MIDTERM**

**Frid Feb 27:** Sexuality and the Evil Eye

**Reading:**

- Clarke, J. 2007. *Looking at Laughter: Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100- BC -AD 250*. Univ. of California Press: 63-81.

**Mon Mar 2:** Sex workers and the brothel

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 49-53
- Clarke 196-206
- C. Edwards, "Unspeakable professions: public performance and prostitution in ancient Rome." In J. Hallett and M. Skinner, eds., *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 66-95
- S. Levin-Richardson. *The Brothel of Pompeii: Sex, Class, and Gender at the Margins of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019): 31-39, 111-139



**Weds Mar 4:** Sex workers and the brothel con't

**Frid Mar 6:** Homoeroticism: men

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 54-62
- Clarke 59-90
- Vout 161-167
- C. Williams. *Roman Homosexuality*. \*\*2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010): 137-176

### **Mon Mar 9: IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2**

**Weds Mar 11:** Homoeroticism: men con't

**Frid Mar 13:** Homoeroticism: women

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources*, pp. 63-64
- L. Auanger. "Glimpses through a window: an approach to Roman female homoeroticism through art historical and literary evidence." In N. Sorkin Rabinowitz and L. Auanger (eds). *Among Women: From the Homosocial to the Homoerotic in the Ancient World* (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 2002): 211-255.

**Mon Mar 16:** Cross-dressing and the materialities of gender

**Reading:**

- F. Carlà-Uhink. "Between the human and the divine: cross-dressing and transgender dynamics in the Greco-Roman world." In D. Campanile et al. (eds) *Transantiquity: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Ancient World* (Routledge 2017), pp. 3-37.

**Weds Mar 18:** Cross-dressing con't

**Frid Mar 20:** Slavery and sexuality

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 65-70
- S. Levin-Richardson. "Sex and slavery in the Pompeian household: a survey." In D. Kamen and C. W. Marshall (eds). *Slavery and Sexuality in Classical Antiquity* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin, 2021): 188-210.

**Mon Mar 23:** Slavery and sexuality con't

**Weds Mar 25:** Sex and the arena

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 71-72
- M. L. Popkin. "Roman gladiator knives: objectification, mascotting, and the material culture of sport in ancient Rome." *The Art Bulletin* (2023), 105(2): 36-61.



- Anna McCullough. "Female gladiators in the Roman Empire." In S. L. Budin and J. M. Turfa (eds). *Women in Antiquity: Real Women Across the Ancient World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016): 954-964.

**Frid Mar 27:** Other races

**Reading:**

- Clarke 42-46
- Vout 151-158
- J. Clarke. "Three uses of the pygmy and the Aethiops at Pompeii: decorating, 'othering,' and warding off demons." In L. Bricault, et al. (eds), *Nile into Tiber: Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, May 11-14, 2005* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) pp. 155-169

**Mon Mar 30:** Other races con't

**Weds Apr 1:** Non-human sex: bestiality and agalmatophilia; censured sexual acts: pederasty and incest; sexual terms as abuse

**Reading:**

- *Primary Sources* pp. 73-76

**Frid Apr 3: GOOD FRIDAY. NO CLASS.**

**Mon Apr 6:** The absence of sex?: castration and clitoridectomy in the ancient world

**Reading:**

- C. Thumiger. "Clitoridectomy in ancient Greco-Roman medicine and the definition of sexual intercourse." In A. Serafim et al. (eds). *Sex and the Ancient City: Sex and Sexual Practices in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (de Gruyter, 2022): 143-71.
- J.G.M. König. "Emasculating healers: castration practices in Greco-Roman antiquity." *Journal of Ancient History* (2021), 9.2: 221-237.

**Weds Apr 8** (as needed)