

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

ROMAN CULTURE

Course Description

Roman Culture explores the culture of ancient Rome, with an emphasis on art, economics, political science, social customs, community organization, religion, and philosophy.

About the Professor

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Week 1 Introduction

Roman culture. There is Roman *literature*, which is the fine art of Roman culture in language. There is Roman *history*, which is the study of the development of the Roman political and social world through time. Squeezed in between them, marked by each of its neighbors, is Roman *culture*, an expression, and little more, to indicate 'the way a people lived,' their life-style. As you will see, in the following syllabus, the 'manner of life' can indeed include the 'products of the finer arts'—literature, philosophy, by which a people orients itself in its larger meanings—and the 'manner of life' can also be understood in terms of the chronological history of a people; but on the whole, and for our purposes here, 'manner of life' will tend to mean the way a people builds a society, arranges its eating and drinking habits, builds its places of worship, dispenses its value and ownership codes in terms of an economy, and arranges the ceremonies of marriage, burial, and social initiation. The course we outline below will touch on several main registers of Ancient Roman culture, 'the way it was lived.'

Timespan. Some fine-tuning is needed here. Ancient Roman culture lasted for over a millennium, from the 8th century B.C. to the 5th century A.D., depending on how you cut the pie, and changed constantly through time as patterns of population change, institutions decay and are replaced, and artistic styles come and go. But there is more diversity to account for than appears in this statement of diachronic diversity. Roman culture is unusually rich at any given period of Roman culture. We will tend to stress Rome in the period of greatest cultural creativity.

Class texts There is a wide variety of texts that can accompany you through this entire course. My suggestions are arbitrary but solid. You would do well to own or consult Michael Grant's *History of Rome* (1978) and Robert Payne's *Ancient Rome* (2005). An older fashioned, but very thorough *History of Rome* is by M. Cary (1954), and would be a useful springboard for further researches. To these texts you can easily add the individual volumes of the Loeb Classical Library—a complete facing-page set of translations of all significant texts remaining from Latin literature-- which provides facing (not very lively) translations, and in which every text you will take interest in here will be represented. With regard to the art works under discussion in this class, especially in Chapters 2-4, you will find appropriate reproductions in many photographic collections of Roman art; the text of the *History of Art* (2007), mentioned in the syllabus, conveniently gathers the works mentioned in the present week's work. For leads to research on most areas of Roman material culture, look at the *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* by Lesley Adkins and Roy Adkins.

Other Texts For our work on Greek visual art, political life, sports, religion, farming, which will compose a large part of the class, we will recommend a variety of bookstore texts. In this increasingly diverse publishing world you will quickly find many appropriate texts and many valid reading solutions different from the one or two pieces of assigned material given with each week's discussion. You are here to educate yourself, and should feel free to use significant resources wherever you can find them, including of course online. Counting on your resourcefulness, the creator of this course has not hesitated to include suggested texts which would be hard to find except in a good research library, nor has he hesitated not to go onto the online literature, which doubtless the student can peruse more skillfully than he. Of particular note, the visual materials, which are of special importance in Chapters 2 to

4, can easily be found at many sites on the internet, as well as in any comprehensive History of Western Art.

Assignments. You will note that there are three paper writing assignments. These assignments are due in weeks five, ten, and sixteen; you will need from the start to look ahead to the writing topics that interest you. Please start from the beginning of the class to think and plan for that writing challenge. Would you like to incorporate diary material into that writing? Would you like to link the writing assignments together? These are options you might want to discuss with your instructor, from the beginning. Note also that there are three discussion questions included with each week's assignment. These questions are intended to set you thinking, perhaps to give you ideas for written assignments, and to suggest ways of reflecting back onto the week's work.

Week 2 The Roman Temple

The Roman Temple. The Roman Temple is a good place to start this course, because it is the locus of Roman religious belief, and thus central to the energy and stability of the Roman world. These structures were of great importance to the Romans, both as headquarters of their 'faith' and as aspects of public statement.

The earliest temples. The earliest Roman temples were constructed close to the period usually attributed to the founding of the Roman state, 776 B.C. Already in the sixth century B.C., that is at the time when the earliest *Greek* temples were being constructed, huge and significant temples were being built on the Italic peninsula. The Temple of Jupiter the Greatest of Gods—Jupiter (Greek Zeus) the Best and Greatest—was constructed early in the sixth century B.C. and dedicated to the god in 509 B.C. This structure resembled the early Greek temples in various forms: in the column decorations, in the portico which introduced the nave, and in the three parallel naves, which contained cult statues of the gods worshipped there. The fundamental idea of the Greco-Roman temple was intact from the start: a home for the cult statue, a precinct for worship and sacrifice, a frontally powerful statement in robust form.

Temple and Cult. The developing history of Roman architectural creation very soon fans out from its origins in cult. There continues, throughout Roman culture, to be a regular creation of classic cult temples, especially picked up from Greek models during the years, mid-second century B.C., when the Romans carried out their subjugation of mainland Greece. The Greek influenced temples of the first century B.C. preserved the delicate lines of Ionic temple columns, while white marble stucco, overlaying travertine, highlighted the Greek effect.

Diversification of structures. The diversification of types of Roman public structure is dramatic, from the first century B.C. on. That new richness is largely attributable to the use of concrete as a fundamental building material. (The Greeks worked only in marble, once they had passed beyond wooden columns; they lost in versatility what they gained in marble beauty.) The Roman architectural revolution in question involved not only materials development but new stylistic moves which greatly extended the usage range of the public building in Rome: the discovery of

the arch and vault forms, and of ways to use them that are both strong and beautiful, and form the basis of so much of the monumental Roman work familiar to us: coliseums, basilicas, aqueducts, imperial arches, colonnades, the stuff of legendary Roman visuals, as well as of efficient and attractive public living.

The Roman Forum. It is worth surveying, in mind, the kinds of public building Rome became known for. The Aemilian *Portico* is a multi-arched three storey building whose function must have resembled a mixture of mall with administrative building. (The Romans typically built for use and made sure the topography reinforced the function of buildings.) For a long time the center of Rome had been a vast rectangular plaza, which over the centuries developed into the Forum, a central marketing and administrative point; the Roman forum was covered with an aggregate of buildings whose origins went back to the founding of the city, but whose growing points were the new triumphs of the Early Empire: triumphal columns, regal arches, and surrounding masterpieces: public architecture like the Theater Complex of Pompey (55 B.C.); Rome's first permanent theater, the Coliseum, erected by the Emperor Vespasian in 80 A.D.; the Pantheon, established (and perhaps architected) by the Emperor Hadrian in 117-125 A.D.; or, much later (315 A.D.), the Arch of Constantine. To name these massive, dynamic, historically lodged structures is to invite the mind onto the public power of Rome, and on this very general point we should dwell, in this fleeting introduction to the Roman aesthetic.

Religious development in Rome. From our brief remarks it is apparent that an architectural tradition which opened with cult temples evolved—and many centuries are required for this—into a cultural world where temples were no longer the most dramatic expressions of public architecture. We would be wrong to conclude, from this point, that the importance of religion gradually diminished in Rome, while that of the state and its affiliated organs steadily grew—at the expense of religion. We are simply going to find, as we traverse many centuries of ancient Roman culture, that there is a marked public tenor to the art, belief, constitution, law, military posture of the ancient Romans. (In all these regards they define themselves off from the Greeks, with whom they are often paired.) With the development of the Roman state—especially during the three centuries that follow the ascension of Empire of Augustus (in 27 B.C.)—Roma herself (a goddess) became a central figure of

reverence, the old Olympian gods of the Greeks, on whom the Roman pantheon was precisely modeled, were worshipped in State functions, and the people as a whole brought with them a religious attitude which was nourished by the dignity of the city forming around them.

Paganism and Christianity. Lest this seem too simplified, we need to remember that by the early fourth century A.D., when the Emperor Constantine declared the Roman Empire Christian, the landscape of Rome was heavily dotted with the new temple, the Church, and that the mixed pagan/Christian culture of the city was to generate new kinds of building—often quite modest—to harmonize with a new kind of public belief.

Readings:

The Art of Rome, J. Pollitt (Cambridge, 1992). Please read the entire book. This work will take you into the texts and documents which underlie the creation of Roman art.

Discussion:

What did the Roman temple borrow from the Greek temple? Do those borrowings fit in with the basic conception of the Roman temple?

Do you agree with our characterization of the *public* nature of Roman architecture? Does it help your understanding of this point if you contrast, with Roman architecture, say the architecture of the Romanesque Church, with its rounded arches and capacity for melting into the landscape?

To what, in our culture today, does the Roman forum seem to correspond? The mall? The town square of yesteryear? Times Square?

Week 3 Roman sculpture

The Romans and art. We began with art, in our inquiry into Roman culture. The intention was to see the Roman spirit in action, and in action we find it, in the wide display of public architectural structures with which the Romans defined their cities, their landscapes—with roads unsurpassed until the nineteenth century, with their walls, their fora, their columns and arches. So coercive was the Roman sense of visual energy that when we think back to the inner Rome each of us carries with us, it is probably filled with public scenes and monuments. Had we enough weeks we could underscore this characterization with discussions of Roman painting and pottery. As it is we will carry forward with some remarks on Roman sculpture.

Greek and Roman sculpture. We are all familiar with some of the 'idealized' sculptures of classical Greece—smooth and universalized male and female forms in gleaming marble, stemming from the fifth century brilliance of such as Praxiteles; and though we know Greek sculpture would continue to evolve, from that point on, into more realistic 'genre' sculpture in the Hellenistic period, we are hardly prepared for Roman sculpture. It is tempting to draw a parallel between the 'concrete revolution,' which underlay the massive constructive power of Roman public architecture, and the move toward sculptural realism, which we find pronounced already in early Republican sculpture. (A few examples: the Altar of Domitius, from the late second century B.C., with its band of 'little people' lined up, 'realistic as everyday,' to be counted in the census; the even earlier—late fourth century B.C. 'Brutus,' in whose face the stark inscriptions of experience are completely unhidden, the beard carved and rugged, the large sub nasal facial wrinkles deep and aggressive, the neck bull thick; the particularly verisimilar male sculptural portrait from the earliest first century B.C.—7.11 in *The History of Art*—with its hollow cheekbones, tightly wrinkled forehead, and tough creased chin.) That move into sculptural realism configures with a society which, from its earliest days, put a premium on experience, and subjected its administrative representatives to a minimum age requirement.

Roman purchasers of Greek sculpture. The historical development of Roman sculpture was not without its Greek, i.e. idealized, phases. Throughout the second century, B.C., while the Roman conquest of Greece was gradually taking place, it

was the pleasure of Roman aristocrats to buy up Greek sculptures (often copies of classical versions) and to have them transported to their villas in Rome. It was from this tradition that the Romans acquired the habit of stationing monumental personal statuary around their city.

Greek and Roman Sculptural Traditions. On many levels, from that of the *populus* itself to that of the imperial administration, the Greek sculptural tradition was increasingly incorporated into the more robust Romanic version of personality. In this regard one can look, with interest, at the Funeral relief of the *Gessii*, dating from the middle of the first century B.C. In that somber relief we see a slave-master surrounded by two freedmen whom he has released from bondage, and who, though now deceased, are both grateful and free. The plebeian sincerity of the freedmen, as pictured there, totally undercuts the tradition of glorifying sculpture. At the other extreme, one can look again at the Augustus of Prima Porta (20 A.D.) with its classicizing salute to the virility and martial power of this Emperor. In this complex sculpture, which is in some ways true Roman 'realism', we also see the Hellenistic charms of wonderfully rendered robes, a richly symbolic breastplate, and the symbolic cupid and dolphin at his right foot—indicators of his origins in myth. The Greek element will never be withdrawn from the staunch Roman sculptural tradition, just as Roman architecture continued through the centuries to embody Greek columnar forms and pedimental artifices.

Roman sculptural traditions. As Roman sculpture flowers into its majority, in the three and a half centuries after the *Imperium* was established (27 B.C.), the sturdy Roman tradition prevails, though in a wide variety of forms. There is a great deal of popular relief sculpture, in the vein of the depiction of two freed slaves, above; for example the second century A.D. funerary relief of a butcher and his wife, rendering the plain nitty-gritty of everyday life; at the other extreme there are any number of sculptural tributes, scattered throughout every city and village of the empire, celebrating imperial as well as local leaders—a splendid bronze statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius on horse (second half of second century A.D.); a stylized portrait head of his wife, Faustina; the column of Trajan (110 A.D.) which recalls that Emperor's defeat of the Dacians, and does so by deploying a 650 ft. long narrative depiction of Dacian spoils and prisoners being transported back to Rome. It has to seem that each military victory is solemnized by an arch, a triumphal column, or a

relief apotheosis. The Roman turn into the public, into showing (even more than telling) is prolifically illustrated throughout the course of Roman history.

Romans as practical and public. It is not, finally, a surprise that a culture which endured for almost a millennium deposited a vast number of both public monuments and decorative sculptures to serve as its memorial. What strikes us is that from the start Roman architecture and sculpture were very much about real events, real people, and the concrete historical setting in which these objects of art had their existence. We will be trying out a definition of the Romans as a 'practical people.' Will we simply mean that they were a gifted, worldly people making real works of art, in a this worldly culture which was of value to them?

Readings:

Roman Art, Paul Zanker (Los Angeles, 2010). Read the whole book. This is an exemplary study of both the sculptural and domestic painting traditions in Rome.

Discussion:

What did Roman sculpture owe to the Greek achievement? Do the Hellenistic 'genre sculptures'—which depict, say, old market people or young children--contribute to the realistic, 'veristic' tradition in Roman sculpture?

Why, in your opinion, were the Romans so intent on commemorating military achievements with triumphal arches? What does this sculptural/architectural response have to do with military success?

Do you feel the influence of Roman sculpture and architecture when you walk through a large Western capital city? New York? London? Where do you see this influence?

Week 4 Roman Domestic Life

Roman private life. We have opened with discussions of Roman temple architecture and of Roman sculpture—some of which was found on Roman temples, some as freestanding statuary, some as funerary art. None of this was yet to touch on domestic life as such; in fact our stress, to the present point, has been on the public, rather than the private aspects of Roman culture. Obviously, though, the ancient Romans—different as they were at different periods in their long history—were concerned with privacy and the home.

The Roman House. The Roman house (*domus*)—and here we speak of the middle class, not at all of the elite with their sumptuous villas or the urban (or rural) poor who had either makeshift or tiny crowded houses—enjoyed the advantages of the Mediterranean climate. The typical single family house was made of cement or stone, and laid out as a rectangle with a peristyle of columns running around the outside of it. The central room (*atrium*) was a rectangle in the midst of which spread a small pool, the *impluvium*, and immediately above which the roof was open. The presence of air and light was treasured, and formed the setting of family life. Around the margins of the *atrium* were the *cubicula*, the sleeping rooms (or sitting rooms or rooms for doing business.) At the back of the *atrium*, leading out into the peristyle, was the *tablinum*, or office of the man of the family; the place where business was transacted and accounts kept. If the family was affluent there would be extensive gardens behind the house, further highlighting the flow of the house into and through nature.

The rooms of the house. The women's and children's rooms were kept strictly private, except to well known invitees or relatives, but the *atrium*, and indeed the entrance way to the 'typical' house, was easy of access. Front doors were regularly left open, certainly during the day, for there was normally a lot of going and coming from outside into the interior of the house, where the master (the *paterfamilias*) was accustomed to doing business. (The business in question was normally of a patron-client nature, the visitor entering the house to propose or discuss ongoing business plans, or to make introductions, rather as politics is carried on in our own culture.) Nor was the house itself typically segregated from the goings and comings of the community in which it was set. We mentioned the open front door. On all sides of

the house, in the streets surrounding it, were shops, carts, wagons, produce vendors, hustlers, people on their way to or from their own houses. In other words the 'typical' Roman house was in some ways far more open to the public than are houses in our (American, European) environments.

Pompeii and Herculaneum. By a disastrous accident of fate, we know a lot about a certain group of houses, which were smothered in ash and pumice by a devastating volcanic eruption from Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D. (The result of that smothering was this: for fifteen hundred years, while they were still undiscovered, the people and house objects of many sites in both Pompeii and Herculaneum were preserved in exactly the same stance, position, activity as they had been when the eruption occurred.) From the preserved rubble of some of those houses we have been able to see, and judiciously reconstruct, the wall decorations with which these (upper middle, at least) citizens surrounded themselves.

House murals. The wall murals which provided the milieu were of high artistic quality, colorful and artful. Over the two hundred years during which these paintings had been created there was a growth in technical sophistication which showed to what a level of lifestyle the well to do rose in the Rome of the first centuries before and after Christ. Art historians have analyzed the periods of development in question: from plaster-over-concrete walls on which were depicted simulated layers of marble and terracotta decorations—already a step into *trompe l'oeil*—to the most subtle illusionary paintings, in which the observer's eye enters a simulated portico and loses itself either in a fantastic lush landscape or in a maze of depicted columns and towers which enchants the eye. It is not until the nineteenth century, our art historians assure us, that such *trompe l'oeil* artifice was created in the West. Access to Janson's *History of Art* would be a convenient way to note a kind of genre detail, from one of those wall paintings at Herculaneum, that shows in fine detail what kind of illusionary skill the Roman painters of the time were capable of.

A still life painting. The tiny piece in question dates from around 50 A.D., and depicts a still life of a few peaches and a jar of water. The collocation of peaches with an intertwining vine establishes, on one side of the composition, a kind of natural—almost temple- ornamental—ionic column relief. Juxtaposing this floral motif, to its right, are a split open peach with visible seed, a small half peach (or is it some other

fruit?) and a transparent pitcher of water. Off of the water, which half fills the pitcher, glint echoes of light, transparencies, which no evident source produces, but which seem to break forth from within the water itself, and to echo the zones of brightness in the fruit. This description falls short, by a mile. If you can access Janson go to 7.58, on page 218. If not, you will find illustrations of this piece in any art historical book which covers antiquity. This is a matter of detail. I chose it for simplicity and availability. But what you need to see is the degree of subtle intensity to which the Roman artist was able to go, in transforming domestic life for his clients.

Readings: *6000 Years of Housing*, Norbert Schoenbauer (New York, 1981). Read widely on the ancient classical world, and let your attention wander over other period of history.

Discussion:

How does the well to do Roman private house fit its environment?

What have we learned from Pompeii and Herculaneum, about the lifestyle of prosperous Romans of the first century A.D.?

What kind of artistic sensibility do you see reflected in the murals found and reconstructed at Pompeii and Herculaneum?

Week 5 The *Civitas*

Public character of Roman culture. Our discussions of Roman temples and sculpture, even to some degree of domestic houses, will have highlighted the public character of Roman culture. Let me try to explain.

Roman public architecture. Roman architecture is of many kinds, including even the intimacies of domestic interiors at Pompeii and Herculaneum, with their elegant nooks and corners, or the finesse of Ionic column Greek style temples in early Republican Rome. In the broad sense, though, Roman architecture, as it was distributed throughout the Empire, was massive, forceful, and incorporated in public event or memorial. We need only think of the Coliseum, the vast *fora* which replicated in every major city of the Empire, such protective walls as Hadrian's in Northern England, the extensive system of truly functional roads, the two story arched aqueducts transporting water supplies into major cities, the extensive and substantial sewer systems built under major cities, the memorial arches and vertical columns memorializing the power deeds of Emperors, the giant villas which dotted the city of Rome: so many landmarks in the establishing of a potent material Roman footprint wherever the culture moved. That footprint is strong, visible, and public—in the sense of there to be seen, used, and handled in public. If for clarity we need any contrast, from other cultures, we might think of the most massive structures of mediaeval Europe (Gothic Cathedrals), Imperial China (multi-story pagodas), or India (private palaces, temple complexes) to recall how inward looking the major structures of many cultures remain.

Roman citizenship. The public character of Roman architecture is appropriate for a polity—the Romans called it the *civitas*, or collective for all the *cives*, or citizens—in which high priority is placed on both the rights and duties of citizenship, and on the responsibility of the *civitas* to all its citizens. (You will not need telling that this point is a vast generalization: Roman history tracks from an early independent Republic stage to the condition of a vast Empire, which even in its last centuries remained a citizen- protective unit. It was not until Christianity spread fiercely through many parts of the Empire, and was declared the official State Religion by Constantine, in 323 A.D., that the fundamental traits of the classical Roman state were called into question.)

Extent of the Roman Empire. For Rome to become a huge public polity, of the kind implied above, it needed both to gird up a huge extent of territory, and to sustain, in itself, a sense of its global majesty. The Roman Empire reached its great extent under the Emperor Trajan (ruled 98-117 A.D.) (That extent covered the territories of forty modern states.) The estimated population of the Roman Empire in Trajan's time was fifty to sixty million inhabitants, which would have been roughly one fourth of the world population. A quite homogeneous system of law, a firmly enforced tax policy, a responsible care for the rights of citizenship molded an immense panoply of cultural groups—from Britons to Syrians to Libyans—into a more or less unified whole.

Roman bureaucracy. Did most Romans, say during the *Pax Romana* period—the first two centuries of our era, during which the Empire grew steadily and maintained a high level of security and peace—have some sense of belonging to this immense political construct? We won't be foolish enough to try to respond to that question. But we can take some soundings. The Romans were during the imperial period meticulous about census taking—Christians think of the account in *Luke*—and tax collecting, and tax paying, all of which contributed tangibly to citizen self-awareness. Beyond the tax concern there was a passion, especially during the *Pax Romana*, for the keeping of written records. (Deeds, contracts, daily reports on the deliberations of official bodies, from the Senate in Rome to the town councils in the most remote provinces.)

Accounting and Self-Consciousness. This drive toward recording coincided with a growing self-consciousness, among educated Romans at least, of the global world where history had placed them. In the time of Augustus a 'global map of the known world' was created, and displayed in the Forum where the Roman people could see a mirror of themselves. (This map was the byproduct of the geographical researches of Strabo, the greatest Greek geographer of the time.) On another level, there was a deeper kind of social awareness of living the Roman condition. The patronage system was deeply embedded throughout Roman economy, from cities to agricultural life, with the result that a vast network of dependency relations established itself throughout the Empire, and contributed in no small part to the cohesion of the Empire. This last bonding element might seem to square oddly with the Roman

disposition to legality, but in fact the two practices went hand in hand; the brotherhood of mutual back scratching co-existed effectively with the system of legal precedents.

Intimacy and art. The present week's observations drive the art-considerations of Weeks 2-4 onto a higher plane of generality. We see the largeness of perception destiny unfolds before the Roman people, the public dimension of the hopes and establishments. At the other end, as in all societies, there remains the recourse to the intimacies of the *domus*—in ancient Athens it was the *gynaikeion*—the removed access in the house where the women and children lived, the intensely private incubator of the new generation to be inculcated.

Readings:

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, pub. 1776-1789. This classic, but still vivid, history is still a centerpiece of any thinking about the nature of the Roman state and the causes of the Roman fall. Please read what you can of the first ten chapters, which will give you an insight into Gibbons' argument and the internal problems in Rome up to the moment of the first barbarian invasions.

Discussion:

What kind of map of the world did the ancient Greeks have? How did it compare with the world map the educated Roman had in the early imperial period?

Please put yourself in first century A.D. Rome. What kind of sense of belonging to the Empire did the 'average' Roman feel?

What was the importance to the Roman Empire of census taking and tax collecting?

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR FIRST 1000 WORD PAPER

Can you identify Roman style public buildings and public statues in your own experience and environment? What explains the extraordinary continuity of these ancient stylistic forms in modern buildings?

What kind of security did the Roman city rely on? Was there a police force? Did the army patrol cities? You may need research for your response; you will learn a lot about ancient policing.

With a vast citizen body, the Roman state needed an effective bureaucracy and a record keeping system to go with it. In what form did they keep their records? Where did they store them?

Did the honor of citizenship have concrete meaning? What kind of documentation did the citizen have? What kind of protections did it guarantee him/her?

Week 6 Citizens and Freedmen

The cost of broad historical surveys. In the preceding week we looked at the immensity of the Roman state, at its most extensive, and expatiated over the degree of uniformity holding together that vast social and administrative structure. In so doing we generalized through the roof, passing over the detail that is life—the variations among different regions of the Empire, the radical changes that shaped Roman history from the Republic through the Empire. Such, however, is the cost of a survey course. We can perhaps reduce that cost a little, by transposing our discussion into more intimate regions of the life carried on by the ordinary Roman on the street, the man or woman who in some capacity or other occupied those houses (*domus*) we discussed in Week 4.

Citizenship. Within both the Roman Republic and the Empire citizenship was highly valued. (It could at different times be used as a bribe to pacify or dominate obstructive tribes, who would pay with their freedom for the rights of Roman citizenship.)

Levels of citizenship. There were a number of different levels of citizenship. (Note the contrast with 'modern' conceptions of citizenship which, usually equated with a specific nationality, is across the board identical for all qualifying members.) Throughout its existence, Republic or Empire, Rome recognized male citizens as the first level of importance. (So important was this right that the threat to deprive a citizen of the right was the government's strongest threat.) The male Roman citizen enjoyed the full range of rights. That range was extensive: the right to vote, to stand for office, to engage in legal contracts, to enjoy the legal conditions of marriage, to enjoy the normal connections involved in international relations; to enjoy freedom from any kind of physical punishment or torture, to be free of any penalty such as death on the cross.

Degrees of Citizenship. The descending levels of citizenship involved appropriate reductions in these guarantees. Those lower levels applied to: women, who enjoyed a wide level of respect in Roman society—the virtuous married matron, with offspring, was a revered social model—who were free to divorce, who were legally independent of their husbands, but who could neither vote nor hold public office;

socii, or citizens of allied 'nationals,' and whom, typically, the Romans were eager to incorporate in their own national webwork—these *socii* had greatly reduced citizenship rights, depending on the degree of friendship between their home country and Rome; slaves, who made up perhaps 40% of the Roman population during the *pax romana*, enjoyed no citizenship rights, as we comment below, but were on what we might today call a distant 'citizenship track.' From this schematic of citizenship it is easy to see what kind of social stratification played out in Roman culture, but not so easy to catch the fine points—the remarkable power, respect, and importance of women, and the complex role of the slave in the culture we are describing.

The freedman. To speak of the condition of the citizen, in Rome, is also to speak of the freedman, for that 'manumitted' slave, that beneficiary of either the death or the generosity of his master, is the slave who has come into his own as a Roman citizen. The freedman qualified for important roles in Roman society. Cicero's freedman Tiro went on after his freedom to accumulate vast wealth, and to live it out happily in his villa to the age of 99. How could a freedman acquire such power?

Horizons for the Freedman. The fact is that Roman freedmen were truly given freedom, after their liberation from the enslaved condition. From the moment of freeing—which could occur through the master's good will or friendship, or because the slave had collected enough money to pay for his freedom—the former slave could become a citizen, unlike slaves in Greek antiquity, who could never become citizens. As a citizen the freedman would continue in the same legal and customary relations to his master, as he had observed during his enslavement, but he would be entirely free. He could vote; though he could not hold high office or marry a woman from a family of senatorial rank; he could himself perform the duties of the high priest, in State religious cults. His children would be born as free citizens.

Upwardly mobile freedmen. Interestingly enough, as we know from inscriptions found throughout the territory of the Roman Empire, many freedmen went on to high success in business, like Cicero's freed slave, Tiro, whom we mentioned above. (The success of this often upwardly mobile group is a tribute to the Roman's sense of human potential, and to their refusal to let prejudice get in the way of high level service to the state.) Lest this picture of freedman success seem too obvious to be convincing, one needs to remember the appalling nouveau riche freedman

Trimalchio, in Petronius' *Satyricon* (1st century A.D.) This hilarious buffoon freedman uses his new wealth for parties of immortal libertinage, though he does so in the accepted spirit of high male fun on the level of vast opulence.

Readings:

The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History, Lauren Petersen (Cambridge, 2011.)
Entire book, please. It opens up perspectives onto Roman culture as a whole.

Discussion:

What rendered Roman citizenship so important? How did that citizenship compare with that of a citizen, today, in one of the Western democracies?

How do you see the Roman practice of converting former slaves into freedmen? Was the practice governed by generosity? Self-interest?

How does the Roman attempt to deal with the citizenship problem—given the huge variety of pressures to gain this privilege—compare with the efforts currently at work in a pluralistic democracy like the United States?

Week 7 Economy, Commerce, and Transportation in Ancient Rome

The practical turn. Even in dealing with expressions of Roman art we have been leaning gently on the conception of the public character of the Roman mind. We have tried not to exaggerate that point, which threatens to ignore an entirely different side of the Roman mind, the side we saw in the wall paintings of Herculaneum, and in the tiny instance of a painted vase with peaches; the side that informs the wonders of the Roman lyric, one of the most aurally acute and personally sensitive in world culture. But we have been going for a large scale practical tone in Roman culture.

The present week we touch on a few aspects of this public character, as they play out in Roman economic life.

Population and bureaucracy. Roman society was the most populous Western political unit on the globe until the early nineteenth century. (We have mentioned that already in the third century B.C. Rome was regularly annexing new territory.) With an immense extent by the second century A.D., the moment of greatest growth, the Empire challenged itself with an immense administrative challenge. There was of course, at all times, an extensive bureaucracy—the evolving relations among the two consuls, the magistrates, and the retired magistrates who moved up to Senatorial status—which is properly the issue of the governing of Rome, rather than the culture. This vast Empire—if we speak of the period following the accession of Augustus, in 27 B.C.—generated wealth, funded armies, provided annual doles of grain, built roads and aqueducts, and-- this is essential--imposed and collected taxes.

Roman public services. The GDP of the Roman Empire was as vast as can be imagined—and has been assessed by various economic historians, for different periods—but the wealth disparity was savage, the senatorial and equestrian classes tending, on the very large whole, to thrive, but the very great mass of plebs were destitute. To some degree they were paying, through the taxes that were part of their destitution, for what today we would call 'services.' These services, if one considers the vast expanse of the Empire, and the many centuries in question, would on the whole have consisted of: decent roads—useful for carriage travel;

substantial importation of grains, cloth, and luxury goods from as far away as India or China; the advantages of decent water supplies—guaranteed by brilliantly engineered aqueducts, indoor plumbing and sewers; city managers who were foremost in the world; reasonable security, both from the ocean police, who protected the ins and outs of international traffic, and from the *vigiles*, who served both as fire wardens and civil police on the urban level. To all of which might be added, that the people of the Roman Empire were on the whole, depending on where they lived, beneficiaries of developments in commerce and technology which greatly advanced the quality of their lives.

Aspects of Roman technology. Implicit in these perspectives is the growth of technological know how throughout the Roman domains. On all fronts, for more than five centuries, the Roman polity was actually learning how to master its environment. This new skill could be tracked in enterprises as diverse as mining, ship construction techniques, accounting sophistication, milling, heavy lifting, road construction, communications technology. Mining techniques involving ground fracturing and water scouring were bringing a diversity of metals—from gold and silver to coal—to the surface for processing. (The processing followed vigorously. The continuum of mining techniques was as close to fracking as mankind was going to manage before our time.)

Ships and milling. Ships were being constructed with lead hulls, which assured great durability in stormy weather and accident, and guaranteed sure passage for the immense traffic in wine, oil, and wheat which criss-crossed the Aegean in the first century A.D. The goods transported throughout the Empire were tracked, logged, and distributed under the control of a meticulous recording system, which saw to it that administrators, on every level, were conscious of what entered or left their province, and how it was distributed. (The consequence, for business and business consumption, was a welcome security in business planning and consumer confidence). Milling and heavy lifting are random choices to name, among the wide range of expertise Roman engineers were putting at the disposal of the engineery of commerce. Large scale milling operations were organized in Gaul and Rome, and contributed efficiently to the preparation of the annual wheat dole throughout the Empire. Cranes were operative, in the major Roman ports, which could lift 6-7 tons, a significant load in a culture where shipping commerce was the absolute key to

commercial success. In road construction technology those same mechanical skills were being honed which would make transportation on land possible—the road network covered at its maximum 53,000 miles—and communications at a distance possible, as rarely afterward before the 19th century; communication by which dispatches could cover five hundred miles in twenty four hours.

Contributions to world culture. And on and on. A culture which mastered the flush toilet is not to be downplayed. The public character of Roman culture is manifest throughout the Empire, in creating the conditions of a livable life. Many lived in destitution. Healthcare was undeveloped. For vast swathes of time, wars were endemic. But by and large a materially comfortable culture was in the making in Rome, and the consequential contribution to world culture cannot be underestimated.

Readings:

Money in Classical Antiquity, Sitta von Reden (Cambridge, 2010). Entire book. This will get you under the surface of the economic world of the Romans.

Discussion:

How were goods transported across such a vast area as the Roman Empire? Who and what did the transporting?

Where did the Romans exhibit their practical/technical skills? In road building? Temple building? Mill construction? What is the common theme among those skills?

Was the Roman state in some senses a welfare state? Did it care for its citizens? What role did the *dole* play in whatever care the Roman state gave to its citizens?

The average life expectancy of the ancient Roman—the ancient Greek too—was 28 years. Does that surprise you? To what do you attribute that figure?

Week 8 At the Dinner Table

Inside the dwelling. From the sublime to the ridiculous? Well, rather a change of pace, an invitation to step inside one of those seriously upscale *domus* we find at Herculaneum and Pompeii, for example, and in which we have gazed at wall paintings which not only soothe and charm, but which, in the high sophistication of their *trompe l'oeil* arcades and porticos, carry the eye and mind to fantasy pleasure forests and gardens. We are making another kind of change of pace, too, for we are inviting ourselves back into the houses of the *clase media*, *mercatores* and other small business people, but beyond that into the houses of the many, flimsy structures made of wood and brick, easily inflammable, lodged among shop fronts on city streets, or on the inside of the square *insulae* (blocks) which compose the bulk of the urban cityscape.

Patterns of living. What tends to be in common, to the dining going on in these differing kinds of housing? There is a general adherence to a pattern of early breakfast (*jentaculum*) eaten around 6 A.M., *prandium* or light lunch around noon, then of *cena*, dinner, later in the afternoon or early evening. (Different snack periods are provided for according to wealth and taste; not to mention the very obvious, that dining habits for the culture as a whole changed dramatically from the simpler, earlier styles of the Republic to the more diversified diets and tastes of the high Imperial period.) The rich were accustomed to giving themselves—on occasion—long dinner evenings, with multiple courses, while the bulk of the people conformed to the above mentioned three eating periods, and which fitted the usual pattern of the working day. By the large though, and this is the point, a habit of regular dining times was maintained, and with it the general practice of dining with one's family or guests, and as rarely as possible alone. The Romans were not only practical and public but sociable and public.

What's on the dinner table? From this point on, understandably, menus diverge radically. (You will have to imagine your own menu for the forty percent of the population who were slaves. Not much fine dining there!) The workingman's diet (and that of his family) will at all times have been monotone and low cost. (Though in many cases doubtless more healthful than the low protein and too easily digestible fiber free diets of the self-indulgent.) The workingman family might start the day

with flat round loaves made from *emmer* (a kind of awned wheat, rarely eaten since antiquity) with an addition—depending on pocket and access—of eggs, cheese or honey. To this basic display wealthier pockets would add not only higher quality of product, but perhaps wheat bread (introduced in the early Empire) to dip in wine, olives, milk, and fruit.

The businessman's life. As we know much more about it than about worker's eating patterns, we can indulgently shift our attention to the prosperous man of business, the *mercator* (tradesman) or the *negotiator* (banker, lender, broker). It would have been the dining practice, of many in this group, to conduct business in the morning—remember that business office the *paterfamilias* maintained in the back of his *domus*, to which clients could pass through the open front door? In early afternoon a light lunch, *prandium*, would punctuate the day, and be followed by a trip to the public baths, where the majority of Romans went daily, to clean themselves and relax, quite without regard to social class. (As in classical Greece, where the gymnasium with its bath was a key social focus of society, so the public baths, maintained at (tax supported) public expense, are where the Roman citizen would go for daily chilling out and cleanliness—a cleanliness in which he was typically glad to see the special cachet of his Romanness, and part of what set him off from the 'barbarians.'

Fine dining with the men. After the bath—and on an occasion where citizens were to eat either with invited guests or at restaurants in town—the man of business (and in later times, if wished, his wife) would settle down to dining. The meal would be eaten, recumbent on the left elbow, at a *triclinium*, or three person table, which was itself normally but one of three tables arranged in a horseshoe fashion, so that the serving slaves would be able to enter the design and serve, so to speak, 'from the inside.' And what would be eaten? And how would it be eaten?

Elegant food and entertainment. How it would be eaten would have a bearing on what was eaten. The how was fingers, aided by two different kinds of spoons—one, a long corkscrew shaped spoon, for scooping out snails—and therefore, since there were no knives, the stress seldom fell on meat—though pork, the most popular meat for the ancient Italians, was served rather often. The what of the eating was usually divided into three courses, of which the first was an appetizer, the second a main

course, and the third a dessert and fruit course. Seafood—especially oysters, mullets, prawns—was widely served, and often available, dependent on the area; vegetables of a wide range of types, many no longer existent, were served; fish sauces of many kinds were regularly used to season main dishes, cheese and fruit were regular staples, and wine—watered just before being drunk—was to be expected by all.

The Summit of Delight. If we wish to imagine the absolute summit of delight, in the meal forming before us, we will need to add in entertainment—frequently jugglers, reciters of poetry, musicians—and delicious sweet honey cakes. Hosts claiming the highest elegance might enjoy serving fat dormice, pickled in brine, to ready the diners for a late night round of drinks—which meant *recherché* vintage wines!

Readings:

Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome, Lesley Adkins and Roy Adkins (Oxford, 1998). All the details you can want, on the Roman cuisine! Enjoy!

Discussion:

Does the rich man or the working man seem to you to enjoy a healthier diet? What are the healthful elements in the Roman diet overall?

What kinds of restaurant—you might want to do research on this—were most popular with the Romans? Was food expensive, both for dining out and home consumption?

What do you think of the dining arrangements for the upper class dinner? Do you think the *triclinium* mode of dining is healthful? Is there any advantage to sitting upright when dining?

Week 9 Sex and Marriage

Roman marriage. We have been inside the dining rooms at Pompeii, the *domus* with its *impluvium* and *atrium*, and the family at mealtime. We have not yet gotten into the structure of the Roman marriage, or into the sexual environment in which the Roman marriage takes place, and which arguably functions as the central action in the creation of Roman culture.

Historical timescales. As we comment briefly, on sex and marriage, it will once again be appropriate to draw attention to the time zone we attend to here, primarily the centuries from 100 B.C. through, say, the third century of the Empire. Outside those parameters, on the early side of the Roman Republic, and on the side of Rome after the introduction of Christianity in the early fourth century, the dominant social practices assume their own forms. In brief, the earlier Roman Republic is in general less tolerant of sexual experimentation and play than is the world of the early Roman Empire. In the post-Constantine world of Roman culture, there is an infusion of Christian moral and marital concepts, into the classical pagan, and that infusion leads slowly away from the groundrules we describe here.

Monogamy and commerce. About the classical Roman marriage we want first of all to stress that its basis is monogamy—the Greeks and Romans almost never endorsed polygamy—and that its foundation is practical not romantic. (Haven't we hammered in the point that the Romans were practical? Don't we all observe that the Romantic view of marriage is a peculiarity of a now two hundred year old tradition within Western societies?) Basically the upper class Roman marriage, of the period we are considering, was arranged between two families, with an interest in preserving wealth and property—by 'keeping them in the family.' Immediately we need to add that the expected outcome of the marriage was children, in whom the accumulated assets of the family could be safely entrusted. It is in this framework that we need to review the trappings of the traditional marriage event.

The marriage ceremony. By the first century B.C. the husband had no 'rights' over his wife, who was free to own property and to live on equal terms with the *paterfamilias*. He did, though have paternal powers over his children, including his son. The equality of the husband-wife relationship is reflected in the ceremony by

which the marriage is carried out. An animal is sacrificed to the gods, on behalf of the pair; the bride is transported to the home the husband has prepared for her; a torch is carried from the bride's home to her new home, and there the sacred water of the husband's home joins with its fellow element, in an affirmation of the oneness of the couple. The bedroom light goes dark. The new generation is underway.

Morality in marriage. Over the new household, if not over the wife, the husband is dominant. It is he who can direct the development of his children, the economic development of his family, and it is he who represents the entire family when it comes to questions of law and business. The stability thus established, in the nuclear monogamous family, was of great importance to the newly crowned Emperor Augustus, at the end of the first century B.C. Augustus strengthened the public face of both husband and wife, by making adultery a crime. He also reinforced the paternal power within the family, by making clear the four delinquencies over which the husband could sentence his wife to divorce: infertility, of course adultery, the consumption of wine, and the audacity to make a copy of the keys of the marital home.

Female sexuality and morality. Outside this tightly guarded marital transaction there turned a social world in which the pleasures afforded by sex were much less closely defined than those of marriage. While sexual modesty was essential to the good wife—for whom reputation was generally sacrosanct—the concubine, frequently a part of the husband's love life, was not so tightly overseen, by society, as the legitimate wife—the *unaviri*. While the concubine could be socially recognized, as the partner of the *paterfamilias*, she could not play a major role in the financial or inheritance issues turning around her lover. She could, however, with no disgrace be named as the concubine of so and so, on her gravemarker, which is far from the fate that would become available to the wider gamut of the family man's world of playmates.

The husband's rights. Within the husband's legitimate purview, once he had discharged his child producing responsibilities, was a world in which the *pudor* (modesty) incumbent on his wife in no way applied. Not only could he have a concubine, but he was free to satisfy himself sexually on inferiors—his own slaves, prostitutes—who abounded, or, if it was to his taste, young boys, who, between the

onset of puberty to, say, seventeen, were regularly involved in love relations with the good male citizens of the society. We will have noted, from the preceding weeks of this course, that on the whole Roman society was the product of clear practical thinking and public spirit, and so the license of a prosperous pagan society cannot have been the cup of tea for the vast majority. But as we can see, from the reading of texts like Petronius' *Satyricon*, or from the nature of the Roman dinner party, as discussed in the previous week, there was ample room, in ancient Roman culture of the high period, for *la dolce vita*.

Readings:

Roman Sexualities, ed. Hallett and Skinner (Princeton, 1997) pp. 1-65.

Sexuality in Greek and Roman Cultures, Marilyn Skinner (Oxford, 2005) pp. 192-239.

Discussion:

What were the highest virtues for a Roman matron? Why did the married Roman woman particularly value her honor?

Are we familiar, in our cultures today, with marriages based not on romance but on commercial interest?

Why does the issue of adultery so greatly concern the Roman state at the time of Augustus? Is adultery a threat to the state?

Week 10 Clothing and Fashion

What did the Romans look like? Our discussions of fine *domus* interiors, of high class dining, of the pleasures of the public baths, of the finesse (as well as the power) of Roman public squares and monuments; all these passing references to the good life—and that good life extended to important areas like indoor plumbing or parks and gardens—leave us legitimately wondering what the Romans looked like, how they dressed, and how the economic differences among them played out in these finer areas of social self-presentation.

Ignoring the poor. We have said and cannot say enough, I suppose, about the immense population of slaves; by speaking of the rickety *insulae* of housing available to the (non slave) poor we hoped to leave no doubt that the culture and style gap, among the Roman classes, was wide. By default, given what remains preserved for us, we draw our narrative from the lives of people who were high on the economic ladder.

Roman clothing. The alpha and omega of sturdy clothing for the Romans is wool—and of course, in one form or another, wool products clothed all but the poorest. The process of weaving, which was done on a vertical loom until the end of the Roman Empire, was entrusted to skilled artisans, and, when possible, drew its raw material from flocks such as those of Tarentum in the south. Wool was used for outer garments, for both men and women, and was characteristically dyed. But wool was not the only basic fabric material, from which clothes were made. According to Pliny the Elder, who is a source of much information about Roman daily life, linen and hemp were also widely used for clothing. As with the preparation of wools—the Romans were highly educated cross-breeders of various sheep species—Roman artisans were skillful at taking materials like flax, soaking them, skinning off the extraneous hulls and husks, airing them, then mallet-pounding the dry fibres into workable fabric.

Imported fabrics. There was also a strong elite market for silks and cottons, which were typically imported from China and India. (For those with the elite tastes but narrower wallets, there was a variety of indigenous Italic fabrics, ranging from nettle

cloth, which was known for its surprisingly silky sheen, and a much prized vegetal sea silk—all products of Roman marketing ingenuity.)

Leather. Leather was the material of choice for belts, boots, shoes, and overcoats, items which were in much demand in remote or simply northern parts of the Roman Empire, as well as for the military, which was such a large segment of the population. (It was customary for wives and mothers to shoulder the job of preparing their war-bound offspring with warm winter clothing.) The Romans were known for their skill in tanning, which commenced with the soaking of hides—pigskin and sheepskin preferred—in alum and salt, and could be rendered to the highest degree of softness and flexibility.

Clothing. The clothing that emerged from the fabric making processes, especially after it had been fashioned to the appropriate level, were of several basic kinds: the *toga* (overgarment); *stola* (head covering and scarf for women); the tunic and if possible also silken underclothes to go under the tunic; brooches (used by women to clasp the overlapping margins of their togas, so that no skin would be visible); and breeches, loose trousers, used if the toga did not reach to ankle length. (Men customarily wore the toga without a tunic beneath it, while for modesty women always wore the tunic, and customarily a bra.

The toga. The loosely flowing toga and breeches outfit, so familiar to us from Roman portrait sculpture, was under certain circumstances upgraded to festivity level. For official ceremonies of some importance men wore the *toga praetextata*, with its purple border; the *toga picta*, with its gold border, for generals and those being honored by military triumphs; the *toga trabea*, worn by statues of the great or of deities, and stunningly all purple; the *saffron toga* worn by augurs and priests. The presences of dignitaries so clothed was inspiring to the Roman plebs.

Women's fashions. On the streets of Rome, or of another major Imperial city like Antioch or Alexandria, one would be sure to see women make their finest uses, not only of the fabrics discussed above—and there was vigorous competition among urban tailors—but of the latest hairstyles and cosmetics. In the Roman Republic modest women were accustomed to wearing their hair in a bun, but into the imperial period women began indulging a succession of hair style trends—plaiting, waving,

curling—which complemented changing fashions in make up and clothing. (Heated tongs were used to make hair curly, if desired.) The pursuit of attractive make up was expensive and alluring. Chalk and white lead were used to make the face pale—and to set off the eyes and lips. Red ocher coloring, made from earth tones, was the basic for cheeks and lips, while mixtures of ash and antimony were used for eye highlighting. Eyebrow pluckers were de rigueur on Madame’s dressing table.

Celebrating beauty. The Romans were practical? They yield nothing to contemporary fine society, in their quest for hardy and attractive ways of adorning and beautifying the body. The beauty celebrated by poets like Catullus, Propertius, and Horace, at the beginning of the Empire, was calculated beauty. And not surprisingly, given the tone of the whole society, women’s voice is almost never heard expostulating on good looking men.

Readings:

Fashions in Makeup from Ancient to Modern Times, Richard Corson (London, 2003) pp. 49-65.

The World of Roman Costume, ed. Sebesta and Bonfante (Madison, 1994).

Discussion:

Where did high-skill weaving techniques get learned? Was all the know-how, for this crucially important practice, picked up inside the family?

What do you know about advertisement in ancient Rome? How did one provider of cosmetics gain ascendancy over others in the market?

Where, in the Roman matron’s clothing, would lie the extra margin for displaying her sexuality? Did fine ladies ever ‘show skin’?

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR SECOND 1000 WORD PAPER

We have played down the Romantic element in the Roman marriage, and yet described the *domus* as a retreat in which the whole family could join. Had the Roman family an intimate side to it?

The ideal for the Roman wife is that of a modest, chaste, and supportive lady. Were there women of great wealth and power in Rome, as well? You might want to look at the first books of Tacitus' *Histories*, for knock-your-socks off anecdotes on this matter!

What do you think of the nutritional value of the Roman dinner? Does it resemble at all what we call the Mediterranean diet? What did the women of the family eat when the men had their nights' out? Was there an obesity issue?

Does it seem to you that the clothing worn by men and women was surprisingly similar? What especially differentiated female wear? Where did the element of female beauty most forcefully express itself?

Week 11 Farmers, Athletes, Entertainers

Diversity of Rome. Rome, as we now see, was by the time of the Empire a large and diverse city, with its extremes of wealth and poverty, its fine dining and its sordid living quarters, its intimate interiors and its squalid *insulae*.

Roman lifestyles. We have talked in the last two weeks about the pleasures of the body—sex, fashion, and clothing styles—and this week we are going to look fleetingly at a couple of lifestyles that were prominent in Rome—in different times and places.

Farming. First farming. It was a commonplace, among the Republican commentators or life and morals, to stress the dignity of the farmer's life. Existence close to the soil was widely viewed—see Pliny the Elder, Cato, Cicero—to be the most honest path to wealth, the best path to moral virtue, and the truest way to keep your harmony with the created world. The fact was that at least until the time of the Roman Empire, and Augustus, Rome lived largely from its agricultural produce—and, as international commerce and commercial shipbuilding developed, from trade with countries like Egypt or Syria, which needed imports from the Italic mainland. Products like wine, hides, grain were valued overseas. But to the Romans themselves their own garden products were a constant pleasure, and a never failing stimulus to the local markets. The market gardening process, whereby locals brought in their goods to a central location, was a source of pleasure and health to the urban Roman. The variety of produce was of constant delight:

artichoke, mustard, coriander, rocket, chives, leeks, celery, basil, parsnip, mint, rue, thyme, beets, poppy, asparagus, radish, cucumber, gourd, capers, onions, saffron, parsley, marjoram, cabbage, lettuce, cumin, garlic, figs, grapes, Armenian apricots, plums, mulberries, and peaches.

Larger scale farming. A brief list like this can explain the pleasures the Romans took in the produce brought to market. Which is not to imply, of course, that Roman agriculture was largely confined to what we might call 'market gardening.' It is just that the Roman farmer—whose true profits came from the extensive planting of spelt, an ancient version of wheat, and the stuff of Roman bread, and who planted this crop in large acreages, *latifundia*—particularly delighted the Roman temper by the production of dining-table tailored niceties. It seems appropriate, in this regard,

to mention, in order of preference, the kinds of plantations that Cato the Elder found particularly useful and attractive in Roman soil:

Vineyards, irrigated gardens, willow groves, olive orchards, meadows, grasslands, fruit trees, acorn woods...

Farm technology. Roman farmers advanced forcefully over their predecessors in Greece or the ancient Near East, in the matter of mechanical techniques, and in many regards set standards which would not be replicated until the Renaissance—the Middle Ages having been relatively uninventive in these regards. Water mills, working off of aqueduct flow, were capable of powering very effective machineries for the grinding of wheat; mechanical reapers were developed which separated out the corn grains from the chaff; and irrigation procedures were developed to a high level of usefulness. The ability of some Roman farmers, to produce large scale harvests, made these farmers key figures in government policy, it being the custom for victorious Roman generals to pay their veterans either in arable land or in grain.

The entertainment world. At the opposite of the agricultural world, in a certain sense, lies the world of entertainment, of amusements made solely by and for man in society, and not by nature. If we were to highlight the central entertainment of the ancient Roman—to set aside fascinating children's games, public boxing and wrestling matches, popular dice and chess games which the ordinary person delighted in—we would have to say that the public games in the Circus would be the real society definer, and especially if we turn to the popularity of the games in such vast arenas as the Circus Maximus or the Coliseum, in the center of Rome.

Sports arenas. The center of Rome was replete with areas for sports, athletic endeavors, and public entertainment. In the Campus Martius, which was initially an army drilling and training ground, young Roman men exercised, worked out, competed in boxing and wrestling matches, threw discus, kept in that shape which was important to the privileged Roman male. The Circus Maximus, also in the center of the city, was the site for horse and chariot racing, and known for its distinguished racing stables. In the Coliseum, square in the center of the city, many kinds of high public amusement were offered to the people, but of particular fascination were the gladiatorial combats. In those contests, which—like the events in the Circus

Maximus—brought in huge crowds, as many as 150,000 spectators per contest—armed men fought each other to the death, or fought wild animals to the death. It is a matter of importance that some of the later losers in these contests were Christians, who were thrown into the arena unarmed, with wild animals, but it is more generally fitting to say that the life and death losers here were either slaves or condemned criminals. So important were these public games that they were made into regular elements of the citizen's daily life; occupying some seventy-seven days a year in the age of Augustus himself, but rising to one hundred thirty-five days a year in the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in the third century AD.

Readings:

The Grain Market in the Roman Empire, Paul Erdkamp (Cambridge, 2005.)

The Roman Games, Alison Futrell (Oxford, 2006). Book of source texts on gladiators, their lives, and the lives of Christians martyred during the games.

Discussion:

Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.) wrote extensively on the farmer and the agricultural life as the backbone of Roman society. What was his reason for this belief?

Do you see why the public entertainments of Rome were powerful attractions to the people? How would you compare a gladiatorial combat in the Coliseum to an evening watching murder themes on television? Which entertainment would be 'better' for the state?

Would you consider the invention of water mills, for grinding wheat, a significant technical achievement? Had it precedents?

Week 12 Education

Roots of the educational system. It is to be imagined that the vast engine of the Roman Empire would develop a thorough system of education, to support its superstructure of laws, documentation, regulations and censuses. But from what roots did this educational system grow.

Early Roman education. In the early centuries of the Roman Republic, education was simple and personal, with little formal training required and much of what we might call home-schooling. [Cato the Elder](#) (234-149 B.C.) not only made his children hardworking, good citizens and responsible Romans, but "he was his (son's) reading teacher, his law professor, his athletic coach. He taught his son not only to hurl a javelin, to fight in armor, and to ride a horse, but also to box, to endure both heat and cold, and to swim strongly". In other words, this exemplary father saw to it that his son was able to read, and doubtless to memorize and recite poetry, but also that he was capable of handling himself in sports and war. The assumed goal of this early educational stage was to create the *vir bonus* society desired, the moral and intelligent youngster who was imbued with the *mos maiorum*, the moral values of his ancestors.

Elementary schools. Already by the middle of the 4th century B.C. schools were being founded in Rome, a development which coincided with the gradual development of the people, *the plebs*, to the point where they demanded higher skills for their lives. (These schools were called *ludi*, a term which means 'games' or 'plays', and indicates the view that school was an oasis of leisure in the midst of the busyness of life.) The teachers in these schools were the first fee-charging teachers in Rome. By the height of the Roman Republic, the preferred teachers were Greek slaves, who were themselves often deeply versed in their own Hellenic culture, which by the third/second centuries B.C. was the highest trend in Roman learning. The best of Roman students were already at that time accustomed to going to Athens to complete their education.

Types of teachers. In the two last centuries of the Republic educational practice became more clearly tiered, with the basic instruction—cf. the practice of Cato, above—shared between the *literator*, the teacher of the child's first years, and the

first trainer in writing and numbers, and the *grammaticus*, who took over instructional responsibility when the child was nine to twelve years of age. With the *grammaticus* education became increasingly diversified. Stress grew heavy on the reading and memorization of poetry, both in Greek—which was widely read and taught—and in Roman classics, and on numbers. Papers or assignments were evaluated on the spot by practiced teachers, some of whom became noted for their powerful formative influence on the young. Master *grammatici*, like Verrius Flaccus, who was appointed tutor to the children of the Emperor Augustus, made huge sums for his instruction. By the age of fifteen the student destined for further education was passed on to a *rhetor*, a professor of ‘oratory.’ From that point on the student, who was by now a young man—yes, women had educational possibilities, but they were largely confined to what they could learn from private reading and instruction—could go on to specialize in, for instance, judicial oratory, which would be one of the stepping stones into the much favored political world, dependent as it was on speech making and intelligent oral eloquence.

Roman higher education. While two of the oldest universities in the world—Plato’s Academy, and Aristotle’s Lyceum—were founded in fourth century Greece, the Romans did not develop that kind of higher education, although the de facto, on the job learning of politics kept men of state obliged constantly to read and to master their own history. The Romans did, though, pursue high level skills in a wide variety of public pursuits—law, engineering, medicine—which demanded practical training at the highest level. In medicine, for instance, a wide variety of tools—including scalpels, forceps, drills for bone surgery—were put to use by physicians like the eminent Greek doctor and writer, Galen, who dominated the Roman medical community in the second century after Christ, and became the personal physician of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Medical specialties like ophthalmology, urology, and cardiology were practiced for the benefit of the lucky. The Roman government made surprisingly vigorous efforts, in the later Empire, to educate its citizens in the value of intelligent understanding of the body.

Literacy. It might finally be added, in this latter regard, that the creation of a literate and informed public was under the Empire starting to be formed. It is estimated that during the first two centuries of the Empire literacy in Roman lands was at a level of 5 to 30 %. The beginning of a significant book culture was

underway, with the development of the *codex*—a hand copied book text with a spine—to supplement the *volumen*, or scroll, which had long served as the (pretty cumbersome) vehicle of the written word in Rome. By the first century of the Empire book shops were springing up around Rome—and not only there but in provincial capitals like Lyons (France)—and a reading and reviewing public was (slowly) starting to form. Such sage elders as Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) were bookaholics, who, when traveling, dining, or take their bath would have classical books read to them by savvy Greek slaves.

Readings:

As the Romans Did It: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History, ed. Jo-Ann Shelton (New York, 1998). Excellent chapter on education, not to mention the wide range of social and cultural practices this whole course is about.

Discussion:

Was Roman primary education basically conservative, and based on the teachings and values of the past? Did the answer to that question change over time?

How do you explain the relative absence of higher education in ancient Rome? Why did Rome differ from Athens in this regard?

Where did the teachers of the young get their training? Research on this question might deepen your understanding of the hierarchy of pedagogical influences in the Roman educational system.

Week 13 Roman Religion

A review. We began our class by discussing Roman temples, for in their massive public role they seemed meaningful examples of what is outward and 'monumental' and 'non intimate' about Roman culture. We were playing with the danger of clichés, in those early efforts to characterize Roman culture—a movement of vast historical sweep, covering at largest a third of the known world, and lasting for almost a millennium—and we tried to make amends by entering the Roman house, by looking at Roma wall paintings, by empathizing with 'the Roman marriage ceremony.' Had we been involved with literature as well as with 'culture,' we would have vastly enriched our 'public' concept by entering the world of such immortally charming poets as Catullus, Horace, and Propertius.

Roman religious experience. All that said, however, there are many areas of cultural production in which the Romans appear to lack some of the inter creativity of the Greeks—for that cultural comparison is hard to avoid, given especially the Roman penchant for incorporating elements of Greek culture, especially after the gradual Roman conquest of Greece, which is complete by the end of the second century B.C. One of those incorporative areas is the religious experience of the Romans, which by our time cultural opinion has agreed to consider 'less creative' than the Greek religious/mythical experience. That 'agreed to' carries a distinctive tweak, for the view of Roman culture as ritualized and plain—compared to the Greek—is one which has prevailed since the Romantic Movement of the 19th century, and Romanticism, but which was not at all the view of the highly Latinate Renaissance. But let's jump in. Let's begin by considering what the Romans do with 'Greek myths,' as they absorb and transform them.

Native Italic mythology. Gradually, for different reasons at different times, the Romans grafted Greek mythical figures onto the stock of ancient Italic-Etruscan myth figures. Those myth figures are especially to be found in several major Roman texts: the archaic books of commentary and ritual legislation, concerning the Sibyl and the earliest transfer of royal power in Rome; the first books of Livy's *Histories*, which narrate most of the founding tales of the Roman people, going back to 800 B.C.; Virgil's epic poem, *The Aeneid*, which relates the founding actions of the city of Rome, and the mating between Rome's heroic founder and the daughter of the local

Etruscan kingdom, Lavinia; the fourth book of elegies of the Roman poet, Propertius. In those varied texts, and in a book like Ovid's *Fasti*, which records the sacred feast and ritual days of earlier Rome, we come in touch with traditional myth tales of ancient Italic vintage: tales such as that of the Sabine women, which consecrates a stage in earlier Roman appropriation of new territory; the marriage of a 'mythical' king, Numa Pompilius, to a nymph, Egiria, from which any number of descendants and tales follow; the story of the courage of Horatius at the Bridge; the legend of Marcus Scaevola, whose fidelity to the Roman Republic was so great that he would plunge his hand into boiling water to affirm his loyalty. Onto all such early Italic accounts, and there are many, the Romans found themselves, as we have said, grafting Roman tales.

Development of the Roman pantheon. Those tales amounted, with the passage of time, to traditional lore in which was embedded material of Hellenic background but of relevance to the efforts of the Romans themselves to create their own cultural state. Thus, inspired by the procedures by which Greek mythology was generated, the Romans early promoted a godly trinity of Mars/Quirinus/Vesta which was effectually worshipped by the person on the street in Rome, say in the third century B.C., but which was simply a way of paying homage to the military and at the same time home-protective (hence Vesta) qualities of the Roman experience. God-trios like this ultimately merged into Roman trinities like Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, which were honored with official worship in great public centers of Roman cult.

Tales of the gods. While the tales of the Greek gods, on which the Romans also drew, were characteristically devoted to the complex social interrelations of the gods, the corresponding Roman god-tales were characteristically devoted to tracking, and abetting, the course of historical actions. Thus each of the actions going into the process of planting involves a prayer to the deity presiding over that particular action: Saturn, the 'god of sowing,' is adulated as the act of sowing the field takes place; Pales, the 'god of the fields,' is addressed in ritual prayer as the fields are ploughed; Pomona, 'goddess of the fruit,' is similarly adored and prayed to while the fruit is being invited to full development; and Ops, the 'god of the harvest,' is adored as harvest takes place. "Adored," as these examples suggest, is a feeble attempt to characterize the type of piety in question here. The above examples are aimed at a single point: that ancient Roman religious worship intersected, at points, with the

polytheism of the Greeks, but is notably different in being tied to ritual, prayer, and practical purpose far more tightly than were the Greeks' tales of the gods.

The meaning of Roman mythography. In a sense, then, our overworked notion of the Romans' public cultural stance is carried out in their religious practice, much of which deploys itself in performative practice, abetting a desired end by inducing it in practice. For this reason we fall appropriately into the locution that the gods of the Romans 'stand for' this or that condition, like the action of the thunder, lightning, the power of eros, or the dynamism of the sea.

Readings:

A Companion to Roman Religion, Joerg Rüpke (New York, 2007) Excellent book; read as desired, in connection with your upcoming final paper.

Discussion:

How did the Romans combine native Italic religion with that of the Greek myths they inherited?

In what sense is the prayer that accompanies planting what we might call 'performative,' carrying out the action it describes?

Could you call an epic poem like the *Aeneid*, which 're enacts' the founding of Rome, performative?

Week 14 Roman Military Training

Romans and the military. From issues of religious rite and fidelity to the hallowed backgrounds of the Roman state, it is not far to the issue of the Roman army, a powerful component of the Roman state, one on which perhaps fifty per cent of the national budget was spent, in the early Empire. Religion and the State were deeply intertwined, and the presence of national piety was constant in the battle preparations and victory triumphs of the Roman army. If the influence of Rome is dominant throughout the ancient 'civilized world,' from Parthia to Northumbria, it is largely because the Roman army, and with it Roman tradition and belief, was omnipresent in that extent of the globe.

The Roman army. What was this Roman army? It was the protective arm of the Roman state, and carried with it both an aggressive/dominative function and a policing capacity; once alien armies were defeated, semi-militarized occupation forces were left to organize the new territory—though on certain occasions compliant or useful foreign areas were given the privilege of organizing and policing themselves. At the peak of its power the army comprised 45 to 120 million members, all men, all citizens; it is estimated that fifty percent of the national budget went into military expenses, in the first two centuries of the Empire. All candidates for the army—in theory anyway—were thoroughly vetted as appropriate for military work. The recruiters worked on basic principles, preferring military candidates who were around 18 years of age, strong and loyal to the state—depending on the time period in question—and fully prepared for teamwork, for severe group spirit was mandatory in the Roman army.

The Army as a Profession. Needless to say, this was a professional army; members signed up for 25 years. Their primary garrison was at Rome, although there were large, often permanent, military stations throughout the Empire. (We speak here chiefly of developments within the Empire, for it was not until the late Republic that the army began to take on its highly organized character—each detail of its provision, movement, and working condition being notoriously well planned from above, down to the hobnail pattern on the soldiers' boots.)

The army's fighting tactics. The fighting prowess of the Roman army was famously tied in to the matter of teamwork, which we mentioned before; and in being thus tied in was also defined as a highly regimented force. When it comes to technical developments, the Roman army changed remarkably little from early Republic to the end of the Empire; steel was not yet available during the Roman military period, so the weapons available to soldiers were made of bronze, or, later in the Empire, of iron—thus were not of higher quality than the weapons of many of their foes.

The Superiority of the Roman Army. In balance for that, though, the Roman soldiery was significantly better trained than most—meaning those 'barbarian' forces whose military prowess was gradually growing, along the borders of the Empire. The new Roman recruit would train by fighting against robust wooden stakes—which would represent enemy infantry people—and would fight those mock enemy with wicker work shields and wooden swords. (These mock implements would be significantly lighter than the metal weapons used in actual combat.) The basic marching requirement was to cover 18.5 miles in five hours, that is at a firm marching pace; serious competence in swimming was also expected.

The Omnicompetent Roman Soldier. As this last pairing, of marching strength with swimming, might suggest, the Roman soldier was expected to be pretty omnicompetent on the job, and that in fact is where the surpassing capacity of the Roman army lay. The infantryman carried with him not only his sword (his *gladius*) and his *pila* (his much feared, armor-piercing) javelins, but his shovel, for a variety of encampment logistics. The Roman soldier was prepared for a high variety of military engineering skills, ranging from road building—often necessary on the spot in the innumerable remote areas of the Roman Empire—through the construction of siege engines, through the rapid construction of vast encampments.

Logistics and teamwork. The brilliance and severity of the Roman military achievement can be encapsulated in a couple of points. The establishment of long supply chains reached great heights among the Roman armies. These chains—as say between the main Roman garrison in the capitol, and outposts on the Rhenish barbarian frontier—would often cross high mountains in freezing weather, then move to rivers like the Rhine or Donau, across which the Roman navy would move

materiel, then there would be a transfer to military caravans which would continue the materiel transport to the north. For such achievements—which after all bring us back to the monumental architectural skills with which we opened our course—discipline and the fear of punishment were indispensable. We have stressed teamwork earlier. But this was not a boyscout camp, and military training among the Romans has been called, by one eminent military historian, like the training of the American marines, only ‘a lot nastier.’ The Greek historian, Polybius (3rd century B.C.) describes in the following terms the consequences of the cowardice of a cohort:

if ever these same things happen to occur among a large group of men... the officers reject the idea of bludgeoning or slaughtering all the men involved [as is the case with a small group or an individual]. Instead they find a solution for the situation which chooses by a lottery system sometimes five, sometimes eight, sometimes twenty of these men, always calculating the number in this group with reference to the whole unit of offenders so that this group forms one-tenth of all those guilty of cowardice. And these men who are chosen by lot are bludgeoned mercilessly...

Readings:

Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity, J.E. Lendon (New Haven, 2005), pp. 163-315. A readable account of how the Romans actually fought.

Discussion:

What was the role of teamwork in the Roman army? Why was so much emphasis put on teamwork?

Why was the issue of supply lines, and the according logistics, so important to the Roman army? Does their logistical skill tie into other abilities characteristic of the Roman people?

Why do you think the Roman state delegated to the army the job of organizing new colonies, annexed territories? Was the army good at that? (Some research needed in order to deal with this.)

Week 15 Roman Slavery

Ancient slavery. The modern opponent of slavery, who rejoices at the abolition of slavery—since the mid nineteenth century—in the major centers of Western culture, is likely to be shocked to learn the extent of slavery in ancient Greece and Rome—not to mention the other great centers of ancient culture. (In India, and especially in China, there was significant enslavement in antiquity, though never on the mass scales common in Western societies.) It is roughly estimated that thirty to forty percent of the Roman population was slaves, depending on the period of time. This will mean that the enormous machinery of Empire, for instance, was heavily dependent on slaves, for labor of many kinds: house servants—many wealthy masters had as many as five hundred house slaves, and the early Emperors had up to twenty thousand slaves at their disposal; urban skilled or unskilled workers, farm labor, mining workers, workers in the mills, even as prostitutes.

The status and labor of slaves. Roman slaves, from the early Republic on, were viewed as property, without a *persona* (human face; personality.) Their children were still slaves, they too could not own property, they were pursued like criminals if they tried to escape. Slaves were bought and sold as impersonally as any trading commodities, and assessed in terms of their skills—for some slaves were of high attainments, for example physicians and surgeons from the Greek east, while others, like cooks, were highly valued in sophisticated households. (The typical household slave would require no special skill: he or she would carry out family type duties within the villa. Routine chores would involve heating up the hypocaust at daybreak, dressing the master, walking the kids to school; washing; cleaning; drying off the master after his bath; carrying the master around town on a litter; accompanying guests home after parties.) Within the range of possible activities for slaves, the above family duties would be highly prized.

Slave trading economy. The actual trading process could take many forms, as befitted the operations of an immense business. Local slave markets could be found throughout the Empire. At these markets brokers would display their wares (typically) on revolving platforms where prospective customers would be viewed naked, and inspected. Normally there would be a placard beside the slave, indicating his or her biodata, degree of intelligence, skills (or lack of them). Slaves

who could be 'guaranteed'—money back guarantee if not satisfied—wore a special designatory cap, and were of course prized, bringing in substantial sums.

Large Scale Slavery. But much of the slave trade business was larger scale than this, and fell under the justification laid out by the jurist Ulpian (2nd century A.D.), who formulated what were at the same time persuasive rules of international law; maintaining that all people are by nature free, but holding that the defeated in war could legally be enslaved. There were in fact dramatic ups and downs in the slave industry within the millennium of Roman rule in the Mediterranean. Slave ownership surged from the time of the three Punic Wars (end of third century B.C.) until the 4th century A.D., and at certain times, as during the collapse of the Seleucid Empire (founded in the aftermath of Alexander's eastern conquests, and surviving until wiped out by the Roman General Pompey) , there was an influx of huge numbers of slaves into Rome.

Julius Caesar and Slavery. On one famous occasion, Julius Caesar took advantage of a military conquest to sell 53, 000 slaves on the spot. It might be added, to this cursory picture, that piracy was a major source of new slaves from overseas, and of revenue for ocean running criminals; and—an unrelated issue—that debt slavery was also a source of new labor, involving as it did the turning in of oneself, or of a kinsman, as slave collateral for a debt, a practice which continued throughout Roman times, despite occasional protests, especially when the practice involved selling one's own children to cover debts.

The Saturnalia. It might be well to conclude this gloomy survey on a lighter note, and one which seems congruent with other tones of Roman culture we have heard in this class. (We could of course turn to the darker yet, and discuss the horrors of enslavement in the mines, a no exit doom which befell slaves convicted of major crimes.) On the feast day of the Saturnalia each year it was customary for slaves and masters to exchange roles, at least briefly. The fifth century A.D. historian Macrobius describes the change as follows:

Meanwhile the head of the slave household, whose responsibility it was to offer sacrifice to the [Penates](#), to manage the provisions and to direct the activities of the domestic servants, came to tell his master that the household had feasted according to the annual ritual custom. For at this festival, in houses that keep to proper religious usage, they first of all honor the slaves with a dinner prepared as if for the

master; and only afterwards is the table set again for the head of the household. So, then, the chief slave came in to announce the time of dinner and to summon the masters to the table.

If this less gloomy note sounds deceptively transitory, it might usefully be added that from early in Roman cultural development there was a more liberal current in vogue, one which deplored slavery while accepting its inevitability. That was the current of Stoic thought, which had its roots in third century Greece, and which spoke up loudly for the universal equality of human beings. Reviewing the Stoic position redirects our minds to those British religious reformers, of the 19th century, who were effectual forerunners of the abolition of the Western slave trade.

Readings:

Slavery in the Roman World, Sandra Joshel (Cambridge, 2010). Please read the entire book, brief and thorough.

Greek and Roman Slavery, Thomas Wiedemann (Baltimore, 1978). Compendium of Roman texts and edicts on slavery.

Discussion:

Do you think it surprising that there were few slave rebellions in Rome, given the size of the slave population? How did the Romans control this population?

Who was Spartacus? How far did he go in rebelling against the Roman State? What were his grievances?

Do you think the Saturnalia provided a useful escape valve for hostile feelings from within the Roman slave community? Do you know of other cultures with similar practices? Mardi gras?

Week 16 Overview of Roman Culture

Some downsides of Roman culture. We have dealt fleetingly with many highly developed aspects of ancient Roman culture, so it was perhaps appropriate to conclude with the topic of slavery, which ensured the presence of the 'real world' in our discussion. We have, in fact, had many opportunities to reflect on that 'real world,' while surveying aspects of Roman culture. What greater testimony could we have, to the realism of the Romans, than their devotion (more or less, varying with the period) of fifty percent of their national budget to the army? They knew just what was required to protect a polity occupying one third of the known world's surface. We have had little time to get inside the nitty-gritty of daily life, but we have seen the shabby look of *insulae*—downwardly mobile blocks of urban dwellings; the severe and worn look of aging military commanders whose sculpted and wrinkled brows brought to portraying the human a severity which other ancient cultures, like the Greek, virtually never brought to their visual art.

The beauty of Roman culture. At the opposite extreme we have indeed met scenes of beauty, design brilliance, discipline, religious fervor, taste for pleasure—at the dinner table or in bed, which reflect a human enterprise intent on surmounting the darker realities of daily life, and we have met a *civitas*, a polity, in which by and large the wonders of order, discipline, and responsibility play large parts. We tried out the word 'practical,' in an early effort to characterize the Roman achievement, but should be careful of any suggestion that the Romans were 'pedestrian.' The Roman gift for order in government, for architectural vigor and engineering brilliance, the evidences of city planning and road construction on hitherto unknown scales, the by and large consistent investment in *gravitas* and *dignitas* on the public level: all these traits raise the Roman achievement far above the pedestrian.

Conservative Roman culture. If any portmanteau term rivals 'practical,' as a descriptor for the Romans, it might be 'conservative' or 'traditional.' One thinks of religion, in such a connection, and would be right in thinking that ritual and sacrifice, chiefly to somewhat transformed versions of Greek god-tales, were of persistent importance for the Romans, from the early Republic to the mature Empire, and that the Roman resistance to Christianity owed much to this 'piety.' The Roman army did not consider a military encounter unless augurs had first consulted the birds and priests had performed the accustomed sacrifices.

Oriention toward the past. The seemingly limitless growth of new cities, as Rome's Empire grew, inevitably configures themselves around a ground plan based on that of Rome, and with one or more major temples at its center. In education it was customary for the youngster to imbibe traditional tales which illustrated the *mores maiorum*, the customs and values of the ancestors, and when it came to the Roman's sense of his own historical mission it was always oriented backward into the past, as we see in the historical accounts of Livy or the founding narrative of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

The Golden Age. And speaking of Livy, we may safely generalize that the Roman historians, to which we can add Tacitus and Sallust, were for the most part concerned with the past and its lessons, rather than with the future. Roman culture is rarely clambering for the future, or in any way concerned with the idea of 'progress'; instead it was a theme, throughout Roman literature, that the Golden Age was far in the past, and that the age of the present was Iron, fallen and needy. It

might even be added, when it comes to fashion, clothing, and dining that the Roman was there too faithful to old patterns. He/she tended to value what was known from before. That such conservatism might have had much to do with poverty is quite possible, for with 95 % of the population of Rome living 'under the poverty level,' with mortality rates for infants running around fifty per cent, life expectancy from birth running at 28 years (the same as in ancient Greece), and with rampant diseases like malaria, the plebs as a whole was unlikely to be thinking farther into the future than the next meal.

Political and religious opposition in Rome. The conservatism of ancient Rome was rarely challenged on the political level—one thinks of the Spartacan uprising from the heart of the enslaved world, at the time of the Punic Wars—and in fact remained, until the time of Christianity and the Barbarian incursions, chiefly threatened by internal power struggles. The causes of the ultimate 'fall' of the Roman Empire, which is probably datable to the late fifth or sixth century, was a mixture of internal dissent with pressure from the outside. The well organized Christians, of the second and third centuries, were for the most part unready to do more than bring pressure to a structure which was already falling. Neither the Christians nor the multiple 'barbarian' forces, pressing on the Roman Empire from outside it, was intent on radical political reorganization. Someone like Saint Augustine, in *The City of God*, was of course envisaging a polity profoundly different from that of the Roman Empire, but not one which challenged or even intersected with the Roman.

The technological in Rome. It is of interest, to us today, to note that while ancient Rome was stable for its time, it remained so without great resort to innovation or technical advancement, which, like the Greeks too, the Romans viewed as essentially a form of manual labor, and thus not worthy of mature attention.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FINAL 3000 WORD PAPER

It has been said that Roman religion is of a piece with Roman culture as a whole: practical, public, even military, and lacking (or not valuing) explorations of the inner life. It is equally often said that Christianity, reaching Rome already at the end of the first century A.D., brought a message of interiority that was fatal to Rome. What do you think of these assessments of the character of Roman paganism and Christian messianism?

Poverty was rampant throughout the Roman Empire; the average life expectancy was 28; only five percent of the population, by one estimate, was literate. Where, then, is the good life of entertainment, great dinners, sex in the city, fashion? There is a large disconnect here. Please try to come up with an assessment of the relation among/between the classes in Rome, and a judgment on whether the Roman government was responsibly interested in its citizens.

As the Roman Empire spread, covering almost half of the populated world in the first centuries after Christ, its communication issues got increasingly complex. How was it possible to pass news from Parthia to Northumbria to Libya? How did the Romans deal with this situation? Look into their very efficient pony express delivery system. Had they other ways of coordinating information from one part to another of the Empire?

On the face of it, we might think the educational system of ancient Roman hardly complex enough to deal with the training of leading orators, engineers, bureaucrats, and military leaders. Is that a deceptive impression? Was on the job training sufficient to create good orators and statesmen? Engineers capable of building aqueducts? Or walls like the Hadrian's Wall in Britain? Please try to explain how the complex structures of a thousand year state were created on the basis of the *mos maiorum*, that value system of the elders which was prioritized in the schools.