

(DD 302) Writing Wrongs: Ancient Rome and Contemporary Politics (#60425)

Time: T/TH 2-3:15 pm

Place: WAG 112

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Ebbeler

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Office Hours: F 12-2 pm; by appointment

Statement of Inclusion and Equity

As an instructor, I am committed to the principles of inclusion and equity. This means that my classroom aims to welcome students of all backgrounds and identities; and that I strive to take the necessary steps for all students to feel respected and comfortable in my classroom. This also means that I expect all students to adhere to these same principles while they are in my classroom. Please let me know what pronouns you prefer to use, as well as anything other information that you think will make your experience in my class more welcoming. I will always respect your privacy to whatever extent you wish. Many of the topics in this course will stir up strong emotions. We need to work together as a community, to support and respect one another in our efforts to communicate in a respectful and productive manner.

Title IX Mandatory Reporting

Please also be aware that, as a faculty member at UT Austin, I am a mandatory reporter for any violations of Title IX. This means that if you tell me something about, for instance, another student or faculty member sexually harassing you, I am required to report it. If you tell me that a friend or family member is abusing you, I am required to report it. However, there are ways to do this in which your identity is kept anonymous if you prefer and do not intend to pursue any charges. I will provide a list of resources that are not required by law to report an incident if you do not want them to do so.

Difficult Dialogues

Founded in 2006 at the University of Texas, Difficult Dialogues began as part of a Ford Foundation initiative developed in response to reports of growing intolerance and efforts to curb academic freedom on U.S. campuses.

One of a diverse group of 27 public and private institutions selected from across the country, UT Austin is unique in offering Difficult Dialogues courses as part of the core undergraduate curriculum.

Difficult Dialogues seminars are distinctive in their focus on teaching students the skills they need to participate in constructive dialogue about controversial and potentially divisive issues.

SHIFT

With this course, I will be participating in a pilot of a new student wellness program called SHIFT. The aim of this program is to help students master healthy coping skills for managing anxiety, time management issues, and other typical stressors that affect all of us. In other words, learning to focus on breathing rather than binge drinking or taking your roommate's Adderall to stay up all night. Throughout the semester, you will be asked to take a weekly SHIFT goal, do it, and then reflect on the process in a journal (I will provide the journal). I will often ask a few students to share their experiences at the beginning or end of class; and will also share some of my own. I will occasionally collect the journals to check that you are completing the assignment (these are otherwise ungraded). There will also be some class days set aside specifically to talk about certain kinds of common scenarios and to brainstorm together strategies for handling them.

Required Texts (available on Amazon.com and other online booksellers)

- **I will provide all assigned readings as PDF files on the course Canvas page. If you wish to purchase the following books, you will find them useful and not overly expensive. You will occasionally be asked to rent a movie (e.g. Spartacus; 300). It is your responsibility to read all announcements in a timely manner; and to ensure that you have consistent internet access as much of the class material and logistical information will be stored on/communicated via Canvas.**
- Neville Morley, *Classics: Why it Matters* (Polity Press, 2018).
- Donna Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (Harvard University Press, 2018).
- Thomas E. Jenkins, *Antiquity Now: The Classical World in the Contemporary American Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- (extra credit) Pat Barker, *The Silence of the Girls* (Doubleday, 2018).

Course Description

When we think about Ancient Greece and Rome, most of us imagine vibrant ancient cities, full of intellectuals, politicians, and other elites. If we have visited modern Italy or Greece and seen the ancient ruins, we imagine cities constructed from glistening marble. We also tend to assume--even if only tacitly--that the inhabitants of these cities were light skinned. After all, we are told, Ancient Greece and Rome formed the cornerstone of Western Civilization, a civilization upon which modern America modeled itself. Erased from our imagination is the fact that the Ancient Mediterranean world was deeply multicultural, especially because of its dependence on slaves captured in foreign wars. Also lost to most of us who have spent time in museums is the fact that ancient buildings and statues were painted in bright hues. We cannot assume that these portraits are realistic, but they remind us of the rich diversity in Ancient Greece and Rome. Too often, though, we tend to see these worlds and the experience of living in these worlds

through the eyes of the elites who left behind for us the historical narratives. We don't realize that the later reception of Antiquity is colored by bias and cannot be taken a face value.

Scholars of the ancient world have long taken it for granted that the rich cultural diversity that we study was well-known and understood. They have also understood the ways in which ancient practices, including slavery, were used as models by the Founding Fathers.

More recently, however, students of the ancient world have been forced to confront widespread efforts to use the Ancient Mediterranean to claim legitimacy for a range of modern practices: rape, slavery, pedophilia, racism, sexism, and especially white supremacy. One of the most prominent white supremacists, Richard Spencer, described his dream of a "White Ethno-State on the North American continent" that would be, in his words, "a reconstitution of the Roman Empire" in a 2013 speech at the American Renaissance conference. From his perspective--and that of many other defenders of the Western Mediterranean as the foundations of Western Civilization/America, what made the Roman Empire great was its whiteness. For scholars of this world, this is a vast and dangerous misunderstanding of what that world actually looked like in lived reality.

This course will focus on a set of "case studies" in which we can see contemporary political views and social practices being justified through a misreading of the history of the Ancient Mediterranean. Our case studies will focus primarily but not entirely on Ancient Rome. While it is impossible to go back in time and recover the "truth" of the ancient world, it is not difficult to demonstrate that various contemporary figures are misusing antiquity. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that there was much that was truly terrible about the ancient world and that it probably should not serve as a model for a progressive, modern society. So, then, the question lingers: should we study the ancient world? Can it be recuperated and, if so, how? What are some ways for thinking about a future of Classics?

Finally, while it is my hope that you will learn some important things about the ancient Greco-Roman world, the primary aim of this class is to help you with the transition from high school to college, including introducing you to the many resources available on the UT Austin campus for enriching your time as a student. To this end, I have arranged presentations for the class from the University Writing Center, the main campus library (PCL), and the Blanton Art Museum. You will also be required to attend a lecture in the University Lecture Series. UT can seem like a very big and overwhelming place. I hope to make it a bit smaller and help you to navigate some of the many treasures that can be found on campus.

In addition to its strong focus on "difficult dialogues," a substantial amount of attention will be devoted to improving your oral and written communication skills. As well, we will spend some time simply talking about how learning in college differs from ways that you may have been taught to think and show learning before coming to UT Austin.

College learning isn't necessarily harder than what you did in high school, but it is certainly different (and involves a much greater emphasis on critical thinking skills rather than rote memorization). Hopefully, you will also come away from this semester with a greater understanding of the ways that history is not just a set of facts but, rather, a constantly evolving narrative that we tell about the past in order to make sense of the present. I also hope that you will come to see how, over time, views on various complicated topics change; but that, still, many -isms (racism, sexism, etc.) have enduring consequences.

Class meetings will focus on discussion. I expect the members of the class to do the assigned readings ahead of time and come prepared to discuss the topics in engaged, respectful, and energetic debates. We will do a range of different types of discussion in class to facilitate us all feeling comfortable and familiar with one another. At the start of the semester, I will play a somewhat more active role in getting the discussion going; but, as the semester progresses, I will expect students to take on most of the work. I will serve more as traffic cop than fount of wisdom! As the semester progresses, small groups of students will be asked to take on the roll of discussion leader. As well, each class session will have a designated note-taker, who will be asked to write up the class for our class blog.

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on: 2 short papers (c. 500 words) in response to assigned prompts. Both short papers will be reviewed by me; one will also be peer reviewed. You will be expected to revise at least one of these papers and submit it for a final grade. You have the option to submit both revised short papers. In addition, you will write a short (300-500 word) reflection on looking at a piece of art in the Blanton that takes the Ancient Mediterranean as its topic. You will also write a longer paper on a topic of your choosing, in consultation with the instructor. Your performance as a discussion leader will be assessed. In addition, you will be asked to do a short, 10 minute presentation on the topic of your final paper near the end of the semester. There will also be two short, take home midterm exams.

Grading Policies

- SHIFT Journal Completion (20%): each week you will be asked to pick a prompt, do the activity, and actively reflect on the process/what you learned. You will also be expected to share parts of your process with the class on occasion. I will ask for volunteers and try to avoid asking someone to share something that makes them uncomfortable.
- 2 500 word papers plus peer review of a peer's paper (25%): prompts for these papers will be provided. The draft of the first short paper is due 1 October; the second is due on 7 November. You will have one week to submit a revised, final draft.
- 300-500 word reflection/analysis of an artifact related to the ancient world in the Blanton Museum (5%): This is due on 24th October.

- Discussion Leader (10%): a sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first two weeks of the semester for this task as well as for taking notes/composing the blog post
- Note-taker/blog post writer (5%)
- 10 minute presentation and c. 1500 word paper on a topic of your own choosing (20%): this will be the most substantial writing assignment in the course. I expect you to start thinking about potential topics by mid-semester; and to meet with me and/or Lexie to discuss ideas and ways to research your topic. We look forward to discussing ideas with you.
- Attendance and Engaged Participation (10%): each student will be expected to attend each class meeting and to participate regularly in class dialogues. Simply showing up will not be sufficient to earn full credit for this grade. To earn a grade in the high 90s/100%, you will need to attend all/most classes and participate regularly and enthusiastically.
- Online Canvas quiz based on a lecture from the University Lecture Series (5%): as part of the First Year Experience, students are required to attend one University Lecture. For this class, I am requiring you to attend the lecture on the evening of 23 September. More details will be forthcoming. Following the lecture, you will be asked to take a short quiz on Canvas that demonstrates what you learned.
- **Extra Credit (0-3 points added to your final course grade): if you read and write a 750 word review of Pat Barker's Booker Prize-winning novel *The Silence of the Women*, you can earn between 0-3 points that will be added directly to your final course grade. This is the only extra credit option in the course. I will provide guidelines for writing a strong book review.**

Your final percentage grade will be translated into a letter grade according to the following table:

100-92.5: A
 92.4-89.5: A-
 89.4-86.5: B+
 86.4-82.5: B
 82.4-79.5: B-
 79.4-76.5: C+
 76.4-72.5: C
 72.4-69.5: C-
 69.4-66.5: D+
 66.4-65.5: D
 65.4-64.5: D-
 Below 64.5: F

****Please note that there is no D- on this scale. If you take this course on a CR/NC option, you MUST earn at least a 65 to receive a grade of CR****

Make-up Policies

Opportunities to make up missed work will be offered only in cases of documented athletic commitment; documented illness, death of an immediate family member (documented by an obituary listing you as a survivor), or other unavoidable emergency (documented by a letter from your Dean of Students). Documented emergencies do not include, for example (all real examples!): the illness or death of your roommate's pet; being in jail for under-age drinking; a late night at Hooters; missing your ride back to Austin after a weekend away; missing the bus to campus; or sleeping through your alarm.

If you are an athlete, you must make me aware of scheduling conflicts during the first two weeks of the semester.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with the University of Texas's Honor Code:

“The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”

Any student caught or facilitating cheating on any assignment will receive an F in the course and immediately be referred to the Dean of Students. In cases where dishonesty is strongly suspected, I reserve the right to re-examine the student(s). I will, however, assume absolute integrity on your part until shown otherwise. If you are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php>. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the contents of this website and to avoid any behavior that might be interpreted as academic dishonesty.

Add/Drop Policy

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Texas's official add/drop policy. Any requests to drop the course after the fourth week will be handled in accordance with these rules. Be forewarned: while you may use a “one time exception” to late-drop the course, the exception is to the deadline, not to the requirement that you must be earning at least a 70% in order to receive a Q-drop.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic adjustments for qualified students with disabilities. For more information contact the Dean of Students at (512) 471-6259 or see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd>. In order to receive accommodations, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). This office will document your disability, inform me of your situation, and instruct me on the necessary accommodations. If you chose not to register with SSD, I cannot make special accommodations for you.

Religious Holidays

According to Section 51.911 of the Texas Education Code, students shall be excused from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. If you will miss class (including exams) to celebrate a religious holiday, you must notify me AT LEAST 14 days prior to the holiday so that we can make arrangements for you to make up the assignment. All make-up work must be completed no later than one week after the missed class.