



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

CLASSICS PROGRAMME

CLAS 401

Topic in Literary Genre: Life Writing in Greece and Rome: Ancient Biography

30 POINTS

Full Year 2015

Important dates

Trimester dates: 2 March to 15 November 2015

Teaching dates: 2 March to 16 October 2015

Easter/Mid-trimester break: 3–19 April 2015

Mid-year break: 2-12 July 2015

Mid-trimester break 2/3: 24 August – 6 September 2015

Study period: 19 – 23 October 2015

Examination/Assessment Period: 23 October – 14 November 2015

Note: students who enrol in courses with examinations must be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the scheduled examination period.

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Day: Friday

Time: 1:10 – 3pm

Place: OK526

Names and contact details

Professor Jeff Tatum

Room: OK515

Phone: 463-5846

Email: jeff.tatum@vuw.ac.nz

Communication of additional information

Any additional information will be posted on Blackboard.

Prescription

An author or genre of ancient literature for presentation, discussion and contextual analysis. 2015: In this seminar, we shall investigate the origins and development of biography in Greek and Roman literature. *Why* did Greeks and Romans write biographies? How did they do their research? What can biography teach us about Greco-Roman notions about character or individuality? How does Greco-Roman life writing differ from modern approaches? Along the way, then, biographical subjects – mostly Big Thing People like Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar or Mark Antony – will claim our notice, along with writers ranging from Xenophon to Cornelius Nepos. Nor shall we overlook memoirs and autobiographies. Predictably, our attention will concentrate itself on the most important extant biographers – Tacitus, Suetonius, and Plutarch – who were more or less contemporaries. Close readings, obviously valuable in the unpacking of each author and in grasping the literariness of his work, will also serve as starting points in attempting to understand each writer's approach to telling a life story.

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course will be able to:

1. think independently and creatively about the relationship between ideology and culture in ancient biography;
2. contextualise biographical works within a historical framework;
3. identify, define, investigate, and solve historiographical problems, particularly with reference to ancient biography;
4. evaluate contemporary scholarship and assess methodological practices.

Teaching format

The course will be taught in two-hour sessions, in which the first hour will consist of a lecture given either by the lecturer or by a student and the second hour will consist of class discussion. Students are expected to read and ponder the set texts for each week, and to come prepared to discuss them in class.

Mandatory course requirements

There are no mandatory requirements for this course.

Workload

In order to complete the course successfully, an 'average' student should expect to spend somewhere in the neighbourhood of 300 hours fulfilling the requirements of the course, i.e. 10-12 hours per week, during the trimester, and the rest preparing for the exam. **Remember this is a rough guideline only.** Some students may need to put in more time, others less, and the time commitment will be greatest just prior to due dates for assignments and the exam. In general, however, the following rule applies: the more you put into the course, the more you will get out of it, as measured both in terms of your learning and understanding, and in terms of your grade.

Assessment

The course will be assessed 50% internally and 50% by 3-hour exam.

Internal assessment (50%)

Test	15%
1 seminar (50-60 minutes)	15%
1 essay (3000-3500 words)	20%

The **test** will be held during the usual class hours on **1 October**. The test will concentrate on the particulars of the texts and authors studied in this course, including technical literary and historical terms and references. The purpose of this test is to ensure that you have acquired the intellectual

apparatus necessary for undertaking sophisticated historiographical analysis. The test will take one hour.

For the **seminar**, each student will research a selected topic, which will be presented to the class. You will be required to choose your topic by the time of our second meeting, and you should begin discussing it with me as soon as possible. This assignment is designed to allow you to get to grips with one text or problem in greater depth. Seminars should be between 45-60 minutes in length.

Essays should be approx. 3000-4000 words in length. The essay should address a topic of your choice, although you must first discuss the topic and its feasibility with me. It is due by **25 September**.

3-hour final exam (50%)

The exam will consist of essays and gobbets designed to test your ability to synthesise what you have learnt through the course. Requirements will be discussed in more detail later in the course.

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	Seminar (50-60 minutes)	15%	all	tbc
2	Essay (3000-3500 words)	20%	all	25 Sep
3	Test (one hour)	15%	all, but esp. 3	1 Oct
4	Exam (3-hour)	50%	all	tbc

Criteria for marking: the test will mostly require short answers to specific queries, the answers to which, while technical, are reasonably straightforward (e.g. *what is meant by as Suetonian rubric?* or *provide a brief outline of Leo's theory of the origins of Greek biography*). As for seminars and essays, the following *general* expectations will be applied:

A to A+ Outstanding work which displays wide knowledge, awareness of the current state of thinking on the subject, critical analysis, independence of mind, initiative, and intellectual rigour. Clearly prepared, with a well-structured argument, avoiding irrelevance. Originality is rewarded, but is not a necessary requirement.

B+ to A- Well-organised, detailed and logical work, showing a thorough understanding of the subject as taught, with evidence of additional study. There should be no significant deficiencies in competence in the subject.

C- to B Work which displays overall competence and an understanding of the basics of the subject. The answer contains reasonably good information, but there may be only limited evidence of additional, independent study. There may be insufficient discussion, and conclusions may not always be adequately supported.

D Work which displays poor and barely adequate comprehension of basic facts and principles, with significant gaps or errors of detail, some irrelevance, and poorly constructed argument; it may be largely descriptive, rather than arguing a case; or it may fail to focus properly on the question set.

E Work which displays largely inadequate understanding of basic facts and principles, with significant errors, omissions or irrelevance, and which shows a lack of grasp of the essentials of the subject.

Submission and return of work

You must hand in two copies of your essay.

Assignments must be placed in the assignment box. You should always keep a copy of your assignment until you receive back your marked assignment.

It is Classics policy that all written work received by the due date will be returned within two weeks. There may be circumstances when this cannot be achieved (e.g. sickness or heavy workload of markers), but it is our objective to provide you with the earliest possible feedback on your work.

Extensions and penalties

Extensions

Extensions for the essay must be applied for **in advance** of the final date for acceptance.

Late assignments for which an extension has not been granted will be accepted up till 23 October. However, they may be penalised, and there is no guarantee that a late essay will be handed back before the final examination.

Penalties

Assignments that are submitted late without an extension will receive a penalty of 5 marks out of 100 per late working day (weekends count as one working day) and may not receive feedback.

Materials and equipment and/or additional expenses

The test and exam are closed book and no equipment such as computers or electronic calculators will be permitted.

Set texts

C. Edwards, *Suetonius: Lives of the Caesars* (Oxford University Press 2000).

C. Pelling, I. Scott-Kilvert, and J. Tatum, *Plutarch: The Rise of Rome* (Penguin Press 2013).

J. Rives and H. Mattingly, *Tacitus: Agricola and Germania* (Penguin Press 2010).

All undergraduate textbooks will be available from Vicbooks in the Hub (Kelburn Campus).

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz.

Recommended reading

Further readings will be supplied by way of Blackboard.

Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

Student feedback

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz