

CLASSICS 340/ILS 371: CONSPIRACY IN THE ANCIENT AND MODERN WORLDS

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Credits: Three (3)

Location: Van Hise 114

Instructional Mode: Face-to-face

Course Attributes: Intermediate, Literature, L&S

Dates and Times: TTh 4:00-5:15

Term: Spring 2020

CREDIT HOURS:

This 3-credit course meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the Spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities—mostly reading and writing—for about 3 hours out of classroom for every class period.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Focusing primarily on the world of the ancient Romans, this course (in translation) interrogates the phenomenon and notion of “conspiracy”—as well as the related concept of “conspiracy theory”—within the political, social, familial, and religious spheres. Like most good things, this course is divided into three parts. In the first, we investigate some famous political conspiracies, including the so-called “Catilinarian Conspiracy” and the assassination of Julius Caesar. The second part turns to the Roman household to consider the social, familial, and gendered dimensions of domestic conspiracies, including the way that women, children, and enslaved peoples could threaten the notional “tyranny” of the *paterfamilias*. In the final part, we consider prominent religions that came into conflict with Roman authorities—especially the mystery cults surrounding Bacchus as well as sects of early Christianity. We will bring to bear the insights gleaned from the ancient world on the modern one in our consideration of more recent conspiracies and conspiracy theories like the Salem Witch Trials, the Red Scare of the 1950s, and even contemporary political events, which may, or may not, admit analysis as a “conspiracy.” As we shall see, “conspiracy” and “conspiracy theory” are useful, yet sometimes tendentious, concepts, which often reveal more about the society and culture in which they occur (as well as the authors who write about them) than the actual activities they would seem to denote.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of ancient Roman society and culture.
- Analyze and interpret ancient texts in translation.
- Critique ancient Roman and Greek societies and cultures and compare them to other societies and cultures.
- Identify, explain, and critique the concepts of “conspiracy” and “conspiracy theory.”
- Apply these concepts to the evaluation of relevant phenomena in both the ancient and modern worlds.
- Assess and critique the value of the concepts of “conspiracy” and “conspiracy theory” for understanding historical, political, social, cultural, familial, and religious phenomena.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Baker, E. W. (2015). *A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Witch Trials and the American Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parenti, M. (2004). *The Assassination of Julius Caesar: A People's History of Ancient Rome*. New York: New Press.

Damon, C. (2009). *Tacitus. The Annals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In addition, a **Coursepack (CP)** is available on **Canvas**.

POLICIES:

Attendance: Regular attendance is not only required, but also essential for success in this course. Note that assignments and quizzes will be based on the material presented in the lectures, readings, and discussions. In addition, attendance will be actively taken on specified discussion days.

Computer Usage Policy: Students will be allowed to use computers and tablets in class on the condition that use of such devices will be limited solely to taking notes, following the Powerpoint, and consulting readings. Those students who are unable to refrain from surfing the internet or using social media during class will be asked to leave the classroom.

Make-ups: There will be no make-up assignments except for stringent and well-documented circumstances such as a religious observation, university-sanctioned commitment, or a major medical emergency. Hangovers, vacations, and spring break do not constitute “stringent and well-documented circumstances.”

McBurney Resources: The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared instructor and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform instructors of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with students or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism: By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review.

Plagiarism means presenting the words or ideas of others without giving credit. You should know the principles of plagiarism and the correct rules for citing sources. In general, if your paper implies that you are the originator of words or ideas, they must in fact be your own. If you use someone else's exact words, they should be enclosed in quotation marks with the exact source listed. You may put someone else's idea in your own words as long as you indicate whose idea it was. If you are unsure about the proper ways to give credit to sources, ask me or consult the Writing Center's website, “Quoting/Paraphrasing Sources,” <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quotingsources/>.

I have extensive experience in reading undergraduate writing and will most likely be able to determine if a paper is not your own work. If any part of a paper is found to be plagiarized, you will need to meet with me, after which you will receive a zero for that assignment and the final grade will be lowered by one letter grade in addition. A report will also be made to the Dean of Students.

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

32% – 4 reading quizzes (each worth 8%)

18% – Three discussion days with short writing assignments (1 page each; each worth 6%)

20% – Essay (5-6 pages; due March 31st)

30% – Final paper (8-10 pages; due May 5th)

Grading Scale: 100-94, A; 93-88, AB; 87-83, B; 82-78, BC; 77-70, C; 69-60, D; 60 & below, F.

Please note: a comprehensive list of readings, study guides for the reading quizzes, and instructions and rubrics for all writing assignments are available on Canvas.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (Jan. 21, 23): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan. 28, 30): What is “conspiracy” and “conspiracy theory”?; Intro to Roman world

Week 3 (Feb. 4, 6): The “Catilinarian Conspiracy”

Week 4 (Feb. 11, 13): **Discussion #1:** McCarthy and the “Red Menace”

Week 5 (Feb. 18, 20): The assassination of Julius Caesar; **Quiz #1 (Th)**

Week 6 (Feb. 25, 27): The Pisonian conspiracies

Week 7 (Mar. 3, 5): The Roman family: Women, children, and slaves

Week 8 (Mar. 10, 12): Claudius and Nero, Wives and Mothers; **Quiz #2 (Th)**

Spring break (Mar. 16-24)

Week 9 (Mar. 24, 26): **Discussion #2:** The murder of Regilla

Week 10 (Mar. 31, Apr 2): Spartacus, Hostius Quadra, and slave conspiracies

Essay due on Tuesday, Mar. 31st, 4:00pm

Week 11 (Apr. 7, 9): The religious landscape of Rome; the Bacchanalian affair; **Quiz #3 (Th)**

Week 12 (Apr. 14, 16): **Discussion #3:** The Salem Witch Trials

Week 13 (Apr. 21, 23): Jews, Christians, and Romans; Orthodoxy, Gnosticism, and “conspiracy”

Week 14 (Apr. 28, 30): ; **Quiz #4 (T)**; Modern theorists of conspiracy

Final paper due: Tuesday, May 5th, 7:25pm