I. Scope and Purpose

Why devote a seminar to Roman political thought? Three answers could be given. First, Roman political thought – and hence Roman law, philosophy, rhetoric, and history – have profoundly influenced the development of not just western political thought, but western political and legal institutions. Second, Roman political thought speaks to issues that we, living in 21st century America, find ourselves grappling with: the balance between liberty and security, the problems of empire and imperialism, the balance between interests and morality in policy (domestic and foreign), and the potential and limits of political participation, to name but a few. Third, and perhaps most importantly, Roman political thinkers produced works of profound insight that are of lasting importance to those interested in the political, ethical, and social dimensions of the human experience.

Having given some reasons for focusing on Roman political thought, how will the course be structured? The course is structured in a roughly chronological fashion: we will begin with Cicero (and will be reading his works in chronological order), and moving forward in Roman history. Lucretius and Sallust will present us with challenges to the Ciceronian account of politics and social life, while Vergil will illustrate the ideological developments inaugurated in the age of Augustus. Seneca provides us a window into the moral and political world of the early Principate, while Tacitus provides us as window into the tensions and dilemmas of monarchy. Pliny presents us with an image of the idealized relationship between ruler and ruled in the context of the Principate, while Marcus Aurelius, himself an emperor, wrestles with the dangers and limits of imperial power. Finally, Augustine will re-evaluate the Roman political and ethical tradition in light of revealed religion – namely Christianity – and in the context of a broader critique of classical politics and philosophy.

II. Evaluation

This course incorporates two kinds of evaluation: written and in-class. The goal of the written evaluation component is to develop and enhance analytical, evaluative, synthetic, and
argumentative skills through the production of a “staged” research paper. The goal of the oral component is to develop and enhance clarity, precision, professionalism, and thoughtfulness in speaking through in-class participation, presentations, and in leading individual sessions of seminar.

A. Written Evaluation

All participants in this seminar will write a “staged” research paper that will be worth 75% of the course grade. The paper is to be between 16 and 20 pages (4000 and 6000 words) in length, and is to incorporate a minimum of 10 secondary sources. These sources must be academic sources: e.g. book chapters, books, academic articles, peer-reviewed academic encyclopedia entries from sources such as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, or from magazines such as the Atlantic or New Yorker.

The stages:

The first stage of the research paper will consist of each member of the class meeting with me to discuss a broad topic. This component of the paper is to be completed no later than Monday, September 30.

The second stage of the research paper will consist of writing down a preliminary research question, with a provisional thesis statement answering it. This is to be handed in to me no later than Monday, October 7.

The third stage of the research paper will consist of writing a brief draft annotated bibliography of sources that you are likely to use. This is to be handed in to me no later than Monday, October 28.

The fourth stage of the research paper will consist of meeting with me to discuss your progress. This is to be completed no later than Monday, November 4.

The fifth stage of the research paper will consist of writing a draft first paragraph and outline of the paper as a whole. This is to be handed in to me no later than Monday, November 18.

The sixth and final stage of the research paper will consist of handing in the paper itself on Monday, December 2.

There will be no final exam for the course.

B. Participation

In-class participation is worth 25% of the course grade. It will be comprised of three components. First, there is regular in-class participation, which will be evaluated based on the quality of your contributions to seminar. Such contributions are essential for the seminar to be successful. Second, each participant in the seminar will run the seminar for a day of your
choosing. Your responsibility will be to prepare discussion questions about the readings for that
day, and to guide discussion over the course of the seminar meeting. Third, each participant in
the seminar will present his or her seminar paper on the last day of class.

III. Class Expectations

You can expect me, as your instructor, to come to class prepared, to be available for assistance
during office hours or by mutually convenient appointment, to answer email correspondence in a
reasonable amount of time (provided your email uses proper punctuation, grammar, spelling,
appellation, and is signed), to provide feedback on your performance, to hand back written work
in a reasonable amount of time, and to provide clear instructions and guidelines.

I expect you, as students, to come to class prepared to engage in the material and on time, to be
attentive and respectful in class, to check your university-registered email regularly, to read and
understand the syllabus and other course guidelines, in addition to adhering to all university
policies and policies stated in the syllabus. Students may not use laptops, cellular phones, or
similar items in this class, with the exception of devices for displaying e-texts.

A NOTE ON READING: This is a reading intensive course. You will be reading roughly as
much primary source material in this course as you would in a graduate level seminar. You can
expect, on average, roughly 150 pages a week of reading.

IV. Grading

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \geq 93.5 \\
AB & = 87.5-93.4 \\
B & = 82.5-87.4 \\
BC & = 77.5-82.4 \\
C & = 69.5-77.4 \\
D & = 60-69.4 \\
F & \leq 59.9
\end{align*}
\]

V. Materials

I have ordered 8 books through the University Book Store, 7 of which are required:

- Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator* (Translated by James M. May and Jakob Wisse)
- Cicero, *On Duties* (Translated by M.T. Griffin and E.M Atkins)
- Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws* (Translated by Niall Rudd)
- Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Translated by G.M.A. Grube)
- Tacitus, *Agricola, Germany, and Dialogue on Orators* (Translated by Herbert W. Benario)
- Augustine, *Political Writings* (Translated by Michael W. Tkacz and Douglas Kries)
- Cullen Murphy, *Are we Rome?*

The recommended book is Mark Morford, *The Roman Philosophers*.

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available via Learn@UW.
VI. Schedule of Seminars and Reading

Monday, September 9: Course introduction; Chapter 1 of Are we Rome?

Monday, September 16: Cicero, On the Ideal Orator

Monday, September 23: Cicero, On the Republic, On the Laws

Monday, September 30: Cicero, On Duties

Monday, October 7: Lucretius, selections from On the Nature of Things*; Sallust, War with Catiline*

Monday, October 14: Vergil, Eclogue IV*; Aeneid, Book VI*

Monday, October 21: Seneca, On Anger

Monday, October 28: Seneca, On Mercy, On the Private Life

Monday, November 4: Tacitus, Agricola, Dialogue

Monday, November 11: Pliny, Panegyric*

Monday, November 18: Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

Monday, November 25: Augustine, City of God

Monday, December 2: Extra Day

Monday, December 9: Presentations