I. Scope and Purpose

Why devote a seminar to Roman political thought? On the face of it, such a focus might seem odd; after all, 20th century political theory and philosophy generally focused on Greek political thinkers – we may think of Arendt, Strauss, or MacIntyre, to name but a few. Indeed, Dean Hammer suggests that he wrote his own recent book on Roman political thought in response to a question he was asked: “What ever happened to the Romans?” Not only have the Romans been strikingly absent from 20th century political theory and philosophy, Roman political thinkers – such as Cicero or Seneca – are often viewed as derivative of their Greek predecessors, be they Hellenic or Hellenistic.

This was not always the case: Roman thought was of great importance through the 18th century, evident in figures such as Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Madison. And focusing on Roman political thought seems less strange when viewed through other disciplinary lenses: scholars in English, history, the Romance languages, theater, and other fields did not lose interest in the Romans in the same way that political theorists and philosophers did.

Yet Roman political thought has been undergoing something of a revival in recent years, due in part to increased interest in republicanism among political theorists and philosophers (evident in the work of figures such as Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit), and also due to increased interest in rhetoric and the rhetorical tradition. Beyond republicanism and rhetoric, the Romans would seem to be increasingly relevant to our own politics: after all, Rome was an imperial republic faced with apparent trade-offs between liberty and security.

Increasingly, then, work on Roman writers focuses on them less as sources for – or in conversation with – later writers, and more as rich resources for political theorizing. We will take the writers we encounter as figures worth studying in their own right, though we will, of course, pay attention to issues of reception and influence. The majority of the writers we encounter will be Romans writing in Latin: the exceptions are Polybius, a Greek who spent time in Rome and wrote for a Greek audience, and Plutarch, a Greek living under Roman rule. We will read texts
that fit in the (somewhat narrow) confines of traditional philosophical genres – Cicero’s dialogues, and Seneca’s essays. But we will also read texts from genres that are not philosophical in a narrow sense: works of history, poetry, oratory, and philosophical confession. In the course of studying these texts, participants in the seminar will gain a deep understanding of the Roman ethical, social, and political tradition from the 2nd century B.C.E. to the 5th century C.E. Students will write and present seminar papers engaging with political theory, philosophy, and classical scholarship that are suitable for development into conference papers and ultimately articles or dissertation chapters.

II. Course Requirements

Students enrolled in the course for credit will write a staged seminar paper. The paper, memos, and the in-class presentations on May 2 and 9, will be worth 75% of the course grade. The goal is to produce a paper that can be presented at a conference and eventually be suitable for publication. You will, in short, be preparing your own contribution to scholarship on Roman political, social, or ethical thought.

The paper will be broken up into 5 stages:

1. Meeting with me to discuss the topic and a preliminary bibliography. To be completed no later than Monday, February 17.

2. A 10-12 page annotated bibliography, to be turned in to me or placed in my departmental mailbox by Friday, March 14.

3. A detailed outline of the paper (3-5 pages), to be turned in to me or placed in my departmental mailbox on or before Friday, April 4.

4. The final seminar paper (25-35 pages), to be turned in to me or placed in my departmental mailbox no later than Friday, March 25.

5. Two short memos (i.e. between 250 and 500 words), to be turned in to me or placed in my mailbox by Monday, 5/8).

   A. The first memo is to be in response to my comments on your paper. You should, in this memo, outline what you take the core of my concerns to be, and how you would go about addressing them. This memo is, in essence, analogous to the memos you will be writing in response to referee reports when you send papers out for review.

   B. The second memo is to be in response to comments made on your presentation. You should, in this memo, try to synthesize these comments, and outline how you would go about addressing them. This memo is, in essence, analogous to what many try to do after presenting papers at conferences.
You will receive a grade for the paper as a whole, and not for the individual components, each of which is designed to help you produce a stronger paper. In order to receive credit for the paper, however, you need to complete each of the components.

The last two days of the course will be reserved for presentations of seminar papers. You should view this as, in essence, a practice conference presentation, and will be allotted 15 minutes to present your paper. We will then have 10-15 minutes of class discussion of the papers. The goal of this exercise is to familiarize you with the basics of presenting at conferences, to provide further feedback on your papers, and to further enrich the mutual learning experience of the seminar by incorporating peer feedback. The paper itself should be viewed as a future conference paper, and eventual publication.

In addition to the seminar paper and presentation, participation will be worth 25% of the course grade. This involves closely and carefully reading the assigned material, and participating in seminar discussion. It also requires each participant to lead discussion once during the semester. Days available are marked with the following symbol: (!).

Auditors will be expected to do all the readings and to lead one discussion during the semester.

III. Incompletes and Academic Dishonesty

Incompletes for this course will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be subject to severe penalties.

IV. Texts

I have ordered 11 books for this course, each of which is required.


V. Recommended Reading

Listed below is a small number of monographs, essays, and edited volumes that are particularly useful for general reading on Roman political thought; a selection of more specific sources will be provided with each week’s readings. This list is very much incomplete, and reflective of my own scholarly predilections (as are the works I note for the specific readings). The general list is also very heavily weighted toward the late Republic and early Principate.

Arena, V. *Libertas and the Practice of Politics* (Cambridge, 2012)
Balot, R., ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Malden, 2009)
Galinsky, K. *Augustan Culture* (Princeton, 1998)
Hammer, D. *Roman Political Thought and the Modern Theoretical Imagination* (Oklahoma City, 2008)
Harris, W.V. *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (Oxford, 1979)
Kapust, D. *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2011)
Millar, F. *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Michigan, 1998)
Morford, M *The Roman Philosophers* (Routledge, 2002)
Murphy, C. *Are we Rome?* (Houghton Mifflin, 2007)
Nicolet, C. *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome* (Berkeley, 1980)
Roller, *Constructing Autocracy* (Princeton, 2001)
Sullivan, J.P *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero* (Ithaca, 1985)
Syme, R. *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939)
Wirszubski, C. *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome* (Cambridge, 1950)
Wiseman, T.P. *Remembering the Roman People* (Oxford, 2009)

VI. Schedule of Readings and Seminars

1/27: Setting the Stage

Reading: Polybius, *Histories* Book VI (To be available via Learn@UW)
Hammer, *Roman Political Thought and the Modern Theoretical Imagination*, Chapter 1
Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought*, Chapter 1

Recommended: Murphy, *Are We Rome?*
Walbank, *Polybius*
Eckstein, *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius*
Baronowski, D., *Polybius and Roman Imperialism*

2/3: The Rhetorical Republic (!)

Reading: Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator* (selections TBA)
Recommended:  May, ed., *Brills Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*
Steele, *Roman Oratory*
Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero’s De Oratore*
Alexander, “Oratory, Rhetoric, and Politics in the Republic,” in Dominik and Hall eds., *Companion to Roman Rhetoric*
Garsten, B., *Saving Persuasion* (Cicero chapter specifically)

2/10: The Republic in and through History (!)

Reading:  Cicero, *On the Republic, On the Laws*

Recommended:  Powell, ed., *Cicero the Philosopher*
Niegoski, ed., *Cicero’s Practical Philosophy*
Wood, *Cicero’s Social and Political Thought*
Schofield, “Cicero’s Definition of Res publica,” in Schofield, *Saving the City*
Cornell, “Rome: The History of an Anachronism,” in Mohlo, Raaflaub, and Emlen, eds., *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy*
Powell, J.G.F. and J.A. North, eds., *Cicero’s Republic*
Atkins, J., *Cicero on Politics and the Limits of Reason*

2/17: Re-authorizing the Republic

Reading:  Cicero, *On Duties*

Recommended:  Long, “Cicero’s Politics in De Officiis,” in Laks and Schofield, eds., *Justice and Generosity*

2/24: The Republic: Crisis (!)
Reading: Sallust, War with Catiline
Sallust, War with Jugurtha
Stewart, D. “Sallust and Fortuna,” History and Theory (1968)
Syme, R., Sallust
Yavetz, Z. “The Res Gestae and Augustus’ Public Image,” in Millar and Segal, eds., Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects
Feldherr, A. Spectacle and Society in Livy’s History

3/3: The Republic: Alternatives (!!)
Reading: Lucretius, On the Nature of Things (selections)
Recommended: Clay, D., Lucretius and Epicurus
Gale, M., ed., Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Lucretius
Gillespie, S., and P. Hardie, eds., The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius
3/10: Augustan Rome: Defects and Remedies (!)

Reading: Livy, *From the Founding of Rome*, Books I through V

Recommended: Vergil, *Aeneid*, Book VI
Vergil, *Eclogue IV*
Chaplin, “Livy’s Exemplary History”
Ogilvie, R.M. *A Commentary on Livy Books 1-5*
Walsh, P.G., *Livy*
Luce, T.J., *Livy: The Composition of his History*

3/24: Stoicism and the Early Principate (!)


3/31: Rethinking Public Life

Reading: Tacitus, *Dialogue on Orators, Agricola, Germania*
Pliny, *Panegyric to Trajan* (To be available via Learn@UW)

Connolly, J., “Fear and Freedom: A New Interpretation of Pliny’s Panegyricus,” Ordine e sovversione nel mondo grece e roman, ed. Gianpaolo Urso
Bartsch, S. Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian
Roche, P., ed., Pliny’s Praise
Pagan, V., ed., Companion to Tacitus (KAPUST ON TACITUS AND POLITICAL THEORY, AMONG OTHER CHAPTERS)
Syme, R., Tacitus (2 volumes)
Saxonhouse, A. “Tacitus’s Dialogue on Oratory: Political Activity under a Tyrant,” Political Theory (1975)

4/7: Plutarch (!)

Reading: Selected essays from Moralia Volume 10

Recommended: Aalders, G., Plutarch’s Political Thought
Mossman, J., ed., Plutarch and his Intellectual World
Gill, C., The Structured Self
Lamberton, R., Plutarch

4/14: Marcus Aurelius (!)

Reading: Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

Annas, J., The Morality of Happiness
Rutherford, R.B., The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: A Study
4/21: Augustine (!)

Reading: Augustine, *Political Writings*

Recommended: NOTE: There is an extraordinary amount of scholarship on Augustine (who was both remarkably prolific and is remarkably influential); the following list is very much minimal, and geared towards collections.

Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine*
Evans, G.R., *Augustine on Evil*
Matthews, G., ed., *The Augustinian Tradition*
Stump, E. and N. Kretzman, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*
Wetzel, J. *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*
Pasnau, R., ed., *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*
Armstrong, A.H., ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*

4/28: Presentations (to be held on the Terrace or at Memorial Union)

5/5: Presentations (to be held on the Terrace or at Memorial Union)