

Latin 308 Lucan and (a bit of) Seneca

Fall, 2008

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Office hours: workin' on it

Purpose: In this course you will be introduced to Lucan, a remarkable poet who produced an unfinished epic of the Roman civil wars in addition to several other major works before being sentenced to death by the mercurial emperor Nero at the age of 25. Because Lucan is very much a poet of his time, we will begin the semester by reading some material from Tacitus dealing with the reign of Nero; throughout the term, we will also read (in English) several works of the important Stoic philosopher and playwright Seneca (who was also Lucan's uncle.) Areas of exploration for this class include: Lucan's use and modification of the epic tradition; the challenges and opportunities of writing historical epic; Lucan's relationship to Nero and the principate; Lucan's view of Stoicism; Lucan's style; and the production of literature under a politically repressive regime. I promise that this will be fun.

Class Time: In the first half of the semester, we will do three things: 1) we will read up on the reign of Nero from ancient sources; 2) we will read the prologue to Lucan book 1, and begin reading book 7 in Latin; we will read all of Lucan in English. Much of our class time will be spent reviewing Lucan's fiendishly difficult, crabbed, brilliantly nihilistic Latin; but we will also devote some time to discussing the work as a whole and what it means. In the second half of the semester, I am trying something new. We will begin after fall vacation with a "scholarship break," in which we read no Latin for 2 weeks, and instead read some works of Seneca and some of the most important work on Lucan from the past half-century. The purpose of the scholarship break is to expose you to secondary work on Lucan, and to get you started thinking about topics for a term paper in this class. Afterwards, we will finish off book 7, leaving Pompey's army in disarray on the field of Pharsalus, and wrap up the class with a few more secondary works.

Texts: You will need:

Lucan: Civil War, trans. Susan H. Braund

Lucan de bello civili VII, ed. J.P. Postgate and O.A.W. Dilke

All the other readings in English will be available as .pdf documents on the class blackboard site, under the "course materials" section.

Grading: Your grade will be based on class participation and four major events.

- 1) Class participation. This means regular and *prepared* attendance of all class sessions. You should be ready to translate the Latin for the day, should have marked sections of Latin that you find inscrutable, and should be able to intelligently discuss the secondary works that we are reading. Failure to attend or to attend with an active and prepared mind will result in a lower grade. (15%)
- 2) a midterm, covering Latin translation, the day before fall break. (25%)
- 3) a final, covering all of Book 7 in Latin, on Dec. 18 (25%)
- 4) a report on one of the works of scholarship (or on a work of Seneca) during the scholarship break (10%)

5) A term paper, 8-15 pages in length, dealing with some aspect of Lucan and discussing at least one secondary source. There are a number of events in the second half of the term to get you thinking about the term paper early; details will be forthcoming in class. (25%)

Late Papers: Unless arrangements are made before a paper is due, late papers will be graded down 1/3 letter grade for each day late. In the case of a legitimate medical excuse, family emergency, etc., the above does not apply. In any case, please to me as soon as possible, and we will make arrangements.

Attendance: For the duration of this semester and for the purposes of this class, we are a community of scholars. Please plan to attend every class session. If you miss class, it is your responsibility (not mine) to find out what you missed.

Academic Honesty: In the unlikely event that a student is found to have engaged in academic dishonesty (cheating, helping other students to cheat, plagiarism) he/she will fail the course. I will also report the student to the Honor Board, who may enact their own penalties. If any student is unclear as to what may be considered plagiarism, cheating, etc., she/he should speak to me about it. A full discussion of these issues can be found at <http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-regs.html#honor> .

Schedule of Readings

	(in English)	(in Latin)
Sept. 3	Cary & Scullard on Civil War	
5	Suetonius, <i>Life of Nero</i>	Lucan 1.1-32
8	Tacitus, bk.13 aka “The Fall of Agrippina”	Lucan 1.33-66
10	Tacitus, bk. 14 aka “Nero and his Helpers”	Lucan 1. 67-97
12	Tacitus bk. 15 excerpts, aka “The Burning of Rome” “The Plot”	
15		Lucan 1.97-157
17	Tacitus bk. 16, aka “Innocent victims”	Lucan 7.1-32
19	Lucan, 1-2	
22		Lucan 7.33-85
24		Lucan 7.85-150
26	Lucan, 3-4	
29		Lucan 7.151-213
Oct. 1		Lucan 7.214-280
3	Lucan, 5-6	
6		Lucan7. 281-336
8		Lucan 7. 337-396
10	(Day after Yom Kippur)	Lucan 7.397-459
13	Lucan, 7-8	
15	Lucan, 9-10	
17	First Midterm exam (primarily translation)	
18-26	Mid-term break	
27	Bramble, “Lucan” from the <i>Cambridge History of Latin Literature</i> (.pdf)	
29	Marti, “The Meaning of the Pharsalia”; Seneca, <i>de Constantia sapientis</i>	
31	Special Hallowe’en reading: Seneca, <i>Thyestes</i>	
3	Seneca, “On the Tranquility of the Mind”; Roller, "Ethical Contradiction and the Fractured Community in Lucan's <i>Bellum Civile</i> "	
5	O’Higgins, D., “Lucan as Vates”; Walker, Andrew. "Lucan's Legends of the Fall”	
7	Walde, Christine. “Caesar, Lucan’s <i>Bellum Civile</i> , and their Reception”; Excerpt from Feeney, D.C., <i>The Gods</i>	

	<i>in Epic.</i>	
10		Lucan 7.460-527
12		Lucan 7.528-596
14		Lucan 7.596-656
17	Johnson, <i>Momentary Monsters</i> , chs. 3 and 4	
19		Lucan 7.657-727
21		Lucan 7.728-786
24	Seneca's <i>Oedipus</i>	
26	Individual conferences about term papers	
27-28	Thanksgiving break	
Dec. 1		Lucan 7.787-846
3		Lucan 7.847-872
5	Outline of term paper due	(Catch-up day)
8	Masters, "Deceiving the reader: the political mission of Lucan Bellum Civile 7"	
10	Excerpt from Bartsch, <i>Ideology in Cold Blood</i>	
12	Final Papers Due	
Dec. 13-15	"Reading Period"	
Thursday, Dec. 18	7:00-9:00 Scheduled time for final examination. Final Exam covers all of Bk. 7 in Latin	