

History 223: Explorations in European History

Roman Women (and Men)



Instructor: Prof. M. Kleijwegt; office hours: WF: 11:00-12:00; office: Humanities 5219;
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Teaching Assistant: Casey Stark

Lecture Hall: Humanities 1101, MWF 9:55-10:45.

The position of women in Roman society was marginal. In legal terms women were regarded as lifelong minors who required a male guardian in order to be represented in court or to engage in financial transactions. Women were generally less educated than their male counterparts and had fewer opportunities to develop or display their talents. Their role was more or less restricted to the home and to a limited number of public offices, usually in the religious sphere. This course will examine the main social environments which are of importance to the lives of women. We will study to what degree the position of women was anchored in, and controlled by, the world of their male relatives and to what degree women could and did choose to ignore the rules that were imposed on them. Did women choose their own marriage partners, were they able to initiate a divorce, and to what degree was their sexual behavior policed by their male relatives? In order to answer these questions successfully the course will pay close attention to the interpretation of sources, whether they are of a literary, legal or documentary kind. The key problem is that the majority of the sources which survive from the Roman world were written by and for men. The course will demonstrate methods and ways in which male-authored evidence can be used to reconstruct the lives and experiences of women.

Textbooks:

Augusto Fraschetti (ed.), *Roman Women*, translated by Linda Lappin, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2001.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*, New York and London: Routledge 1995.

The final grade for this course is based on the following components:

Three 5-page writing assignments (line spacing 1.5). Each writing assignment counts for **20%**, a total of **60%**.

Submission dates:

First assignment: 10/13.

Second assignment: 11/3.

Third assignment: 12/1.

Writing assignments have to be submitted no later than 4:00 PM to Casey Stark on the day listed above. Late submissions will not be accepted. Unforeseen problems, such as illness etc., which will make it impossible to submit an assignment, should be communicated to Casey Stark as soon as possible (within reason). Late submissions received without a prior written communication as to why the assignment is late will automatically be given an 'F'.

Final exam. The final exam will count for **30%**. The day set for the exam is Saturday 12/20 at 10:05 AM. The location will be determined at a later stage and will be announced in class as soon as it is known.

The final **10%** of the final grade is based on performance and attendance in the discussion sections.

Attendance of the discussion sections is compulsory. You are allowed one absence and you are urged to contact Casey Stark to notify her that unforeseen circumstances make it impossible for you to attend your discussion section for a particular week. If you are absent on more than one occasion, you will automatically forfeit the 10% allocated for performance and attendance.

You are strongly recommended to attend lectures with regular frequency. From week 2 to week 4 we will study Roman society and women's place in it, in historical as well as in ideological terms. If you have not been exposed to Roman society before, you need this part of the course to understand the legal situation of women in Roman society. If you have already been exposed to Roman culture or history, there is a strong likelihood that whatever you have been taught it was not specific and detailed enough to understand the experiences of Roman women of various social backgrounds. From week 5 onwards, the lectures will explain the material discussed in Gardner's book (on Mondays) and contextualize the material studied for the discussion section (on Fridays). Wednesday

lectures will raise specific issues beyond the discussion in Gardner. Three lectures will be devoted in their entirety to the writing assignments.

Teaching Program

Week 1: General introduction.

Wednesday 9/3: General introduction to the course.

Friday 9/5: The study of women in the ancient world: from Pomeroy to Pomeroy.

Week 2: Studying women in the Roman world: the problem of the sources.

Monday 9/8: literary sources.

Wednesday 9/10: documentary sources.

Friday 9/12: legal sources.

Week 3: Roman society and women.

Monday 9/15: domestic life.

Wednesday 9/17: politics.

Friday 9/19: religion.

Week 4: Different types of women.

Monday 9/22: the senatorial lady.

Wednesday 9/24: the provincial upstart.

Friday 9/26: the slave girl.

Week 5: Guardianship of women.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 5-31.

Monday 9/29: Guardianship and its consequences: Roman women under control?

Wednesday 10/1: Writing the first assignment.

Friday 10/3: The role of the Vestal Virgins in Roman religion and society.

Week 6: Marriage.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 31-81.

Monday 10/6: Roman marriage and its impact on a woman's life.

Wednesday 10/8: Finding a marriage partner: whose responsibility?

Friday 10/10: The period of the Gracchi and the reputation of Cornelia.

Week 7: Dowry and Divorce.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 81-117.

Monday 10/13: The role of dowry and divorce.

Submission of the first writing assignment.

Wednesday 10/15: Women as victims and agents.

Friday 10/17: The wild women of the late Republic.

Week 8: Sexual offences.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 117-137.

Monday 10/20: Policing women in the Roman world: real or illusion?

Wednesday 10/22: Writing the second assignment.

Friday 10/24: Mime and the role of the actress in Roman literature and society.

Week 9: The Roman mother and her children.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 137-163.

Monday 10/27: What was it like to have a Roman mother?

Wednesday 10/29: Children in the Roman world.

Friday 10/31: Livia: power behind the throne.

Week 10: Inheritance and bequest.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 163-205.

Monday 11/3: Women and financial independence.

Submission of the second writing assignment.

Wednesday 11/5: Did Roman women gain more financial independence over time?

Friday 11/7: The gender equality of martyrdom.

Week 11: Slaves and freedwomen.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 205-233.

Monday 11/10: The legal position of slave girls and freedwomen.

Wednesday 11/12: Were slaves and freedwomen more exploited than freeborn women?

Friday 11/14: Helena Augusta.

Week 12: Women at work.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 233-257.

Monday 11/17: Working women in the Roman world.

Wednesday 11/19: Writing the third assignment.

Friday 11/21: Hypatia and other educated women.

Week 13: Christian women in the Roman world.

Monday 11/24: Did Christianity initiate gender equality?

Wednesday 11/26: Melania the Younger.

Friday 11/28: Thanksgiving.

Week 14: The emancipation of Roman women.

Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society*, pp. 257-267.

Monday 12/1: How free was the Roman woman?

Submission of the third writing assignment.

Wednesday 12/3: What do we mean when we talk about the Roman woman?

Friday 12/5: How much do we learn about women from reconstructed biographies?

Week 15: Recapping women.

Teaching Program Discussion Sections

Week 1: no meetings.

Week 2: Monday 9/8 and Tuesday 9/9: General introduction.

Week 3: Monday 9/15 and Tuesday 9/16: Studying women in the Roman world.

Week 4: Monday 9/22 and Tuesday 9/23: Roman society and women.

Week 5: Monday 9/29 and Tuesday 9/30: Frascchetti: introduction.

Week 6: Monday 10/6 and Tuesday 10/7: Claudia the Vestal Virgin.

Week 7: Monday 10/13 and Tuesday 10/14: Cornelia the matron.

Week 8: Monday 10/20 and Tuesday 10/21: Fulvia: woman of passion.

Week 9: Monday 10/27 and Tuesday 10/28: Lycoris the mime.

Week 10: Monday 11/3 and Tuesday 11/4: Livia the politician.

Week 11: Monday 11/10 and Tuesday 11/11: Perpetua the martyr.

Week 12: Monday 11/17 and Tuesday 11/18: Helena Augusta.

Week 13: Monday 11/24 and Tuesday 11/25: Hypatia the intellectual.

Week 14: Monday 12/1 and Tuesday 12/2: Melania the saint.

Week 15: Monday 12/8 and Tuesday 12/9: Review session.