

Welcome to *Virtue in the Greco-Roman World*

Historical Studies 200:06

Wednesdays 1:20-3:15, Memorial Library 424 “Greek & Latin Reading Room”

About Our Class

This is a course about you. We will be reading texts written thousands of years ago by people living in a foreign world. These texts display and argue about ways to be good (and bad) humans. Considering and debating the ideas of human virtue found in these texts can be one of the best ways for you to develop your own conceptions of value and virtues. We are not using the ancient people as role models for how we should be – although you might admire some of them – but as interlocutors who, in their strangeness, help us see ourselves more clearly. Our goal is not merely self-understanding, however, but self-creation as you choose and develop the ethical stances that you will embody in your life.

Throughout the class we will practice considerate deliberation and respectful disagreement as we develop our ideas. If you already have your mind made up and are not interested in changing it, you won't find value in this class and should drop it. You will be asked to do a lot of reading and to *think* about what you've read, both during our class and while you go about the rest of your semester.

We all bring different backgrounds and personal stories to our seminar. Our conversations will respect both the different perspectives of our cultural and social starting points and the different decisions we draw in the course of the semester. We will consider how our ideas and attitudes have been formed by our backgrounds and how we want to grow and respond. Self-discovery and self-formation is not something you only do once.

About your Professor

Leonora Neville (she/her)

John W. and Jeanne M. Rowe Chair of Byzantine History
Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor

I am an historian of the medieval Eastern Roman Empire (a.k.a. the Byzantine Empire) who loves helping students learn. For more information on me see my webpage:

<https://history.wisc.edu/people/neville-leonora/>

To learn about the civilization I study in my historical research, start with this video:

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-byzantine-empire-leonora-neville>

Contact: Leonora.neville@wisc.edu (Expected Response Time: within 24 hours Monday-Friday). Office Hours: please email me to set up a time to meet. My office is room 4106 in the Mosse Humanities Building.

Learning Goals

This course aims to establish life-long habits of mind, including:

- Integrated thinking
 - you can draw connections between things you observe in different facets of your life
 - you can maintain a rich internal dialogue about ways you live your life in different contexts, such as familial, educational, professional, civic, religious, etc.
- Self-discovery & self-formation
 - you habitually consider how you got to be who you are and who you want to be in the future
 - you strive to be who you want
- Self-evaluation & Self-motivation
 - you accurately assess your own progress
 - you don't rely on grades or other people's opinions for validation
 - you correct or modify your behavior to meet your goals
- Intentional principled action
 - you habitually discern your personal values and principles
 - you make choices based on those values and principles
- Integrity
 - you have a high degree of agreement and concord between what you think, what you say, and what you do

We will also try to gain or improve the following skills:

- respectfully discussing things with people who disagree with you
- articulating your interpretations of complex texts
- making reasonable arguments based on complex texts
- reading complex texts
- increasing English vocabulary
- recognize rhetorical structures in complex texts

We will try to gain the following knowledge:

- remember the names of the texts we read and their authors
- identify the geographic area in which the texts were written
- identify the time when the texts were written
- explain the basics of the texts' contents

For most of these learning goals your success in achieving them will be seen in the way you live your life for decades to come. Your grades in the class will be based on whether you can reflect on the processes that contribute to these goals. To get the most value out of this class, let go of the emphasis on grades and rubrics. Your goal here is not to earn a grade but to learn something.

This course is about you. What matters is your learning and your self-assessment, not how someone else rates you.

All course activities are marked pass/fail based on whether they are extant. All the activities are designed to help you learn, think, and develop.

Course Activities

- Weekly readings
 - You will fill out a reading log each week recording:
 - Your reading environment, speed, and concentration so you can learn what works best for you and observe your improvement
 - Your notes on themes, characters, words, and ideas
- Weekly discussions
 - You will post ideas to the online discussion board before each class
 - You will contribute to our conversation in our seminar sessions
- Commonplace Book
 - You will keep a notebook of observations and ideas about themes of your choice throughout the semester, based on your experiences inside & outside of class
- Public lecture observation
 - You will tell the class about a (non-course) talk or lecture you attend on campus
- Summative presentation or essay
 - You will tell the class something you have decided about a virtue you have been thinking about throughout the semester and what brought you to that conclusion. You may submit an essay summarizing that thought process.

Course Schedule

At the end of each session, we will discuss what we should read for the following week. Together you will confirm the selections to be read and develop questions for the following week's discussion board. Readings are subject to change depending on the development of the themes of our discussions.

Week	Date	Main Reading/Topic	
1	6-Sep	Goal setting	
2	13-Sep	Iliad	books 1-8
3	20-Sep	Iliad	books 9-16
4	27-Sep	Museum scavenger hunt	Chazen Museum of Art

5	4-Oct	Iliad	Books 17-24
6	11-Oct	Xenophon, Education of Cyrus	Books 1-2
7	18-Oct	Xenophon, Education of Cyrus	Books 3-5
8	25-Oct	Xenophon, Education of Cyrus	Books 6-8
9	1-Nov	Herodotus ? or other	
10	8-Nov	Herodotus ? or other	
11	15-Nov	Plutarch Life of Alexander ?	
12	22-Nov	Thanksgiving	relax
13	29-Nov	Evagrius ?	
14	6-Dec	Life of Basil ?	
	Exam slot	Presentations	

Grading

This course uses “specifications grading.” This means that each item is graded pass/fail depending on whether it exists in a reasonably complete form. You will practice self-assessing the quality of your own work. Together we will discuss and determine precisely what the specifications should be for each element of the course.

For example, if your weekly reading log meets the fundamental specifications for a reading log entry, you will get full credit for it. If you don’t do the log entry, or do it incompletely, you will get no credit for it.

Flexibility

If you miss class session or skip a reading log, you can replace it with a second external lecture activity. If you miss two or more reading logs & classroom sessions, you can replace them with a short paper. This flexibility will allow us to accommodate work we miss due to illnesses, religious observances, and other unforeseen difficulties.

If you submit up to 2 reading logs, the Commonplace book, or the paper that do not meet the specifications, you may resubmit them up to the date scheduled for the final exam (this class has no final exam, but the University sets a date when it would take place).

- Discussions = 20%
 - 13 online posts before seminar & participation in seminar
- Reading Logs = 50%
 - 13 reading logs submitted before seminar
- Commonplace Book = 15%
 - 1 semester-long notebook submitted December 13
- Paper & Presentation = 10% (at least 4 pages, no more than 20)
- External Lecture = 5%

Course policies

We will discuss and determine our norms of conduct at our first session. We will establish guidelines for our conversations that will enable us to embrace our differences, learn from each other, and practice respectful disagreement.

Diversity

Just as we can learn from ancient people because of the ways they are different from us, so to we can learn from each other when we share our diverse experiences and backgrounds. We are all valuable members of our community, and our community is richer because of our differences and variations in culture, opinion, identity, experiences, abilities, challenges, background, and preferences. I am committed to helping you thrive at this university.

Fine-Print

The following scale will be used to determine final grades:

92-100% A
87-91.9% AB
82-86.9% B
77-81.9% BC
72-76.9% C
67-71.9% D
0-66.9% F

The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled instructor: student meeting times Tuesdays 1:20-3:15 reading, writing, problem sets, studio time, labs, field trips, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

Institutional academic policies and statements:

- [Teaching and Learning Data Transparency Statement](#)
- [Privacy of Student Records and the Use of Audio Recorded Lectures Statement](#)
- [Campus Resources for Academic Success](#)
- [Course Evaluations](#) and [Digital Course Evaluations](#)
- [Students' Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Statement](#)
- [Academic Integrity Statement](#)
- [Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Academic Calendar and Religious Observances](#)