

Classics/Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies 127
Women, Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome
Macalester College
Professor Beth Severy-Hoven
Fall 2009

Aristophanes: *Three Plays by Aristophanes. Staging Women*. Jeffrey Henderson, translator. Routledge, 1996.
Blundell: Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge (MA), 1995.
Carson: Anne Carson, *If Not, Winter. Fragments of Sappho*, New York, 2002.
D'Ambra: *Roman Women*, Cambridge, 2007.
Williamson: Margaret Williamson, *Sappho's Immortal Daughters*, Cambridge (MA), 1995.
* Reading or link provided on course Moodle site; see <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>.

WEEK 1

Wednesday, September 9: Welcome and Introduction

Friday, September 11: Women, Gender and Classics

Reading: 1)* M. Skinner, "Classical Studies, Patriarchy and Feminism" *Women's Studies International Forum* 10 (1987) 181-6; 2) * Selected Poetry; 3) Blundell, "Introduction," 9-12

Questions: What has been the role of Classics in 'Western' society? Why is the field well suited to this role? Why are *you* taking this course – what does "Classics" mean to you? What specific changes did Skinner call for in the discipline in 1986? How do the poems reflect the same world described by Skinner?

WEEK 2

Monday, September 14: Introduction to Sex, Gender, Sexuality and Archaic Greece

Reading: 1) * Mari Mikkola, "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, sections 1-3.4 and Conclusion; 2) Blundell, "The Archaic Age" and "Women and the Poets," 63-94

Questions/Tasks: 1) Be prepared to give a definition of the terms gender, sex and sexuality, and to offer objections to your own definitions. How does Judith Butler's notion of performativity relate to these terms? 2) What were the salient features of the archaic period in Greek history (economic, political, artistic, etc.)? What were the salient features of women's lives in Archaic Greece? How do we know? What are the problems with the evidence we have?

Wednesday: September 16: Introduction to Sappho

Reading: Williamson, 1-89

Questions: 1) What problems face us in interpreting the poems of Sappho? 2) What details, arguments or ideas intrigue you? Send questions to me by 8pm Tuesday.

Friday, September 18: Sappho's Poetry

Reading: 1) Browse through the Carson translation of Sappho's poetry, reading closely at least fragments 1, 2, 16, 31, 51, 94, 96, 98A, 102, 105A, 105B, 110, 111, 114, 121, 130, 131, 132, and 148; 2) * Selected Contemporary Male Poetry

Questions: Do you perceive differences between Sappho's poems and those of her male contemporaries? Consider poetic techniques, themes, characters, etc. How would you characterize Sappho herself based on her work?

WEEK 3

Monday, September 21: Sexuality and Ritual in Sappho; **QUIZ on Greek Materials**

Reading: Williamson, 90-132

Questions: 1) What does it mean for sexuality to be part of one's public rather than private life? How may this have been so for Sappho and her female contemporaries? How is it so in the contemporary US? 2) In light of these ideas, which poems might you interpret differently?

Wednesday, September 23: Scholarship on Sappho

Reading: * Ellen Greene, "Sappho, Foucault, and Women's Erotics" *Arethusa* 29.1 (1996) 1-14

Questions/Tasks: In your own words, describe Foucault's conception of ancient Greek sexuality and the critique of it offered by Greene. What is poetic apostrophe? How does it illustrate Greene's critique? Find another fragment which achieves the same or a similar effect. Are there poems which contradict Greene's assertions?

Friday, September 25: *Hymn to Demeter*

Reading: * *Hymn to Demeter*

Questions: How do Demeter and Persephone's experiences mirror those of archaic women as presented by Blundell, Williamson and/or Sappho? How does the hymn reinforce dominant social hierarchies such as gender? How might it be seen to undermine or challenge them?

WEEK 4

Monday, September 28: Introduction to Classical Athens

Readings: Blundell, "The Classical Age," 95-97, "Women in Athenian Law and Society," and "The Lives of Women in Classical Athens," 113-49

Questions: What are the salient features of the Classical period in Greek history? How did the lives of women in Classical Athens differ from those in the archaic period? How do we know? What is the relationship between political systems and gender in Athens during this time?

Wednesday, September 30: Tragedy

Reading: Euripides' *Medea*

Questions: What social categories besides gender are at work in Euripides' characterization of Medea? How does the play challenge or reinforce such hierarchies?

Friday, October 2: Women's Speech in Athens

Reading: * Laura McClure. "The City of Words: Speech and the Athenian Polis," from *Spoken Like a Woman*, 3-29. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999

Questions: This chapter introduces McClure's book-length argument, so it concludes with her thesis. What is this thesis? How might her argument apply to the *Medea*? How might this muddle our attempts to use the play to understand the Athenian construction of gender?

WEEK 5

Monday, October 5: Medical Texts

Reading: 1) Blundell, "Women's Bodies," 98-112; 2) * Helen King, "Producing Woman: Hippocratic Gynecology," in L. Archer et al, *Women in Ancient Societies*, 102-14. New York, 1994

Questions: What is King's thesis? How do the notions of the body King and Blundell present resonate with or change our developing understanding of women, gender and sexuality in the Classical period? How might the relationship between culture and science be seen as similar today?

Wednesday, October 7: Medical Texts; **Paper on Gender Construction Due by 5pm**

Reading: 1.* Selections from the Hippocratic Corpus (*Women's Life in Greece and Rome* #341, 343, 344, 346, 348, 349); 2)* Selections from Aristotle (*Women's Life in Greece and Rome* # 339)

Questions/Tasks: 1) Find specific passages that illustrate King's thesis. 2) How might you explain certain symptoms differently from the Hippocratic doctors or Aristotle? 3) How does Aristotle reason? How does he formulate and prove his theories, and how does this affect his analysis of women?

Friday, October 9: Law and Oratory

Reading: * Demosthenes (?)/Apollodorus, *Against Neaera*

Questions: 1) Be able to give a general history of Neaera's life based on the prosecutor's account. 2) What are the precise charges in the case? What of the evidence presented is relevant to those charges? What else is the orator working on in the speech?

WEEK 6

Monday, October 12: Introduction to Old Attic Comedy

Reading: Aristophanes (Henderson), 3-42

Questions: 1) How did the Athenian genre of comedy differ from tragedy? 2) What other observations, comments or ideas from the introduction intrigue you? Send questions to me by 8pm Sunday.

Wednesday, October 14: Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

Reading: Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*

Questions/Tasks: 1) How does the play challenge or reinforce gender or other social categories? 2) Think of some modern plays, films or television shows which work in a similar fashion, or at least form intriguing comparisons.

Friday, October 16: Scholarly Interpretations

Reading: * Chris Faraone, "Priestess and Courtesan: The Ambivalence of Female Leadership in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*" in C.A. Faraone and L.K. McClure, eds., *Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Ancient World*, 207-23. University of Wisconsin Press, 2006

Questions: What is Faraone's thesis? How does he relate this argument to earlier interpretations of the *Lysistrata*, that is, how does he position his work relative to earlier scholars and scholarship? What types of evidence does he use to support his arguments? Do you find his thesis compelling? Are there parts of the play you now see in a new light?

WEEK 7

Monday, October 19: Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*

Reading: Aristophanes' *Women at the Thesmophoria*

Questions: 1) Be able to outline the plot. 2) How is the play similar to, and how does it differ from the *Lysistrata*? 3) What modern genres come to mind as you think about Aristophanes' social commentary and comedy?

Tuesday, October 21, 7:00-8:30pm: Viewing of *The Julie Thesmo Show*

Wednesday, October 21: *The Julie Thesmo Show*

Reading: * Script of the *Julie Thesmo Show* available on Moodle

Questions: How does the production adapt Aristophanes' original setting, characters and plot for modern audiences? What of his play is left out? What contemporary cultural material is referenced or used? What do you make of these choices? Does Gamel achieve her goal of providing "feminism and...laughter, too"?

Friday, October 23: Gamel on Gamel

Reading: Mary-Kay Gamel, "From *Thesmophoriazousai* to the *Julie Thesmo Show*: Adaptation, Performance, Reception" *The American Journal of Philology* 123.3 (2002) 465-99

Questions: 1) What do you find surprising in Gamel's account of her goals or experiences? Does anything here cause you to rethink your earlier responses to the show? 2) Gamel's script is now itself quite dated. Explain how you would update a specific scene or reference and the effect this change is meant to have on the audience.

WEEK 8

Monday, October 26: **Neara Performances**

Wednesday, October 28 Introduction to Material and Visual Culture

Reading: * Andrew Stewart, "Perspectives" in *Art, Desire and the Body in Ancient Greece*, 3-24. Cambridge, 1997

Questions/Tasks: 1) What do we need to keep in mind when interpreting visual and material sources? How are they like textual sources, and how not? 2) Compose 2-3 other questions which you would like addressed in class from Stewart's wide-ranging and often theoretical material. E-mail these to me by 8pm Tuesday. 3) Take one of Stewart's observations of Greek culture and use one of the ancient works we have read as an example to explore and explain it.

Friday, October 30: *Fall Break*

WEEK 9

Monday, November 2: Funerary Sculpture

Reading: * Karen Stears, "Dead women's society: constructing female gender in Classical Athenian funerary sculpture" in Nigel Spencer, *Time, Tradition and Society in Greek Archaeology*, 109-31. Routledge, 1995

Questions: 1) How are women portrayed in classical funerary reliefs? How do these images of women compare to the literary and historical sources? Are grave reliefs a good source for understanding Athenian women? 2) Find an argument, idea or piece of evidence which brings new light to a discussion or reading from earlier in the term.

Wednesday, November 4: Pottery and Porn

Reading: 1)* Robert Sutton, "Pornography and Persuasion on Attic Pottery" in Amy Richlin, *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, 3-35. Oxford, 1992; 2) * Brian McNair, "Sexual Representation, from antiquity to the Internet: history, definition, regulation" from *Pornography and Postmodern Culture*, 41-60. Oxford, 1996

Questions: 1) What is Sutton's thesis? How do images of male-male sexuality differ from images of males with females? 2) Given the parameters suggested by McNair, should these images be considered pornographic?

Friday, November 6: Statue of Aphrodite from Knidos

*Reading:** Nanette Salomon, "Making a World of Difference: Gender, Asymmetry, and the Greek Nude" from Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Claire Lyons, *Naked Truths*, 197-219. Routledge, 1997

Questions: According to Salomon, is the Knidian Aphrodite naked or nude? Do you agree?

WEEK 10

Monday, November 9: Amazons

Reading: See course homepage or Moodle site for text and images.

Questions: How did the Athenians use Amazons to think about gender? Citizenship? Athens?

Tuesday, November 10, 6-8pm: Field Trip to Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Wednesday, November 11: *No Class*

Friday, November 13: Introduction to Roman History and Culture

Reading: D'Ambra chapters 1 and 3

Questions: How can we know about Roman women? How are Roman constructions of femininity different from or similar to the Greek?

WEEK 11

Monday, November 16: Real Women?

Reading: D'Ambra chapter 4

Questions: What challenges are associated with our surviving sources of information on the lives of women who lived in ancient Rome?

Tuesday, November 17: **Paper on Museum Object Due by 5pm**

Wednesday, November 18: Literary Sources: History

Reading: * Livy, *History of Rome*, preface and book 1

Questions: 1) How do females function in this story of how Rome came to be? How is rape related to the monarchy? 2) What information can we gather from this source about women in Rome?

Friday, November 20: Literary Sources: Biography and Philosophy

Reading: * Plutarch *Life of Antony*

Questions: What are Plutarch's sources of information? Which social categories does Plutarch utilize in portraying Cleopatra? What information can we gather from this source about Cleopatra and other women in Rome?

WEEK 12

Monday, November 23: Presentation in class on the Later Life of Cleopatra

QUIZ on places, people and events in Roman history

Wednesday, November 25: Art, Architecture and Epigraphy

Reading: *Mary Taliaferro Boatwright, "Plancia Magna of Perge: Women's Roles and Status in Asia Minor," in Sarah H. Pomeroy, ed., *Women's History and Ancient History*, 249-72. Chapel Hill, 1991

Questions: What types of sources does Boatwright use to reconstruct the social position of Plancia Magna?

Friday, November 27: *Thanksgiving Break*

WEEK 13

Monday, November 30: Epitaphs

Reading: * Selected Epitaphs from Rome (*Women's Life in Greece & Rome* 39, 40, 43, 47, 439)

Questions: How can we use these as historical sources? How are they problematic?

Wednesday, December 2: Portraiture

Reading: * Judith Ginsburg, "Visualizing Agrippina" from *Representing Agrippina. Constructions of Female Power in the Early Roman Republic*, 55-105. Oxford, 2006

Questions: What forms of evidence does Ginsburg consider, and how do they differ from each other? What information can we gather from these sources about Agrippina?

Friday, December 4: Women in Ancient Judaism - Guest Lecture by Professor Andy Overman

WEEK 14

Monday, December 7: *Class Meets at 3:30pm.*

Women in Early Christianity, Guest Lecture by Professor Susanna Drake

Reading: * Martyrdom of St. Perpetua from *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 8.2-10

Wednesday, December 9: Autobiography?

Reading: * Martyrdom of St. Perpetua from *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 8.2-10

Questions: 1) What questions, ideas or arguments from our two guest lecturers would you like to discuss? Email them to me by 8pm Tuesday. 2) How can the text about Perpetua be used as an historical source?

Friday, December 11: Roman Sexualities

Reading: * Holt Parker, "The Teratogenic Grid," in J. Hallett and M. Skinner, eds., *Roman Sexualities*, 47-65. Princeton, 1997

Questions: How do Roman sexual categories differ from those of the modern US, and from those of archaic and classical Greece? How does Parker determine them? Although Parker does not address this, with what other social categories do Roman sexual categories intersect?

WEEK 15

Monday, December 14: Wrap Up, **Paper on Historical Source Due in Class**

Monday, December 21, 10:30am-12:30: **Final Exam**