

Classics/Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies 127 ~ Fall 2009 ~ Macalester College
Women, Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome

Professor Beth Severy-Hoven

Office: 312 Old Main / Office phone: 696-6721

Office hours: M 10:45-11:45, W 1:10-2:10, *and by appointment*
severy@macalester.edu

Course Web Page: <http://www.macalester.edu/courses/clas127>

Moodle Site: <http://moodle.macalester.edu>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will investigate contemporary approaches to studying women, gender and sexuality in history, and the particular challenges of studying these issues in classical antiquity. By reading ancient writings in translation, analyzing art and other material culture, and working through significant modern research, we will address the following questions: How did ancient Greek and Roman societies understand and use the categories of male and female? Into what sexual categories did different cultures group people? How did these gender and sexual categories intersect with notions of slave and free status, citizenship and ethnicity? How should we interpret the actions and representations of women in surviving literature, myth, art, law, philosophy, politics and medicine in this light? Finally, how have gendered classical images been deployed in the modern U.S. – from scholarship to art and poetry?

GOALS, EXPECTATIONS AND EVALUATION

The course readings and assignments have been designed with the goal that students:

develop their abilities to observe texts closely and critically, to pose meaningful questions, investigate multiple interpretations, and communicate their conclusions effectively to others in written forms, and

understand the types of evidence surviving from ancient Greek and Roman cultures and the inherent challenges of working with them, particularly in regard to studying women, gender and sexuality.

To these ends, the course will emphasize writing, discussion and creativity. We will use writing in part as a method to think and learn about the course material. For example, to help you read more carefully and prepare to participate in class discussion, nine informal response papers are required over the course of the semester. These 1-2 page musings on the day's reading – potentially including a summary, comments, critique, concerns, comparison to other readings, answers to the discussion questions or proposals for new questions – must be submitted *before* discussion for credit. Since we will be working with a great deal of creative literature, both ancient and modern, you may choose to submit a short story, poem or other creative writing for two of these informal papers. For all reading assignments, questions are provided on the syllabus to help direct your reading and responses, as well as our discussion. In turn, on certain days specified in the syllabus, students are required to submit questions they would like to address or have addressed in class by 8pm the evening before. All of this work will help you prepare to participate actively in class discussion. Class participation includes reading the assigned material, thinking about the questions and tasks posed on the syllabus and otherwise preparing, coming to class regularly and on time, as well as contributing significantly to class discussion and projects. Your nine response papers also count toward your participation grade.

Attendance will be kept; not only will you not receive credit for participation if you are absent, after four absences your grade will suffer directly. More than six absences may cause you to fail the course.

We will also be using writing to think an argument through more thoroughly than we have time for in class. Thus, three short, formal writing assignments are required. The first will ask you to analyze how one of the primary texts we have read together creates, reinforces or challenges a dominant social hierarchy such as sexuality or gender. The second involves the analysis of an object you select at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Finally, the last asks you to evaluate the surviving evidence for the life of an historical woman and discuss what we can and cannot conclude about her based on it. **Late paper policy:** if a paper is not turned in by the designated time, one letter grade will be deducted from the one otherwise earned. For every additional day the paper is late (24 hrs.), another letter grade will be deducted.

We will also have one group project in the middle of the term aimed specifically at exercising your historical imagination and encouraging you to consider the literary, rhetorical and socio-historical context of a piece of ancient evidence.

Two short quizzes will help you familiarize yourself with key people, places and events of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Last but not least, a final exam will give you the final word on the issues we have explored over the semester. If you have difficulties with the date of any scheduled quiz or exam, consult with me in advance. I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, at 696-6220 to make an appointment. It is important to meet early in the semester to ensure your accommodations are approved to ensure you begin the semester successfully.

Class Participation	25%
Paper on Gender Construction	15%
Paper on Material Object	10%
Paper on Historical Source	15%
Group Project	15%
Quizzes	5%
Exam	15%

TEXTBOOKS AND READING

The following books have been ordered and should be available at the Macalester textbook center in the Lampert Building on Snelling Avenue. Please notify the store and Professor Severy-Hoven immediately if you cannot find any of these books:

Women in Ancient Greece, Sue Blundell, Harvard, 1995

If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho, Anne Carson, translator, Vintage Press, 2002

Sappho's Immortal Daughters, Margaret Williamson, Harvard University Press, 1995

Euripides Medea, Diane Arnson Svarlien, translator, Hackett, 2008

Three Plays by Aristophanes. Staging Women, Jeffrey Henderson, translator and editor, Routledge, 1996

Roman Women, Eve D'Ambra, Harvard, 2007

Several readings are also provided electronically or are otherwise available on the World Wide Web. These may all be found through the course Moodle site: <http://moodle.macalester.edu>. Please bring a hard copy of these reading with you to class, although you may share with a colleague.