CLAS 4000 Seminar in the Classics: Good Men in Evil Times

http://myweb.ecu.edu/stevensj/

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Continuity of Instruction: This seminar meets online synchronously via Canvas. In the event of a disruption in campus services, instruction will continue in this mode.

Course Objectives:

- Knowledge of the form of the classical encounter of the tyrant and the good man; the characters (gentleman, poet, philosopher, statesman); and their Greek and Roman historical and cultural contexts.
- Identify and interpret passages in the readings that merit close study
- Understanding of how ancient authors portrayed law and duty under tyrants, and what was meant by the pre-Christian concept of conscience in a secular context.
- Evaluate the literary, political and philosophical implications of the encounters, the modes of speech employed, and the thought process behind political or private action.

Writing Intensive (WI) Objectives. CLAS 4000 is a writing intensive course in the Writing Across the Curriculum program at East Carolina University. This course will focus on the development of writing skills. Upon completion of the course students will:

1. Use writing to investigate complex, relevant topics and address significant questions through engagement with and effective use of credible sources.
2. Produce writing that reflects an awareness of context, purpose, and audience, particularly within the written genres (including genres that integrate writing with visuals, audio, or other multimodal components) of their major disciplines and/or career fields.
3. Demonstrate that they understand writing as a process that can be made more effective though drafting revision.
4. Proofread and edit their own writing, avoiding grammatical and mechanical errors.
5. Assess and explain the major choices that they make in their writing.

This course contributes to the four-course WI requirement for students at ECU. Additional information is available at the following site: https://writing.ecu.edu/.

University Writing Portfolio Requirement (WI 5)

- Students in all writing intensive courses are required to submit at least one completed written project to their University Writing Portfolio. In this course, students will submit assignments using the Portfolium tool. The university uses these writing samples to assess the writing program and to make improvements where necessary. To report problems with Portfolium, contact ITCS: https://go.ecu.edu/Portfolium.
- By default, assignments that you submit to your University Writing Portfolio become part of your personal Portfolium website (https://ecu.portfolium.com), which you may use or not as you please. Be aware that you are in control of the privacy settings of your Portfolium site and should review the settings to ensure your privacy settings are set to your preference. Making items on your personal Portfolium site public or private does not impact your grade in your writing intensive courses. Your Portfolium account remains yours after you leave ECU.

Grading. CLAS 4000:

• Class discussion	30%	Scale: A 92.5-100, A- 89.5-92.49
• Four 5-page syntheses, 10% each on: 1. Greek authors; 2. Cicero; 3. Seneca; 4. Marcus Aurelius 1-6. Summarize plot and class discussion; end with a paper stub – passage(s) of interest for further study.	40%	B+ 86.5-89.49, B 82.5-86.49, B- 79.5-82.49 C+ 76.5-79.49, C 72.5-76.49, C- 69.5-72.49 D+ 66.5-69.49, D 62.5-66.49, D- 59.5-62.49 F 0-59.49
• 6-8 page final paper due 5/4	30%	

Late work may be accepted without penalty if you arrange with me in advance. I reserve the right to impose a letter grade reduction if you do not arrange with me in advance.

Description of Writing Assignments. General guidance (WI 2-4):
Proofread; use a spelling and grammar check (MSWord has automated tools for this); 12 pt font double-spaced; italicize titles and foreign words. If you must use the ideas of another source, footnote and carefully distinguish which ideas are yours and which are borrowed; use of AI is a form of plagiarism and not allowed; ideally all writing in this seminar should come exclusively from class discussion and your own ideas about the readings. Observe a formal academic tone & language and argue as if before a someone who has also read the text. Your opening paragraph should efficiently anticipate your argument (no general flowery introductions). Do not re-trace the arc of your learning experience; cut to the persuasive argument. Do not praise, blame, or critique ancient texts. Assume they have an integral purpose. Use fact-filled arguments, cite passages from the text by work and line #, and analyze them closely. Edit your work before submission: read aloud to detect usage errors and breakdowns in sentence structure. In a 2nd drafts, expect that 1/3 to 1/2 of the paper is the strong core, leaving space for promising threads.

1. Class discussion. The writing assignments in this seminar will require you to have heard the discussion of every text, so you will need to be present or listen to recordings for every class. For the class discussion grade, however, mere attendance or listening is only a portion of the grade. To earn a grade above passing, you must also contribute to discussion. You will be expected to have read the assigned text and to have a question about the reading and to be ready to answer questions about it. This will probably necessitate reading the passage more than once, since this is ancient literature with lots of strange content and context.

2. Syntheses (WI 1, 2, 4). A synthesis should bring together the steps in the learning process. Begin by briefly summarizing the text and our seminar discussion; then identify a passage of particular interest (or potentially a word or image that recurs throughout the text) and explicate from it an important interpretive thread; this should amount to a 'paper stub' or the beginning of a paper idea, which takes the argument beyond what was said in class. Each synthesis should take around 5 pages to cover the readings in the unit. You will receive feedback on the writing as well as the success in following this format, which you should apply in subsequent syntheses.

3. Final paper (WI 1-4) produced in stages. Students will present ideas for it in class and get feedback from seminar participants. It is recommended to submit a rough draft at least a week before the last class. I can give you feedback on the more successful aspects to help you develop a successful final product. It will be marked for style, content, organization, and mechanics and returned to you. The final paper is due Monday, 5/4. The starting point for any paper is a question or problem, not a topic. It should have important interpretive implications that the text can answer through close reading.

Textbooks:

All readings provided in Canvas. This course engages diverse scholarly perspectives to develop critical thinking, analysis, and debate. Inclusion of a reading does not imply endorsement.

Links:

Roman Republic in the age of Cicero https://myweb.ecu.edu/stevensj/latn3001/timetable.htm

Introduction.

We will begin with Hesiod's *Works and Days* (@680-650 BC), for its famous description of the decay of civilization from golden age to silver, bronze, heroic, and finally the iron age in which there is no faith between men and justice has left the city. He argues for a moral economy in which work reveals the justice of nature. He describes the city, preferred by his brother Perses, as a place where kings are bribed and justice is crooked. Other Greek works to be discussed include Xenophon's work *On tyranny* featuring the encounter of the moral poet Simonides with the wealthy, famed *tyrannos* of Syracuse, Hiero. Then we will look at the historical Socrates portrayed in the works of Aristophanes, Plato and Xenophon. The accusation by Aristophanes is that the early Socrates was a student of the new *physiologia* of Anaxagoras, an atheist science that argued against convention, and esp. conventional notions of the gods, and for natural (transactional, utilitarian) approaches to justice, poetry, economy, and morality rooted in necessity (whatever I need must be just). Plato and Xenophon give differing accounts of how Socrates defended himself at his trial for impiety and corruption of the young. We finish with Plato's account of Socrates' preference of death to exile; and Demosthenes' speeches (*Philippics*) on the patriotic defense of Greece against Philip of Macedon.

The second unit concerns the career of Cicero in the late Roman republic (106-43BC). He was born in Arpinum, educated in Rome (esp. by listening to the augur and jurist Q. Mucius Scaevola in 80s) and studied philosophy in Athens under Antiochus of Ascalon (79 BC) and rhetoric under Molon in Rhodes (78BC). He hosted every philosopher who visited Rome, and had a career as a leading orator and statesman until prohibited by Caesar, at which point he began writing dialogues that summarized and interpreted all the Hellenistic schools of

philosophy (Stoic, Academic, Epicurean, Neo-Pythagorean). He first rose to prominence as a Quaestor in Sicily (75 BC) when he prosecuted the governor Verres for corruption (70 BC). After rising through the *cursus honorum* (ranks of offices) to be Praetor (66) and Consul (63), as a supporter of Pompey, he was invited in 60 to become the mouthpiece for the illegal first Triumvirate (Caesar, Pompey, Crassus), but declined and was exiled 500 miles from Rome (58-57). His speech on behalf of the tribune Sestius upon his return (Pro Sestio, 56), captures the division of Roman politics between the advocates for the traditional power of the senate (*optimates*) and the part of the people (*populares*), though both were from aristocratic Roman families. This division was made worse by the illegal triumvirate and resulted in street violence in Rome. Caesar is off conquering Gaul and has left Clodius as Tribune to look after his interests; Crassus is preparing for the invasion of Parthia where he will die in 53; and the aging Pompey is left to hold the capitol divided between his own men under Milo and Caesar's men under Clodius, and a political structure similarly divided between consuls and tribunes loyal to each (Gabinius consul 58 and Milo and Sestius tribunes 57 to Pompey; Piso consul 58 [father of Caesar's wife] and Clodius tribune of the plebs 58, curule aedile 56 to Caesar). After the death of Caesar's daughter Julia (54) who had married Pompey, and Caesar's conquest of Gaul (58-51), open civil war broke out at the battle of Pharsalus (48), where the senatorial forces under Pompey were defeated and Pompey fled to Egypt and was beheaded. Cicero was forced to submit to Caesar's 'friendship' and retired from public life to write philosophy. His last book of the *Tusculan Disputations* discusses the stoic wise man (*sapiens* / sage) whose rational self-mastery makes him invulnerable to blows of fortune and able to remain blessedly happy under any political regime.

This idea is put to the test in the career of Seneca (the younger, 4BC-65AD). Seneca offended Caligula in the senate and was ordered to commit suicide, but became so ill, Caligula thought he would die anyway and relented. Seneca did not fall on his sword or leap into the sea, he says, 'lest I seem only to be able to die for loyalty' (*NatQ.* 4.17). When Claudius came to power in 41 AD, Seneca was accused by his wife Messalina of adultery with Julia Livilla, sister of Caligula and Agrippina. He was exiled to Corsica for 8 years, until Agrippina became the fourth wife of Claudius and had him recalled to tutor her son Nero. From 54-62AD, Seneca was an advisor to Nero and de facto regent of Rome's domestic affairs. From the time Nero came of age in 55, Seneca's position began to deteriorate, but he had so much moral influence as a Stoic philosopher, that all Nero could do was dirty him up and ease him out of power. So, he gave Seneca so much wealth that it was said he was wealthier than the emperor. We will read Seneca's *De clementia*, which demonstrates masterfully the way the philosopher has to employ polyvalent language with defensible ambiguity to communicate a message that might be taken positively by the emperor's less intelligent audiences with any criticism carefully veiled. It was not that the emperor was too stupid to understand what Seneca was doing, but rather that so long as it showed that the emperor was someone to be feared rather than simply a buffoon, it was allowed. We will also read portions of his letters to Lucilius on virtue, the invulnerability of the philosopher, and the way to live and die in a politically corrupt world.

We will finish with the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic philosopher king (161-80 AD), who was forced to spend his entire life as emperor on the front lines defending the empire from invasion. Both Seneca and Marcus Aurelius came from Spain; Marcus was the nephew of Antoninus Pius whose family was from Gaul. He was educated in Greek by Herodes Atticus (a rich pompous Athenian) and in Latin and oratory by Marcus Cornelius Fronto, with whom he became intimate friends. Both of them distrusted philosophy and advised him against studying it. In the *Meditations*, we see the practice Seneca learned from the Sextians of the daily examination of conscience. He takes seriously the stoic idea that fate and cause are the reason of god extending into all things in the universe, and thus that however chaotic events seem, we

live in a divinely ordered world to which we must seek to conform ourselves to avoid passion and unhappiness. Our duty is to learn nature's will and obey the benevolent deity.

Epictetus (50-135 AD) was the teacher of Arrian, who preserved the *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, our best sources on Stoicism from this era. Marcus' bronze equestrian statue in the Capitoline Museum is the only one from antiquity not melted down. The column of Marcus Aurelius celebrates his victory over the Sarmatian Iazyges and Germans. His victory arch, whose reliefs survive, are prized for showing where the triumph began in Rome.

After fighting a Parthian war in the east (161-66), there were wars against the Marcomanni, Quadi, and Sarmatian Iazyges called the Marcomannic wars (161-80). He had to devalue the currency to pay for it all, then there was plague that killed millions 165-66. Christians were persecuted more under his reign, though later authors do not blame him for the persecution.

For information about severe weather and university closings, see http://www.ecu.edu/alert/. East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Suite 109 Mendenhall, 252-737-1016. https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students/dss-guidelines/. Academic integrity is expected of every East Carolina student. Cheating, plagiarism (using the ideas of others without attribution), and falsification, will be considered a violation of Academic Integrity: (http://bit.ly/2RgFpLh). Do not use *Cliff's Notes* type sites (Shmoop, online paper mills etc.) or AI generated papers (if it is not your own, it will be evident). It will result in a 0 for the assignment if you use ideas from even reputable internet sources without citation and a clear demarcation of which ideas are yours and which are not.

Schedule of assignments:

T 1/13	Introduction to the topic "Good Men in Bad Times" (law and duty under tyranny, the philosopher and the statesman, conscience and god)
Th 1/15	Unit 1. Hesiod, *Works and Days* (A just man in an unjust world; country vs. city morality)
T 1/20	Xenophon, *Hiero* (*On Tyranny*, the poet Simonides meets Hiero, *tyrannos* of Syracuse) 1-5
Th 1/22	Xenophon, *Hiero*, 6-11
T 1/27	The Life of Socrates (in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Plato and Xenophon's accounts of his conduct in war and under The Thirty)
Th 1/29	Plato, *Crito* (our duty to the law even as enforced by evil men)
T 2/3	Demosthenes' *Philippics* (courage under threat of invasion)
Th 2/5	Unit 2. Cicero, *Against Verres* (battling corruption)

T 2/10	**Synthesis 1 due.** Cicero's *Pro Sestio* (the good man on trial for going armed to save the Republic)
Th 2/12	Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.I-XIX (Philosophical responses to tyranny)
T 2/17	Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.XX-end
Th 2/19	Cicero, *Philippics* (Against Antony; belittling the tyrant) and Brutus' letter to Cicero
T 2/24	**Synthesis 2 due.** Unit 3. Seneca, *De Clementia* (the philosopher as mirror of the prince) Book 1
Th 2/26	Seneca, *De Clementia* Book 2, Tacitus on Nero and Seneca.
T 3/3	Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius* (philosophy and life under tyranny): 7, 8, 17, 24
Th 3/5	Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius* 97, 104
3/7-15	**Spring Break**
T 3/17	**Synthesis 3 due.** Unit 4. Marcus Aurelius, Introduction to his life and writings. *Meditations* Book 1: The conscience of a Stoic emperor (cf. Plato's philosopher king) .pdf p.31
Th 3/19	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 2 .pdf p.55
T 3/24	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 3 .pdf p.73
Th 3/26	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 4 .pdf p.95
T 3/31	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 5 .pdf p.127
Th 4/2	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 6 .pdf p.159
T 4/7	**Synthesis 4 due.** Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 7 .pdf p.193
Th 4/9	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 8 .pdf p.227
T 4/14	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 9 .pdf p.259
Th 4/16	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 10 .pdf p.289
T 4/21	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 11 .pdf p.321
Th 4/23	Last day of class. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Book 12 .pdf p.350
Mon 5/4	**Final paper due at noon**