

Intensive Reading: Vergil/Sallust
LAT381 • Fall 2004 • Wheaton College
MWF 11:30 – 12:20 + Tutorial (Time to be determined)
Location: Knapton Hall 214 + TBA

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Vergil, Clio, and Melpomene, 3rd Century CE

Course Description

This advanced reading course meets concurrently with *LATIN 215: The Crisis of the Roman Republic* and provides students with the opportunity to read and consider a work from the Roman Republic. For this semester, our options are Vergil's *Eclogues* (verse) or Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* (prose). In addition to the activities of *LATIN 215*, participants in this course will meet in a once weekly tutorial session and complete expanded versions of *LATIN 215*'s final project and/or end of semester examination.

Vergil's *Eclogues* or *Bucolics* ("Selections" or "Cowherds' Songs") are the earliest surviving poems by Vergil, best known as the author of the quintessential Roman epic, the *Aeneid*. Vergil composed the *Eclogues* during a turbulent historical moment: Caesar's assassins had been defeated by his adopted son Octavian and his lieutenant Marc Anthony and an uneasy peace prevailed between the two erstwhile allies; the Roman countryside had been devastated by war and the confiscation of property, as Rome's new overlords paid off their troops and settled old scores. In this time of uncertainty, Vergil turned to the pastoral world of shepherds and singers, fusing harsh, contemporary realities with the world of bucolic fantasy. These 10 poems provide a remarkable commentary on the social and personal effects of the Roman Republic's crisis and are, in their own right, a masterwork of Latin literature.

Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* recounts in detail the events and characters involved in Catiline's conspiracy of 63 BCE. Written around 42 BCE in the immediate aftermath of Caesar's assassination, Sallust reflects back on a dysfunctional political system tottering under the weight of corruption and frustrated aspirations. At the center of his account stand Cicero – a parvenu champion of the old guard – and Catiline – a scion of ancient nobility, fallen on hard times, who rejects custom in favor of the power of the mob. In speeches delivered by Caesar and Cato on the fate of the conspirators, Sallust presents two rising politicians twisting the unwritten codes of Roman cultures to partisan, and personal, advantage. Written in a compressed, powerful, archaizing style, Sallust's monograph is the earliest complete work of Roman historiography and a powerful analysis of the causes and symptoms of the Republic's crisis.

Required Texts

- **Sallust.** *Catiline*. Edited by A.T. Davis. Focus Publishing, 1987. **ISBN: 0862922585.**
- **Virgil.** *Eclogues and Georgics*. Edited by R. D. Williams. Focus Publishing, July 1996. **ISBN: 1853995088.**