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Dear Colleague,

I am writing to share with you an opportunity for you and your students from the Miami University Classics Department. As an extension of our cooperative work with high schools, we have begun offering a new program of enrichment presentations for high school students. These lectures, presentations, and workshops, given by experienced faculty from Miami, are designed to provide material that complements Latin, mythology, and history classes at a range of levels giving students new insights into language and literature, culture, history, art, and archaeology from the ancient world.

They have been developed in consultation with our high school teacher partners to support their work. As you can see from the attached list of titles and descriptions we are offering a range of topics on literature, art, archaeology, history, and daily life. We hope that this provides some topics that would be of interest and use for your program and students. All of the topics can be adjusted depending on your course material, class level, and length of class period.

Please contact me if you would like to arrange a visit by one of our faculty to your class or extracurricular club.

Best wishes,

Steve Tuck
Professor and Chair of Classics
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Miami University Department of Classics Enrichment Presentations

Falling in Love in Rome: Latin Poets and Roman Life

In this presentation and interactive exercise we will explore the expressions of love in Latin poetry. While most famous ruminations on love, its pleasures and discontents, can be found in Catullus and Roman Love Elegy we will also look at Vergil and Lucretius. Students of Latin will gain an overview of how Latin love poetry stood in relation to Roman societal norms. This presentation aims to explore how love in the Roman world was significantly different from our perception of it conditioned by the precepts of romanticism. The presentation will also address the gender dichotomy in relation to love as it is reflected in the most famous poetic works of Roman antiquity.

By Zara Torlone, Professor of Classics

Beware the Ides of March??

On March 15, 44 BCE Julius Caesar was assassinated by a band of Roman Senators, an event that would lead to a series of brutal civil wars and the eventual transformation of the entire Roman state. This lecture examines both the sources of that violence (Who was Caesar? What brought about his assassination?) and its consequences for Roman politics and Roman life more generally. Caught up in the story are figures like the charismatic Marc Antony, the enigmatic Cleopatra, and the famous orator Cicero—and not least the young boy (the puer”) who would outsmart and outlive them all. We will also sample later depictions of this critical event to discern its significance for authors, artists, and audiences throughout the western tradition.

By Denise McCoskey, Professor of Classics

Daily Life in Ancient Rome

In this lecture we will examine sources that attest to daily life during the Roman period—documents like letters, wills, marriage contracts, and legal cases. Such documents help us see “beneath” the level of world history to discern how everyday people lived their lives in the ancient world. We will learn both how such documents survive (where and how we find them today), and what they tell us about the people who wrote them. Here we will learn, for example, just what kinds of care-packages a Roman soldier wanted sent by his family or what financial dilemmas a woman might face when divorcing her husband. Such sources attest to both the pleasures and light moments of ancient life (such as the birthday invitation depicted above—the first identifiable ancient piece of handwriting by a woman) and the heartbreaks and struggles. You’ll never think about the ancient Romans the same way again!

By Denise McCoskey, Professor of Classics

Magical amulets

In a world full of magic, but lacking vaccines, hand sanitizer, and other modern ways of protecting oneself from invisible harm, the Romans turned to magical amulets. We’ll look at the concept of magic in the Roman world and the types of amulets worn to protect against harm. We’ll concentrate on the bulla, a form of necklace with pouch that was worn by ancient Roman children as protection from evil spirits. Students will make their own bulla to keep and maybe wear it during tests and quizzes for good luck!

By Steven Tuck, Professor of Classics



Curses!

In this presentation we survey curses in the Roman world and how they were used to gain justice or just advantage by calling on the power of the gods or spirits. Curses against thieves and rivals in love and sports are featured particularly. After we examine the ancient types of curses, how they were made, and where they were used, students will make their own curse tablets based on ancient models.

By Steven Tuck, Professor of Classics

Staging Spectacle

How did one go about organizing a day of games in ancient Rome and how were they run? In this presentation we explore the sometimes years-long work of hosting a set of games and the running of the day's events themselves. This includes the staging of animal hunts from gathering animals to recruiting hunters and the presentation of prisoner executions, the halftime show of the ancient amphitheater. Finally, we explore just how gladiatorial combat worked and the surprising conclusion that it wasn't as deadly as most people believe!

By Steven Tuck, Professor of Classics

Discovering the Will of the Gods: Prophecy in the Ancient World

In a world without weather satellites, smartphones, or cable news, finding what might happen in the near future, or some meaning from the patterns around you was more difficult. The Greeks and Romans turned to divination, seeking answers to their questions about the world through observing natural phenomena such as lightning strikes, examining the entrails of animals, or consulting oracles. This presentation introduces some of the more common means of learning the will of the gods and the incredible, literally world-changing influence of the priests and priestesses that were responsible for this practice.

By Steven Tuck, Professor of Classics

Decorating a Roman House

Far more important than just picking out the right rugs and throw pillows, decorating a house in the ancient Roman world was the process of creating a stage on which an elite family would display its greatness. In this presentation we discuss Roman houses and some of the scenes and stories found in their floor mosaics and wall paintings, asking what they meant and how they established the values of the family that lived in that house. We also compare the use and décor of Roman to modern houses, seeing how they differ but also what they remarkably have in common.

By Steven Tuck, Professor of Classics

Animal Hunts, Prisoner Executions, and Gladiators: the art of Roman amphitheaters

The amphitheater was the most important venue for spectacle in the Roman world. It was designed to hold a cross section of society and to expose people to events that reinforced social values and the power of the emperors. The sculpture that filled these buildings supported those lessons in surprising ways. Drawing comparisons between the decoration of amphitheaters and Great American Ballpark we see how the major events of the amphitheater: animal hunts, prisoner executions, and gladiators, served as the subjects for the art that adorned these buildings, but presented in ways that told stories and lessons to those in attendance.

By Steven Tuck, Professor of Classics