

**Ancient Greek and Roman Studies  
2021 Colloquium Program with Abstracts**

[Zoom link](#)

**9:40-9:45** Prof. Richard Last, *Introductory remarks*

**9:45-10:00** Prof. George Kovacs, Program Coordinator of Ancient Greek and Roman Studies,  
*Looking ahead to 2021-2022*

**10:00-10:20** Stephanie Spencer, “The Mysterious Event: Is Homer describing a discus toss in *Iliad* 23?”

In *Iliad* 23.826, Homer uses, σόλον αὐτοχόωνον, which some ancient and modern sources understand to signify a discus toss that is featured as an event at the funeral games of Patroclus. It is my belief that this is not the case and that this is not a discus toss event. I would like to propose that scholars have been interpreting this event incorrectly and we must use other works by Homer, and scholarly sources, to re-examine the passage to determine if the contest is a discus toss or not.

**10:20-10:40** Ray Berry, “Hostile Hospitality: The Negative Connotations of ‘ξεῖνε’ in Herodotus and Homer”

The Ancient Greek ξένος is difficult to faithfully render into English, with possible translations of “guest,” “host,” “friend,” “stranger,” and “foreigner” which do not take into account the complex social rules between guest and host that the word truly evokes. When ξένος is used in its vocative (ξεῖνε in Ionic or Epic, ξένε elsewhere) as a form of address by Greek authors, modern translators assume the term falls somewhere on a sliding scale from neutral to friendly. Technically this is not wrong, the connotation of ξεῖνε is ambiguously positive in its default state, but consistently translating the term in this way, without regard for its context and nuances, does a disservice to the original works by stripping them of their subtext. When Croesus addresses Solon as ξεῖνε Ἀθηναῖ, Athenian guest-friend-stranger, in the first book of Herodotus’ *Histories*, context makes it clear that he does so not as a friendly greeting but as an unfriendly reminder that if Croesus does not hear what he wants to, the visiting Solon will bear the consequences. The hostile ξεῖνε invokes the standards of guest-friendship as a warning and the position of the addressee as stranger in order to single them out, marking them as foreign, unwelcome, and overreaching. Through close examinations of Herodotus’ use of the word as compared with its earliest uses in the *Odyssey*, this paper argues that the connotations of ξεῖνε as a form of address are far more complex, varied, and potentially hostile than modern translations express.

**10:40-11:00** Harper Jin, “The Ma’am Behind the Mask: Old Comedy and The Depiction of Women in Aristophanes”

When attempting to understand the lives of Athenian women in classical Greek society, one must keep in mind that most, if not all, of the source material historians and classists have to work with is from the male perspective. A perfect example of biased source material are written plays, which are composed by men, for men. Because of this, the representation of women, as they are portrayed within the literary record, must not be taken at face value. However, despite the biases present within ancient plays, they do still offer the opportunity to try and understand both the people and the environment of the time in which they were written. Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazousae* serves as a prime example of a work written in Athens during the fifth century that allows for a critical analysis of the representation of women in Classical literature. This essay argues that the depiction of women, as they are portrayed in the *Thesmophoriazousae*, does not and cannot accurately reflect real Athenian women during the fourth and fifth centuries. The main topics of discussion are the concept of *mimesis* and the theme of duality, which I use to support this argument. Moreover, I look at Mnesilochus specifically in a pseudo character study and compare and contrast him against the other feminine characters of the play.

**11:00-11:10*****Coffee Break***

*The Zoom session will remain open for those who wish to continue socializing, though there is no obligation.*

**11:10-11:40**

Book Launch: Dr. Ian Begg, *Lost Worlds of Ancient and Modern Greece. Gilbert Bagnani: The Adventures of a Young Italo-Canadian Archaeologist in Greece, 1921-1924.*

**11:40-12:00**

Kryn Gurney, "Middle Comedy: A Period of Transition and Experimentation"

Middle Comedy is often forgotten or simply dismissed by scholars in the study of Greek Comedy. Whether because of its poor survival rate, or the biased contexts in which it survives, Middle Comedy is often considered a lesser steppingstone between the greats, Old and New comedy. This paper argues that Middle Comedy is a chronological period of experimentation and transition, not from Old to New comedy, but between societies and audiences. Societal change and preferences of audiences inevitably caused the nature of comedy to evolve. Comic playwrights needed to adapt to their audiences, who had changed, in addition to navigating through the political turmoil of 4<sup>th</sup> century Athens. Experimentation with combining aspects of different genres and recycling older jokes and stories created the most influential element of Middle Comedy, the braggart cook ( $\mu\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\omega\varsigma$ ), which continued through into New Comedy. The innovation of the cook ( $\mu\alpha\gamma\epsilon\iota\omega\varsigma$ ) character combines all aspects that make up Middle Comedy. Middle Comedy has aspects of dithyramb (almost serving as a replacement to the chorus and parabasis), satyr play, and recalls tragedy and epic through parody. Thinking of Middle Comedy as a chronological label for comedy in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, this paper argues is better than treating it as a title for the genre, since Middle Comedy has such wide ranging aspects from Old Comedy, Satyr play, fifth century tragedy, Homeric epic, and dithyramb.

**12:00-12:50*****Lunch***

*The Zoom session will remain open for those who wish to continue socializing, though there is no obligation.*

**12:50-1:10** Connor Hopper, “Fetial Procedures and the Conception of a War to Come”

The fetial priests of Archaic and early Republican Rome were tasked with ritual responsibilities pertaining to certain aspects of Rome's international relations. Namely, they were in charge of the war declaration process, treaty oaths, and the surrender of Roman offenders. In modern times, the role of the fetial priests in war declaration procedures has been characterized by many as superficial with a focus on contextualizing a war declared by Rome as defensive in nature and therefore *just*. William V. Harris in 1979 described their role as purely psychological. Jonathan M. Hall in 2008 claimed that their procedures, with great elaboration, would demonstrate that whenever Rome declared war, it would do so defensively. Ultimately, the aim of my research is to look past narratives that frame the Roman religion as being opportunistic or lacking depth or integrity. The question I intend to answer with this presentation is whether fetial priests can be given a more holistic and grounded examination that goes beyond describing their role as superficial. Therefore, I shall challenge the superficial view and examine the ways in which the fetial procedures may have impacted the conception of a coming war. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that the fetial procedures provided legitimate legal, religious, and tactical benefits for the coming war. In this way, I shall argue that role of the fetial priests was integral to the early Roman war declaration process and had a deep and resounding effect on the conception of a war that was to come.

**1:10-1:30** Grace Chapnik, “Steppes to Empire: Political Transformation in the Early-to-Mid Fifth Century Hunnic World”

The fifth century A.D. was a period of massive changes for Huns, and this paper seeks to determine precisely how these transformations occurred. Through the lens of politics, shifts in the Huns' society are traced, deducing the effect of leadership upon the Hunnic Empire. The rise and fall of the Empire through the reign of the famed leader Attila provides a basis for this investigation, as the Huns' political environment shifted numerous times throughout his tenure. Attila's ability to swiftly consolidate power and grow his Empire, as well as the breakdown of the Hunnic Empire after his death, shaped the world of Huns by repeatedly generating varied political circumstances. These structural changes are traced through the state of Hunnic politics before Attila, his co-rule with Bleda and eventual sole leadership, and the subsequent collapse of the Empire.

**1:30-1:40** *Coffee Break*

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**1:40-2:00** Cyanna Blackmore, "A Lightning Strike: A Century of Hunnic Power"

The power of the Huns under Attila swept up into the narrative of the Roman Empire at the perfect time, coinciding almost too perfectly with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. However, being a nomadic and likely largely illiterate people, the Huns are difficult to track, and even more difficult to understand. Their people and culture were porous, and the only sources we have about them are from an outsider's perspective, making the reconstruction of an image of their people, lifestyle and motives particularly difficult. The rise of Hunnic power in Europe was swift, opportune, and finitely attached to the leader that achieved it.

**2:00-2:20** Kelly Goslin, "Cultural Exchange at the Edges of the Empire – Iconography and Religious Identity in the Dura-Europos Church"

The Dura-Europos Church is considered the oldest Christian *domus ecclesiae* to date. The house church was constructed during the third-century C.E. in the Syrian city of Dura-Europos, a military settlement located on the Eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. A veritable treasure trove of wall art and early Abrahamic iconography, the city of Dura-Europos was described as a "Pompeii of the Syrian desert" upon its discovery in 1931. For much of the twentieth-century, scholarly interpretation of the iconography located therein depended upon the writings of Carl Kraeling, and his work became the orthodox analysis for much of the following decades' historiography. Recently, however, the conclusions carried in this earlier assessment have been gradually undermined by new interpretations that investigate the visual ambiguity of the decorations. Contrary to the dogmatic assertions of Kraeling's work, the frescoes located in the house church overlap symbolically with multiple different religious and cult ceremonies, writings, and myths that are not exclusively Christian, or even within Abrahamic tradition. This similarity begs the question of how distinct or individualistic the Christians were of Dura-Europos. What can this structure reveal about the culture of its practitioners, and what can it indicate in regards to their relationship with other neighbouring cults in the city? Contrary to polemic-based arguments for self-distinction, a comparative of the Christian art with that of neighbouring cult structures reveals cultural exchange, rather than schism, playing a larger role within the Dura-Europos house church. By examining the polytheistic nature of Roman *domus ecclesiae*, as well as the demography of Dura-Europos, I will demonstrate how the mutual exclusivity commonly applied to Christianity during the third-century is fundamentally implausible herein, and grounded in later theological disputes.

**2:20-2:40** Soleyma Theilmann-Gohr, "Self-Representations of Christian Identity in Second Century Rome"

This paper explores the topic of second-century Christian inscriptions found in Rome in relation to Christian identity. The main research question is: how open were Christians in Rome about their religion when considering instances of prosecution in second-century Rome, as recorded especially by Justin? The way I approached this question is by examining major epigraphical finds, such as NCE 156 and the Flavia Sopha inscription in comparison with other written records stating how Christians were viewed. I also examine the literary texts to see how open Christians were with using Christian motifs in different parts of Rome, whether it be in the catacombs, in the street, or on inscriptions. My thesis

for the paper is: the earliest documents demonstrate that Christians were very open about their identity, despite events that might suggesting otherwise. By arguing this point, I will propose that it was safe for most Christians to be open about their identity without fear of persecution at any given time.

**2:40-3:00**

Prof. George Kovacs, *Closing remarks and awards*