



Women in Antiquity
Spring 2025

MEETING 12

Beyond the Roman Aristocracy

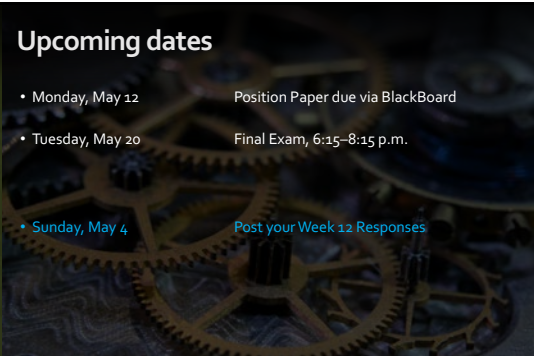
- The Principate
- Patrician and Plebeian
- Slavery
- Freedmen and women
- Rome vs. the provinces



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Upcoming dates

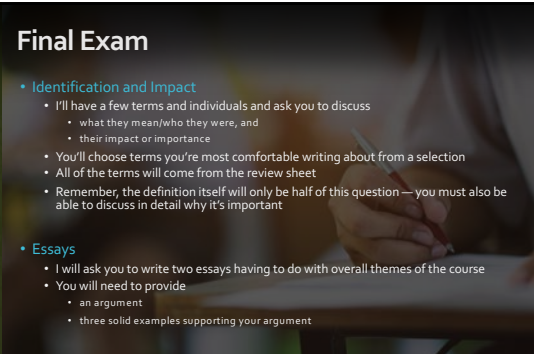
- Monday, May 12 Position Paper due via BlackBoard
- Tuesday, May 20 Final Exam, 6:15–8:15 p.m.
- Sunday, May 4 Post your Week 12 Responses



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Final Exam

- Identification and Impact
 - I'll have a few terms and individuals and ask you to discuss
 - what they mean/who they were, and
 - their impact or importance
 - You'll choose terms you're most comfortable writing about from a selection
 - All of the terms will come from the review sheet
 - Remember, the definition itself will only be half of this question—you must also be able to discuss in detail why it's important
- Essays
 - I will ask you to write two essays having to do with overall themes of the course
 - You will need to provide
 - an argument
 - three solid examples supporting your argument



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Five things today

- 1 The Principate
- 2 Patrician and Plebeian
- 3 Slavery
- 4 Freedmen and women
- 5 Rome vs. the provinces

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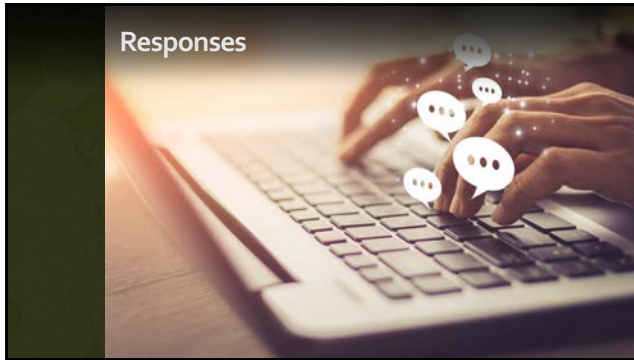


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Quiz #10: Beyond the Roman Aristocracy

1. In relation to gender, the Twelve Tables established all of the following **EXCEPT**
- a. Women were not allowed to cry at funerals
 - b. Women remained under guardianship into adulthood
 - c. Sons could be sold into debt slavery up to three times, but daughters could not
 - d. ☒ Women could escape *usucapio* (*manus marriage*) by drinking the husband's blood three times in succession every year
2. Marriage among slaves in Rome
- a. was formally acknowledged and legally valid
 - b. ☒ resulted in free children if the mother was free
 - c. was dislilled and discouraged by masters
 - d. sometimes involved multiple wives or husbands
3. Stories related in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* include all of the following **EXCEPT**
- a. Daphne, a nymph pursued by Apollo
 - b. Hecuba, queen of the destroyed Troy
 - c. ☒ unhappy lovers Rameis and Julietta
 - d. Galatea, the sea nymph beloved of Acris and courted by Polyphemus, the Cyclops
4. A female Roman slave could achieve *manumission* (release from slavery) through all of the following **EXCEPT**
- a. bearing free children to become her master's slaves
 - b. ☒ Fasting for 60 days during the festival of the Good Goddess
 - c. Repaying her purchase price with her personal savings from tips and gifts
 - d. Marriage to a free man, which involved prior *manumission*
5. According to Plutarch, most freedwomen were
- a. dependent on gifts from lovers or the state
 - b. ☒ skilled workers (shepherds, artisans) or domestic servants
 - c. no longer in contact with their former owners
 - d. initiates in a secret cult, the *libertinae gaudia*
- EC. What aspect of the life of Roman slaves, freedmen, and freedwomen surprised you or stood out to you?

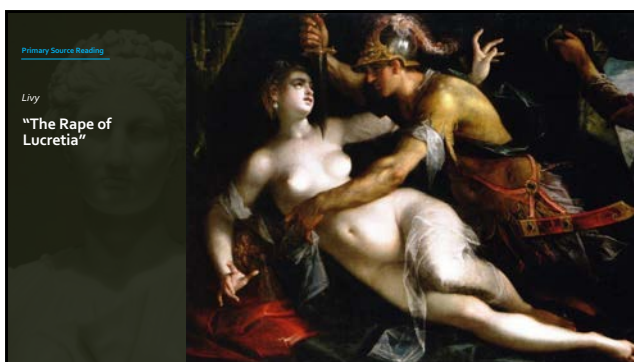
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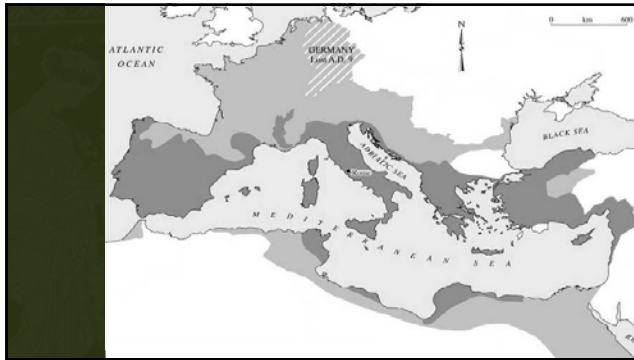
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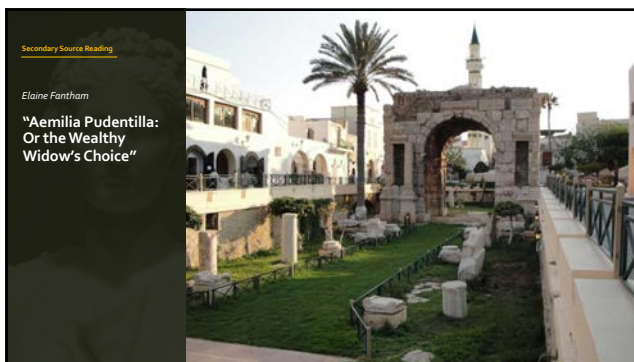
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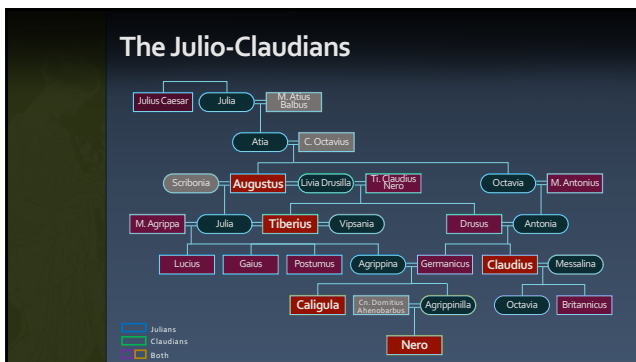


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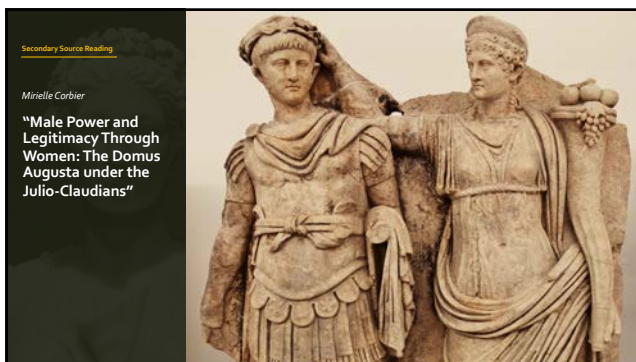


Livia

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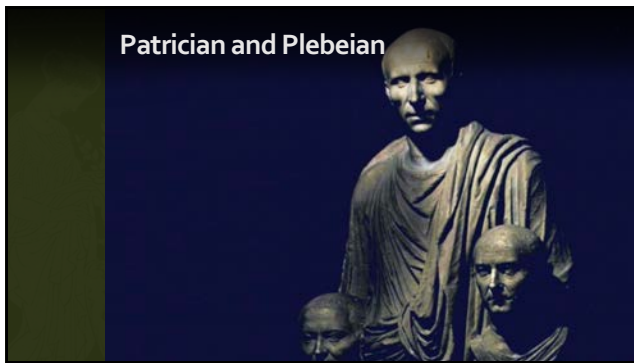


Secondary Source Reading

Mirielle Corbier

"Male Power and Legitimacy Through Women: The Domus Augusta under the Julio-Claudians"

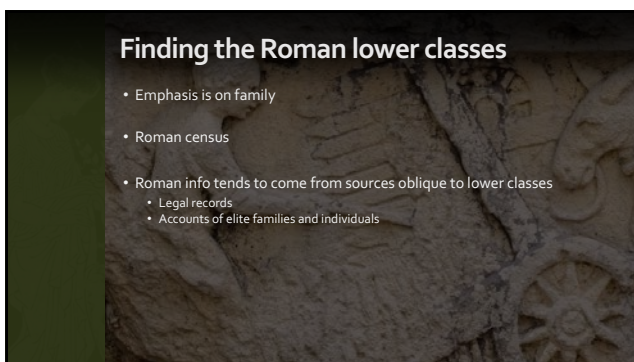
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Finding the Roman lower classes

- Anomaly:
 - Large quantity of everyday Roman citizens hidden, but
 - Classes lower than that (slaves and freedmen) are within the household
 - Info about them in terms of contact with higher classes within household
- Presence of gender inconsistent
 - Collective presence in forum and in demonstrations

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Secondary Source Reading

Matthew Roller

"Horizontal Women: Posture and Sex in the Roman Convivium"

SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Romans reclined to eat (on left, eat with right)
- Traditional formal version: women do not recline with the men but would sit in a chair opposite
 - Not an actual rule
 - If a woman reclines, it is indicative of a sexual relationship
- Seated in a chair = attempting to avoid sexuality (and therefore promiscuity)
 - Most ideal and virtuous of women
- Reclining = sexual freedom
 - Men always recline = meaning men always have sexual freedom

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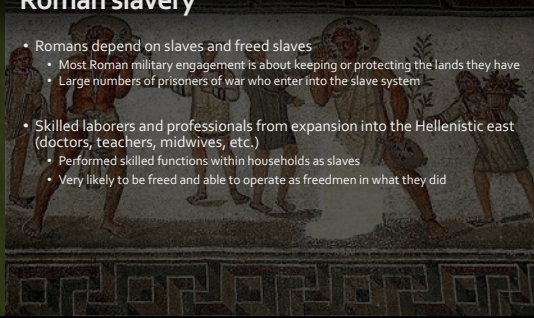
Roman economy

- Wealthiest economy — Very high standard of living
 - To be a Roman citizen is to stand out
- Drives Rome's pursuit of dominion
- Drives Romanization
- Result: Roman society expands because the Roman economy rapidly expands

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Roman slavery

- Romans depend on slaves and freed slaves
 - Most Roman military engagement is about keeping or protecting the lands they have
 - Large numbers of prisoners of war who enter into the slave system
- Skilled laborers and professionals from expansion into the Hellenistic east (doctors, teachers, midwives, etc.)
 - Performed skilled functions within households as slaves
 - Very likely to be freed and able to operate as freedmen in what they did



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Rome and the Empire

- Romanization via colonies and other Roman cities
- Miniature Romes become Roman in culture but mixed in ethnicity
- Less of a physical difference between lower and upper classes
 - In Rome, slaves are foreigners
 - In the rest of the empire, the distinction may be less obvious
 - The divide is different, and not necessarily in predictable ways



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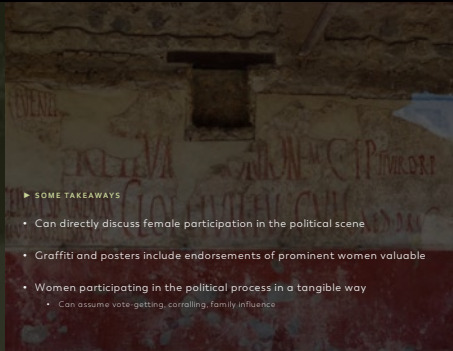
Secondary Source Reading

Lisa Savunen

"Women and Elections in Pompeii"

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Can directly discuss female participation in the political scene
- Graffiti and posters include endorsements of prominent women valuable
- Women participating in the political process in a tangible way
 - Can assume vote getting, corraling, family influence



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Slavery in the household

- Considerable presence of slaves and ex-slaves in Roman aristocratic households
 - Women more likely to end up as domestics
 - Men might end up in households, fields, mines, etc.
- Domestics used as indicators of family's status
- Children growing up in aristocratic family would have constant contact
 - Intimate knowledge of what it is like to be a slave woman or a freedwoman

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Exploitation

- Limited number of restrictions on men exploiting female slaves
- Normal to have mistresses because of arranged marriages
 - Also true for women with male slave
- Virtue precluded cruelty against women

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Primary Source Reading

Ovid

Selections from
Metamorphoses



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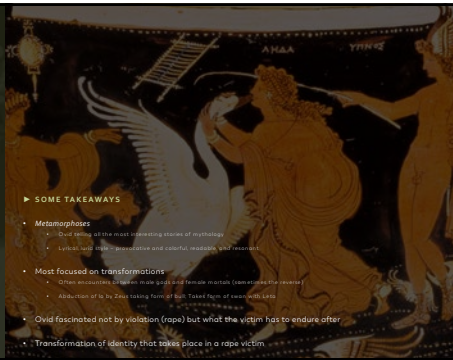
Secondary Source Reading

Leo C. Curran

"Rape and Rape Victims in *The Metamorphoses*"

SOME TAKEAWAYS

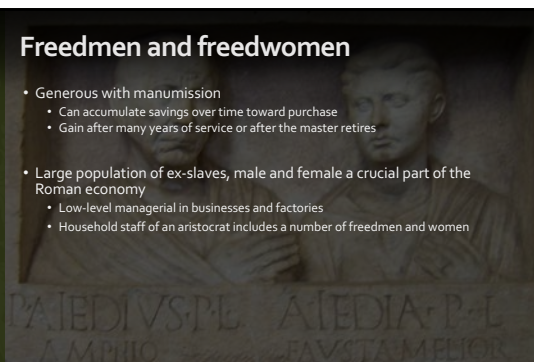
- **Metamorphoses**
 - One of the most interesting stories of mythology
 - Lyrical, told elegantly, persuasive and colorful, modern and ancient
- Most focused on transformations
 - Ovid associates the most male and female victims (as victims of the sexual)
 - Attribution of it to Zeus taking form of him, taking form of women with later
- Ovid fascinated not by violation (rape) but what the victim has to endure after
 - Transformation of identity that takes place in a rape victim



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Freedmen and freedwomen

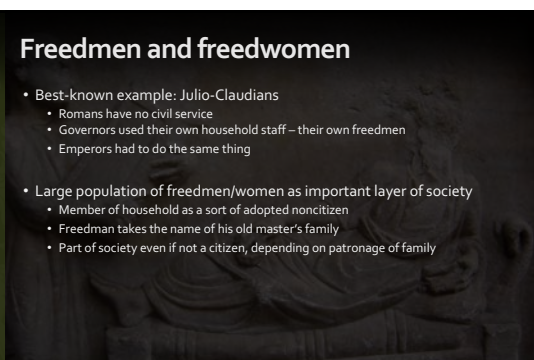
- Generous with manumission
 - Can accumulate savings over time toward purchase
 - Gain after many years of service or after the master retires
- Large population of ex-slaves, male and female a crucial part of the Roman economy
 - Low-level managerial in businesses and factories
 - Household staff of an aristocrat includes a number of freedmen and women



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Freedmen and freedwomen

- Best-known example: Julio-Claudians
 - Romans have no civil service
 - Governors used their own household staff – their own freedmen
 - Emperors had to do the same thing
- Large population of freedmen/women as important layer of society
 - Member of household as a sort of adopted noncitizen
 - Freedman takes the name of his old master's family
 - Part of society even if not a citizen, depending on patronage of family



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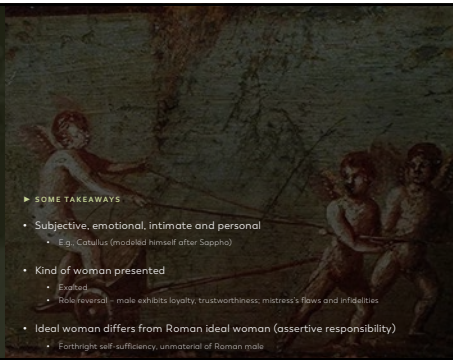
Secondary Source Reading

Judith P. Hallett

"The Role of Women in Roman Elegy: Counter-Cultural Feminism"

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

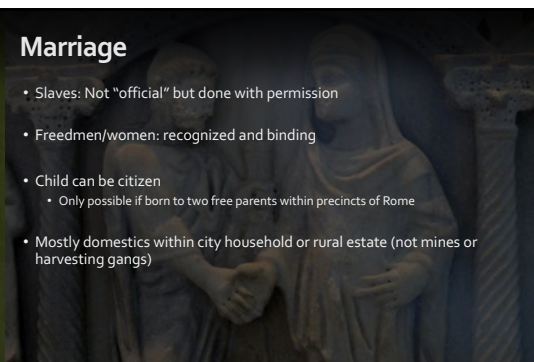
- Subjective, emotional, intimate and personal
 - E.g., Catullus (modeled himself after Sappho)
- Kind of woman presented
 - Enslaved
 - *Religio feralis* – male exhibits loyalty, trustworthiness; mistress's flaws and infidelities
- Ideal woman differs from Roman ideal woman (assertive responsibility)
 - Fortright self-sufficiency, unmaterial of Roman male



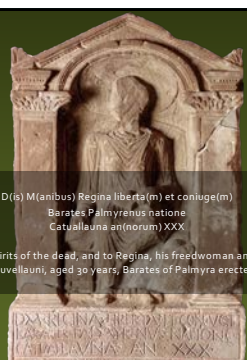
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Marriage

- Slaves: Not "official" but done with permission
- Freedmen/women: recognized and binding
- Child can be citizen
 - Only possible if born to two free parents within precincts of Rome
- Mostly domestics within city household or rural estate (not mines or harvesting gangs)



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D(is) M(anibus) Regina liberta(m) et coniuge(m)
Barates Palmyrenus natione
Catualla an(norum) XXX

'To the spirits of the dead, and to Regina, his freedwoman and wife, of the Catuvellauni, aged 30 years, Barates of Palmyra erected this.'

DAVID NATHANIEL CONVISI
BARATES PALMYRENSIS NATIONE
CATUALLA AN. XXX

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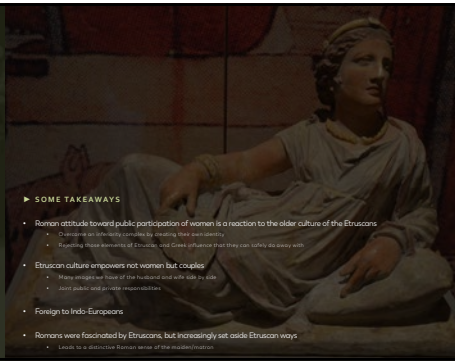
Secondary Source Reading

Larissa Bonfante Warren

"The Women of Etruria"

► SOME TAKEAWAYS

- Roman attitude toward public participation of women is a reaction to the older culture of the Etruscans
 - Etruscans did not really care much for having their men and women
 - Etruscan culture empowers not women but couples
 - Many enjoyed sex both of the husband and wife both in public
 - Joint public and private responsibilities
- Foreign to Indo-Europeans
- Romans were fascinated by Etruscans, but increasingly set aside Etruscan ways
 - Etruscan is a distinctive feature some of the superlatives



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