

Beyond the Roman Aristocracy

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #12

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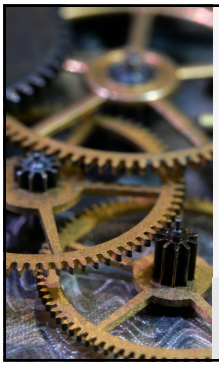

Upcoming Dates

- Monday, December 7
  Position Paper due
- Tuesday, December 15
  Final exam
- Sunday, December 27
  Ultimate Deadline
  No submissions accepted after this date—NO EXCEPTIONS

- No Responses due this week

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Five things today

- The Principate
- Beyond the aristocracy
- The Twelve Tables
- The Roman underclass

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Final Exam

- Identification and Impact
  - Define and discuss the impact of four or five terms or names
  - All terms will come from the review sheet
- Essays
  - Two essays having to do with overall themes of the course
  - Provide an argument and three solid examples
- For each section, I will give you twice as many options as you need

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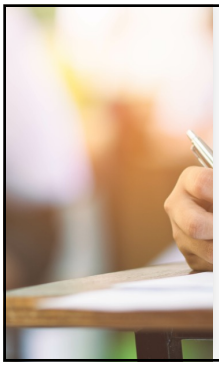

Final Exam review

- The final exam covers all assigned materials
  - Everything in the assigned readings is fair game, even if we did not discuss it in class
  - The essays are cumulative—you can use examples from the entire course
- Review resources are linked on the Exams page
  - These include quiz notes, slides, lecture videos, weekly responses, textual topic discussions from online semesters, maps and timelines, and more

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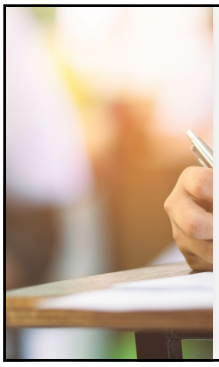

Approach to preparing

- Make a list of the most important milestone events in the periods we've discussed
  - Think about causes and legacies
  - Dates are less important than sequences of events
- Use the review sheet
  - Look through the questions to gauge which topics to spend more time reviewing
  - Take note of the terms and review the ones you're unfamiliar with
- Pregame the essay
  - Try to come up with possible essay questions
  - Map out in advance possible examples and interpretations
  - Example: If there were a question about religion and culture, what would I say and what three examples would I give?

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Questions about whatever



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The Principate

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The Principate

- Republic devolves into a series of civil wars
- Last warlord standing is Octavian, the great-nephew of Caesar
  - He becomes "princeps" = first citizen
  - Family name becomes Caesar Augustus

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Livia

- Augustus shared power with his wife
- Livia took on "private" aspects of the principate
  - Network of matrons, vestals, etc.
  - Intelligence gathering among the nobility
  - Notes written in a secret code no one had access to
  - Moral review of the senate
- Given the name Augusta

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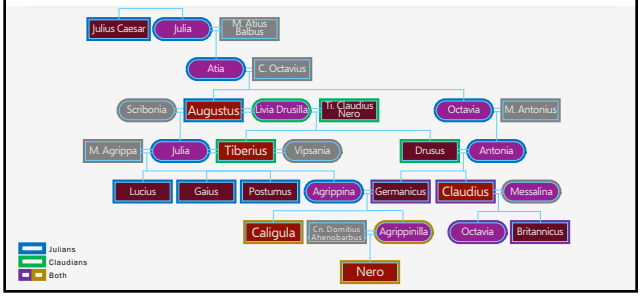
The Julio-Claudians



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Secondary Source Reading

Mireille Corbier

"Male Power and Legitimacy Through Women: The Domus Augusta"

- Shortage of men and an excess of women
- Legitimacy of rule through women
  - Marriages
  - Adoptions
- Danger posed by women
  - Often more popular than the male rules
  - Seen by public as honorable and admirable
  - Much harder to act against
- Domus Augusta was a closed circle entered through via women



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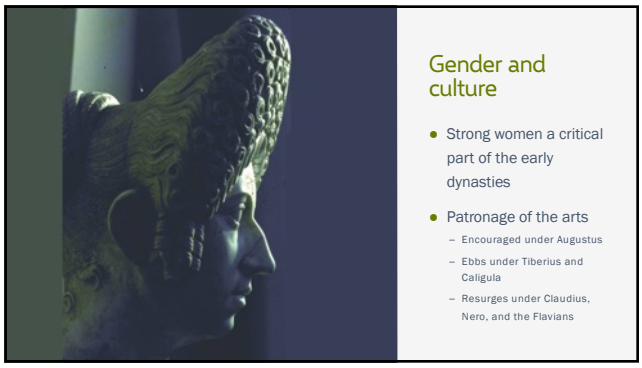

Gender and culture

- Strong women a critical part of the early dynasties
- Patronage of the arts
  - Encouraged under Augustus
  - Ebbs under Tiberius and Caligula
  - Resurges under Claudius, Nero, and the Flavians

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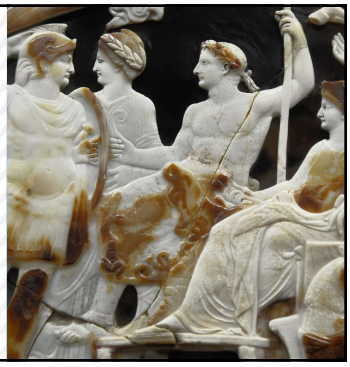
Secondary Source Reading

Susan Fischler

"Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women at Rome"

- Women prominent and of critical importance in the imperial families
- Importance recognized by the state
  - Portraits on coinage
  - Depicted on crossroad reliefs
  - Titles and honors
- Avatars of religious and political continuity between principes
  - Honored as women and as symbols of the imperial order



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Beyond the Aristocracy

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The origins of Rome

- Etruscans
- Greeks
- Carthaginians
- Latins

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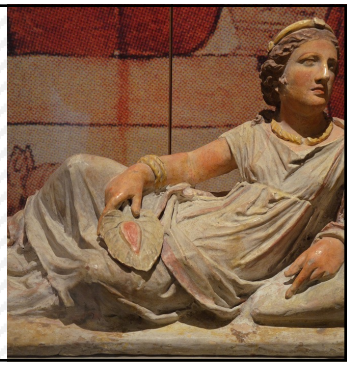
Secondary Source Reading

Larissa Bonfante Warren

"The Women of Etruria"

- Roman attitude toward women's public participation is a reaction to the Etruscans
  - Overcome an inferiority complex by creating their own identity
  - Rejecting those elements of Etruscan and Greek influence that they can safely do away with
- Etruscan culture empowers not women but couples
  - Many images we have of the husband and wife side by side
  - Joint public and private responsibilities
- Foreign to Indo-Europeans
- Romans were fascinated by Etruscans, but increasingly set aside Etruscan ways
  - Leads to a distinctive Roman sense of the maiden/matron



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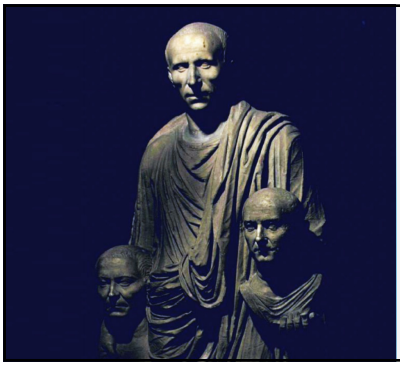

Patricians

- Romans must consult the gods before any act of the state
- Empowers those few families who control the priesthoods
- Patrician families control Rome
  - The state religion
  - All offices with imperium
- Plebeians (non-patrician families) deprived of voice and agency

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Primary Source Reading

Fragments
"The Twelve Tables"



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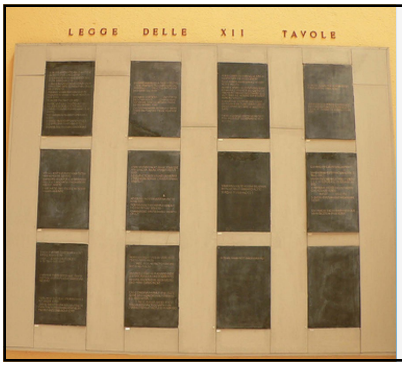

The Twelve Tables

- Six decades in, patrician abuses were worsening
  - Excessive interest on loans
  - Corruption in deciding court cases
- Demands for reform
- 10 lawgivers create a public law code
  - Justice is shared and transparent
  - Reinforcement of shared identity

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Gender and parenting the the Twelve Tables

- Parenting
  - IV.1: A dreadfully deformed child shall be quickly killed.
  - IV.2: If a father sell his son three times, the son shall be free from his father.
- Marriage
  - VI.6: Any woman who does not wish to be subjected in this manner to the hand of her husband should be absent three nights in succession every year, and so interrupt the usucapio of each year.
  - XI.1: Marriages should not take place between plebeians and patricians.
- Women
  - V.1: Females should remain in guardianship even when they have attained their majority.
  - X.3: The women shall not tear their faces nor wail on account of the funeral.

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Finding the Roman lower classes

- Emphasis is on family
- Roman census
- Roman info tends to come from sources oblique to lower classes
  - Legal records
  - Accounts of elite families and individuals

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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"

- 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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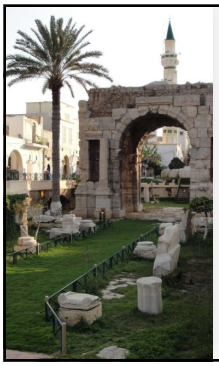

Rome and the Empire

- 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

Liisa Savunen

"Women and Elections in Pompeii"

- 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, corralling, family influence



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The Roman underclass

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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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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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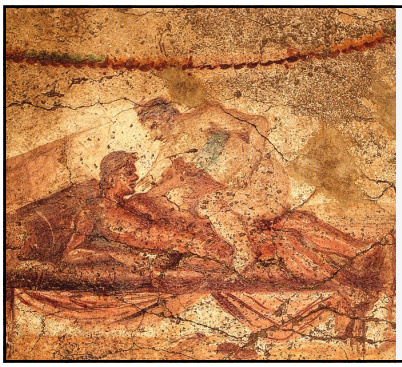

Exploitation

- 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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Selections from Ovid

- Daphne's Refusal
  - Phoebus kills the Python and sees Daphne
  - Phoebus pursues Daphne
  - Phoebus begs Daphne to yield to him
  - Daphne becomes the laurel bough
- The Lament of Hecuba, Priam's Queen
  - Hecuba's lament and transformation
- Pyramus and Thisbe
  - Arsippe tells the story of Pyramus and Thisbe
  - The death of Pyramus
  - The death of Thisbe
- Galatea the Sea Nymph
  - Aeneas's journey to Sicily
  - Acis and Galatea
  - The song of Polyphemus
  - Acis is turned into a river-god

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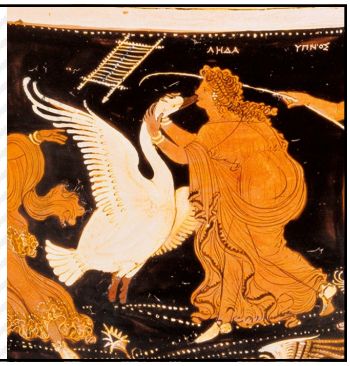
Secondary Source Reading

Leo Curran

"Rape and Rape Victims in The Metamorphoses"

- Metamorphoses
  - Ovid telling all the most interesting stories of mythology
  - Lyrical, lurid style – provocative, readable, and resonant
- Most focused on transformations
  - Often encounters between male gods and female mortals (sometimes the reverse)
  - Abduction of Io by Zeus as bull; form of swan with Leta
- 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 Hallett

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

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



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Marriage for the underclass

- 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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