

Research Seminars

Discipline: Classics and Ancient History

Semester 2, 2021



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With one exception, research seminars will be taking place at 4 pm (Brisbane time) on Friday. Seminar 3 on Friday 10 September will begin at 5 pm instead.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the seminars will continue to be online only in second semester 2021.

The zoom link for the online seminars will remain unchanged for the whole semester, and will be emailed to our mailing list for events in Classics and Ancient History. To receive the zoom link and updates for future events, please email admin-hapi@uq.edu.au.

Semester 2, 2021 Program

Friday 27 August 2021, 4pm	1. Katherine Prouting, The University of Queensland 'Physical and Sexual Abuse in Athenian Lawcourt Speeches' 2. Dr Kit Morrell, The University of Queensland 'Talking about Laws in the Roman Republic'
Friday 10 September 2021, 5pm	3. Associate Professor Anne-Sophie Noel, École Normale Supérieure de Lyon/HiSoMA 'What Can We Do with Objects in Greek Theatre? From Performance Studies to Thing Studies'
Friday 24 September 2021, 4pm	4. Lucile Myers, The University of Queensland 'Celebrating the Transgressive: Charles Townley and the Collection of Intersex Sculptures in Eighteenth-Century Britain' 5. Dr Justin Pigott, The University of Auckland '"These Heaven-Bound Dung Beetles": Late Roman Attitudes towards Slaves Entering the Clergy'
Friday 15 October 2021, 4pm	6. Dr David Rafferty, The University of Adelaide 'Revisiting Christian Meier's <i>Res Publica Amissa</i> '
Friday 22 October 2021, 4pm	7. Edward L'Orange, The University of Queensland 'Far from Conservative: Athenian Religious Change in the Fifth Century BC'

Unable to join our seminars?

Talks 3, 5 and 6 will be recorded for open-access podcasting.

For further details, please contact:

Associate Professor David M. Pritchard, Discipline Convenor of Classics and Ancient History
d.pritchard@uq.edu.au or +61 401 955 160



Titles and Abstracts

1. Katherine Prouting, The University of Queensland

Physical and Sexual Abuse in Athenian Lawcourt Speeches

Domestic violence is a common topic in Athenian literature. Often writers or speakers introduced it to emphasise didactic statements or as a way to continue a story's narrative. However, unlike other genres of Athenian literature, the analysis of domestic violence in Athenian legal speeches is underdeveloped. Domestic violence involves a person perpetrating acts against a victim in which there is a relationship. These acts are often categorised as physical abuse, such as hitting, slapping and kicking, and as sexual abuse, such as rape and non-consensual sexual acts. The Athenians responded to these complex phenomena through the overt and covert use of legal procedures. The latter provided a legal and rhetorical way to examine domestic violence. These procedures could deal directly with alleged domestic violence (e.g. the *trauma ek poronias*) or indirectly, as was the case with the *dokimasia tôn rhêtêrôn* ('public scrutiny of speakers'). In this paper, I shall discuss how the Athenians used forensic speeches to discuss physical and sexual abuse, while contextualising these behaviours through modern studies of domestic violence that are applicable to the world of classical Athens.

2. Dr Kit Morrell, The University of Queensland

Talking about Laws in the Roman Republic

Roman public discourse typically privileged tradition over innovation: 'let no innovation be made contrary to the precedents and customs of the ancestors', as Cicero put it in *Pro Lege Manilia* (60), summing up his opponents' views. Yet, Roman lawmakers frequently did introduce significant innovations. The language of making and naming laws also suggests an attitude to innovation different from the rhetoric of *mos maiorum* ('ancestral custom'). A vote in favour of a proposed law was precisely a vote for change: *uti rogas* ('as you ask'), abbreviated to V on the voting tablet, as opposed to A for *antiquo* ('I maintain things as they are'). Roman statutes were named for their proposers (*lex Acilia*, *lex Julia*, etc.), and it was a source of prestige to give one's name to a new law. Even the inclusion of a so-called *sanctio* clause to try to prevent the repeal of a law anticipated further legislation in the future. This paper will consider what Roman ways of speaking and writing about laws might tell us about attitudes to lawmaking and innovation in the Roman republic.

3. Associate Professor Anne-Sophie Noel, École Normale Supérieure de Lyon/HiSoMA

What Can We Do with Objects in Greek Theatre? From Performance Studies to Thing Studies

Material objects are now a well-established research topic in Greek tragedy. In the past decade, the most remarkable critical turn has been a shift from a performance-oriented interest to an ontological questioning. While the first generation of scholars investigated how objects participated, sometimes crucially, in the performance of Greek tragedy, the current generation is more

interested in the ontology of objects, namely the set of defining properties that characterise their being in ancient plays, and, more widely, how non-human and human beings coexist in the ancient tragic *Weltanschauung*. This shift raises epistemological questions that have not been explicitly formulated. Moreover, a response to these ontological debates on the 'life' of objects has been to absorb and apply new theories: posthumanism and new materialisms are now deployed as new heuristic tools broadening classicists's range of interpretative strategies. However, through a critical reading of Jane Bennett's acclaimed 2010 opus, *Vibrant Matter*, I show how radical new materialist ideas – advocating for the non-human turn – clash with ancient Greek culture. The ancient, tragic materialism indeed grants a relational existence to objects, entangled with human bodies, emotions and cognition.

4. Lucile Myers, The University of Queensland

Celebrating the Transgressive: Charles Townley and the Collection of Intersex Sculptures in Eighteenth-Century Britain

Few figures dominate the collection of antiquities in England in the eighteenth century like Charles Townley. Over the course of three tours of Italy, Townley and his agents acquired some of the most significant Graeco-Roman sculptures to enter Britain. Today, the Townley Marbles form an important part of the Greek and Roman Department of the British Museum. This paper focusses on one type of sculptures collected by Townley, namely his collection of sculptures of Hermaphroditus and other intersex divinities. These works included a recumbent nursing intersex sculpture, an ancient well-head decorated with scenes of sexual conquest, including the rape of an intersex youth, and a carved marble herm. I will detail what we know about the nature, provenance and acquisition of these sculptures. My paper also discusses the reasons for Townley's collecting of them and the nature of their display in his collection. It contrasts his display practices with his contemporaries. Unlike other collectors, Townley did not attempt to minimise or hide the transgressive nature of this material. Instead, he used these sculptures as part of his own self-presentation to show his morally liberal leanings. In examining this aspect of Townley's use of intersex sculptures, we can see the way in which the ancient world could be used to make explicit and validate non-normative moral positions.

5. Justin Pigott, The University of Auckland

"These Heaven-Bound Dung Beetles": Late Roman Attitudes towards Slaves Entering the Clergy

The fourth-century theologian Gregory of Nazianzus considered the entry of slaves and freedmen into the clergy as debasing the church, calling bishops drawn from slave stock 'heaven-bound dung beetles'. Such sentiments were shared by the broader church hierarchy and imperial government of the day with council canons, episcopal rescripts and imperial laws all prohibiting the ordination of slaves. However, despite these proscriptions, the ordination of slaves was widespread. Indeed, on more than one occasion we find Gregory himself ordaining slaves. That we find such inconsistency is unsurprising. The act of slave ordination struck at the heart of tensions between traditional Roman social practice and the emerging Christian institution. By exploring the nature of such tensions, the post-Constantinian church's opposition to slave ordination and the drivers that led men such as Gregory to ignore its prohibition, this paper seeks to provide fresh insight into the social contours of Christianisation.

Titles and Abstracts

6. Dr David Rafferty, The University of Adelaide

Revisiting Christian Meier's *Res Publica Amissa*

Christian Meier's *Res Publica Amissa*, and especially the long introduction to its second edition of 1980, is the most theoretically sophisticated explanation of the collapse of the Roman republic that we possess. Yet, the book has not been translated into English and has made relatively little impact on Anglophone scholarship. It has belatedly become influential in German scholarship and has been a starting point for much of the recent work on Rome's political culture. This paper will explore what we can gain from Meier's work in the light of fifty years of detailed scholarship on the republic and recent work in Political Science that is theoretically similar. The simple concept of 'crisis without alternative' is only one of the riches that Meier's approach offers.

7. Edward L'Orange, The University of Queensland

Far from Conservative: Athenian Religious Change in the Fifth Century BC

Cleisthenes's democratic reforms after 508/7 had a huge impact upon many aspects of Athenian politics and society. However, religion in Athens has often been viewed as a matter quite separate from the sphere of politics, with the common view being that the democratic revolution hardly affected *polis*-level religion at all. Students of the great Geoffrey de Sainte Croix – notably Robert Parker and Emily Kearns – have spearheaded this view, arguing that any religious changes brought about by Cleisthenes were conservative changes, simply continuing existing trends in state religion. According to this view, religious changes seen in the fifth century BC were a result, not so much of democracy, but of a natural progression in religious practice. This paper directly challenges this view of Athenian religious history. I will demonstrate that the reforms of Cleisthenes led to changes to *polis* religion that can be described only as rapid and quite profound. In little more than fifty years, Athenian democracy demonstrably changed the traditional priesthood and cult personnel as well as the financing of, and the participation in, religious cults and festivals. It also introduced state-based control systems into deme cults, and democratic ideals into distinctly religious settings. The reforms of Cleisthenes were thus a watershed in the history of Athenian *polis* religion.