

History Part II: Paper 9 = Classics Part II Paper C3 [2019-20]

Course Directors: Professor Robin Osborne and Dr John Weisweiler

Aims and objectives

1. *To introduce students to ubiquitous importance of slaves in all aspects of life, political, social, economic and cultural, across Greek and Roman history.*
2. *To explore a wide range of literary, documentary and visual sources relevant to slaves in Greek and Roman society.*
3. *To encourage students to reflect on the particular methodological problems in accessing the culture or experience of those outside the elite.*
4. *To reflect more widely on the range of ways in which human beings were enslaved and the range of justifications given for slavery in antiquity.*

Scope and structure of the examination paper 2019-20

The three-hour paper will contain twelve or thirteen essay questions concerning various topics covered in lectures, classes, and supervisions. Some of the questions may offer passages or images for comment. Some questions will concern the Greek world, some the Roman world, and some will require comparison between Greek and Roman worlds. Candidates are required to answer three questions, with no restrictions on which three they answer.

In **2020-21** the scope and structure of the paper will remain unchanged.

Course description

SLAVERY IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN
WORLD

PROF. R. OSBORNE AND DR J.
WEISWEILER and others
(21L and 3C: Michaelmas)

Nothing signals the gap between the modern world and the world of ancient Greece and Rome more starkly than the more or less universal ancient acceptance of slavery. Slavery was not simply an institution which the ancient world had and the modern does not, it grounded Greek and Roman thought as well as Greek and Roman life in the systematic subjection of a substantial section of the human population.

Understanding the effects of slavery is vital for our understanding of all aspects of the Greek and Roman world.

But if slavery is something that unites Greece and Rome in opposition to us, slavery in the ancient world was not a single thing. Slavery profoundly affected social, political, economic and cultural relations, but it did not determine them. Indeed, slavery offers us one of the best lenses through which to do comparative history both within the Greek and Roman worlds and between them. The distinctive choices made in one Greek society or at one time emerge most clearly when compared with each other and with the choices made in one or other part of the Roman world at one or another time, and vice versa.

Slavery has attracted continuous scholarly attention for the past two generations, but discussion has been particularly lively in the past decade with the appearance of several works surveying the whole field (Bradley and Cartledge 2011, Hodkinson, Kleijwegt and Vlassopoulos (forthcoming), and Hunt 2018), and with a renewed interest in comparative history. This course builds on this new scholarly energy to look at the root-and-branch way in which slavery shaped the ancient Greek and Roman world.

After an introductory lecture drawing attention to the peculiar historiography and particular politics of the study of ancient Greek and Roman slavery in modern times, the lectures will offer both a chronological history of Greek and Roman slavery and a close analysis of how slavery affected economic, political, social and cultural life across the Greek and Roman worlds. The course is as interested in the ways in which slavery affected the way in which people thought about the world as in the grim realities of the slave trade, as interested in the politics of modern representations of ancient slavery, whether in scholarship or on film, as in the impact of slavery on ancient political life.

Preliminary reading:

Hunt, P. (2018) *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery*. Malden MA.

Wiedemann, T. E. J. (1981) *Greek and Roman Slavery: A Sourcebook*. London

Provisional lecture programme:

Classics and slavery: the politics of the historiography of ancient Greek and Roman slavery

2 Slave and the law: the articulation of slave status across the Greek world

3 Becoming a slave: warfare, the slave trade and slave breeding in the Greek world

4 Varieties of Greek slaves: the occupations and conditions of slaves in the Greek world

5 Slaves and the economy in the ancient Greek world

6 Observing slaves: the marking and unmarking of slavery in the Greek city

7 Slaves and the state: collaboration and resistance in the Greek city

8 Imagining slaves in the Greek world

9 The slave body: torture and the truth of sex

10 Ceasing to be a slave: manumission

11 Justifications and critiques of slavery in ancient Greece

12 Slavery in the Republic: citizenship, unfreedom and the Roman model of slave society

13 Slavery in the Early Empire: regulating slave reproduction in a republican monarchy

14 Slavery in Late Antiquity: the making of a Christian slave society

15 The Roman slave supply: slave reproduction under the conditions of empire

16 Varieties of Roman slave: the occupations and conditions of slaves in the Roman world

17 Freedmen and Freedwomen in the Roman city (MB)

18 Thinking with slavery in Roman literature (MB)

19 Challenging slavery: slavery and its discontents from the Stoics to Augustine (??)

20 Slave revolts and slave resistance in the Roman Empire (MB)

21 The afterlife of the ancient slave: from *Spartacus* to *Gladiator* and beyond.

2 x 1.5 hour classes: 1 on the *Life of Aesop*

2 on Greek and Roman slavery in a comparative context

Specimen Paper

Answer 3 questions.

1. 'Scholarship has been obsessed with the legal status of slaves, but to the slaves themselves legal status was irrelevant'. Did the legal status of slaves matter in the ancient Greek and Roman world?
2. Has the foreignness of slaves in the Greek and Roman world been over-emphasised?
3. Why have modern scholars been so exercised over whether ancient Greek and Roman slaves were or were not treated humanely?
4. 'Greece and Rome needed slaves to maintain the myth that everyone else was free.' Discuss
5. Was the ancient economy ever based on slavery?
6. Did it matter by what sort of name a Greek or Roman slave was called?
7. When and why did slaves revolt in Greek and Roman antiquity?
8. 'No one was as much a slave as the Roman freedman.' Discuss. You may if you wish refer to the following passages in your answer:

a) In the magistracy of Pason son of Damon, in the month of Herakleos, when Habromakhos son of Xenagoras and Markos son of Markos were serving as councillors. Written in the hand of Sosikles son of Philleas on behalf of Sophrona daughter of Straton, who was present and ordered him to write on her behalf. On the following conditions Sophrona, acting with the consent of her son Sosandros, hands over to the Pythian Apollo to be free the female house-born slave [literally, 'body'] named Onasiphoron, priced at three silver minae, and has received the whole price; Onasiphoron has entrusted the sale to the god, with the aim of becoming free and not to be claimed by anybody at any future time, and to have no obligations of any kind whatever to anyone. The guarantor required by law is Eukleidas son of Aiakidas. And if anyone touches Onasiphoron in order to enslave her, then she who has sold her and the guarantor together are to ensure that the sale to the god is valid; and similarly anyone at all is to have the legal right to take Onasiphoron away so that she may be free, without incurring any penalty or being subject to any legal action or punishment. Onasiphoron is to remain with Sophrona for the whole period of the latter's life, doing whatever she is ordered to do without giving cause for complaint. If she does not do so, then Sophrona is to have the power to punish her in whatever way she wishes to. And Onasiphoron is to give Sosandros a child. This sale is to be deposited as required by law: one copy engraved on the Temple of Apollo, the other taken to the public archives of the city by the Secretary Lysimakhos son of Nikanor, Witnesses: Signature of Eukleidas son of Aiakidas: I have become guarantor of the above-stated sale, appointed by Sophrona with the agreement of her son Sosandros. There are five more witnesses, two priests of Apollo and three private persons. *Fouilles de Delphes 3.6.36*

b) Now if anyone fails to carry out their obligations to their ex-master or ex-mistress or their children, he should merely be reproved and be let off with a warning that he will be severely punished if he gives cause for complaint again. But if he has behaved insolently or abused them, he should be punished, perhaps even with a period of exile; and if he physically attacked them, he should be condemned to hard labour in the mines; and also if he has been responsible for spreading any malicious rumours about them or inciting someone to lay an accusation against them, or has initiated a law suit against them. *Digest 37.14*

c) I too used to be just what you are, but I have risen as far as this by my own merits (*virtute mea*). What men need is initiative, none of the rest matters. I buy well, I sell well; let others give you different advice... Well, as I was about to say, it was thrift that brought me this good fortune. When I arrived here from Asia, I was just as big as this candlestick. Actually I used to measure my height against it day by day, and I used to anoint my lips from the lamp to get a beard on my face faster. Well, I was my owner's particular pet for fourteen years; there's nothing dishonourable in doing what your master orders. And I used to do my mistress's will too— you know what I mean: I won't spell it out, since I'm not the one to boast (76) But in accordance with the will of the gods, I became the master of the household, and took command of my master's little brain, And then? He nominated me co-heir with the Emperor, and I inherited an estate big enough for a senator. But no one is satisfied with doing nothing; I decided on a business career. I won't bore you with a long story: I built five ships, filled them with wine at a time when wine was equivalent to gold, and sent them to Rome. You'll suppose I'd planned what happened next: every single ship was wrecked. Fact, not fiction! in one day Neptune devoured thirty million Sesterces. Did I give up? Certainly not! I felt this loss as though it was nothing. I built other, bigger ships, better and more fortunate ones, so that no one should say I was not a courageous man. As you know, a great ship is a sign of great courage. I filled them with wine again, and bacon fat, and beans, and perfumes from Capua, and slaves. At that moment, Fortunata supported me most loyally —she sold all her gold and clothes and gave me one hundred aurei, cash. That was the yeast for my savings (*peculium*); what the gods will, happens quickly. On one voyage I made a round profit of ten million Sesterces. At once I bought back every estate which had belonged to my patron. I built a house, I bought slaves and cattle. Whatever I touched grew like a honeycomb. When I began to have more wealth than the whole of my community back home, I withdrew my hand; I retired from business life and drew an income from advancing capital to my freedmen.

Petronius *Satyrice*

75–6

9 Was the sexual life of the Greek or Roman slave simply the sexual fantasy of their master?

10 Was religion an opiate for slaves in *either* the Greek city *or* the Roman empire?

11 'Slavery destroyed the possibility of truth.' Discuss with reference to *either* the Greek *or* the Roman world.

12 Did slavery disappear in the later Roman empire?

13 'Twentieth-century films featuring Roman slaves were simply ways of coping with the realities of contemporary life in the USA.' Discuss.

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