



CLAS/HIST 315: Roman Civilization and Daily Life

Course Syllabus
Spring Semester 2026

Instructor: Giampiero Bevagna, MA

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Type: Standard Course

Lab/Site-Visits Fee: USD\$295

Course Description

How did average citizens of a town in the Roman Empire live? What were their daily habits, duties and pleasures? Where did they work, how was family life organized, and, finally, what was the system of beliefs and values that guided daily life? In order to answer such questions we will follow the life of ordinary citizens in Pompeii, an ordinary city on the shores of the Mediterranean in Roman Italy during the first century CE.

Famous for being destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE and uniquely preserved under feet of hardened lava, Pompeii and the neighboring towns are now one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. Since their “rediscovery” in the 1700s, these cities have yielded tons of immensely valuable archaeological material: from remains of charred food to impressive ruins of public buildings; from written graffiti on the walls to rich art collections in individual houses. With all categories of material culture, Pompeii can provide us with an insight into social, political, religious, and commercial life in the ancient Roman world.

By tracing the footsteps of these people, we will explore the streets, homes, shops and public buildings of Pompeii and neighboring cities, such as Herculaneum. Through the things they left behind, we will learn about everyday life, and ultimately death, in the context of the ancient Roman world in general. Pompeii will serve as a microcosm for studying Roman society and culture. The overarching goal is to integrate archaeological, art historical, and primary literary material into a single, coherent intellectual narrative in order to gain a complex understanding of Roman Civilization at its height.

In the end, the goal is to “look at the Romans through the eyes of the Romans.”

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Measures Course requirements that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome
examine both primary and secondary sources (examine how authors of	reading assignments, participation and oral presentation

different time periods and social backgrounds present key issues)	
illustrate and interpret the material remains (archaeological record) of the Roman culture	reading assignments, participation and oral presentation
estimate how Roman civilization influenced their culture, and, more generally, the development of world history	reading assignments, participation and oral presentation

Course Materials

Readings

All readings will be available digitally on Moodle. See “Umbra Institute Course Materials - Textbooks and Readers” handout provided in the orientation folder for more information.

Further Readings

Additional hand-outs will be provided in classes when needed.

Assessments

Attendance	10%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Oral Report	25%
Analysis of Documentaries	20%

Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: Decimal and centesimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on:

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your

grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Written Exams (45%)

The course includes a mid-term (20%) and a final (25%) examination. Items covered on each exam include lectures and readings. Testing format will be multiple choice, T/F questions, map and glossary quizzes, short answer questions and short essays. Study guides will be distributed in advance.

Oral Report (25%)

Each student will prepare and present a review - a quick recap - of the previous lesson's reading/s. When scheduled, class sessions will begin with a five-minute summary of the main data and key ideas discussed in the previous session; that summary is presented by a student both orally and in written form. (Hand-outs are requested, ppts are welcomed.) Presentations will be assigned to each student at random.

The instructor will lead off with the first one showing students what the review should cover: the summaries must contain the most important points from the previous session.

Also, for about 10 more minutes, the same student will lead an in-class discussion, preparing questions to be addressed to the classmates in order to clarify some concepts or enhance the meaning of others. To receive full credit on this assignment, a student must correctly identify the most relevant information from a class session, summarize and prioritize this information, and deliver it confidently to the class.

A prompt and a rubric with more information on the assignment will be provided in Moodle.

Analysis of Documentaries (20%)

Students will write a report/analysis of a documentary on Roman Civilization or Pompeii. Students will find the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

Course Content Disclaimer

Some ancient art shows scenes of sexual intercourse or violent images.

Additional Course Information

Class sessions will be based on students **having read** the assigned material for class, either from primary sources (what the Romans themselves wrote) or from secondary sources (what moderns have written about the Romans). Classes will be a combination of discussion and lecture, leaning more heavily to discussion when the readings are primary sources.

During class sessions we will study important examples of Roman/Pompeian monuments and pieces of art. These examples will help students to understand and visualize better the fundamental aspects of Roman history and culture. Students are expected to pay great attention to these examples in order to be able to interpret images of Roman civilization and provide an informed, detailed discussion.

Lectures will include material beyond the course readings for which students will be held responsible in the midterm and final exams. Therefore, it is critical for students to take notes, and class attendance is required.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. All students are allowed 2 unexcused absences, which do not need to be justified. It is the student's responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity. i.e., sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class. More than 2 absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences (8 or more) may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other

test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled. Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism. Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices (for example, ear buds) cannot be used during class lectures and discussions for anything other than note-taking, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, students are asked to keep computers and phones away and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have a vision or other accommodation; 2) if you are using a tablet to take notes, one which is not connected to the internet; 3) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools; or 4) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

JAN 19	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
JAN 21	GEOGRAPHY AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

WEEK 2

JAN 26	<p>THE ROMAN EMPIRE</p> <p><u>READING #1:</u></p> <p>A) M. WARD, F. M. HEICHELHEIM, C. A. YEO, <i>A HISTORY OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE</i>. 6TH ED., (PRENTICE HALL 2016) 1-3, 7-9</p> <p>B) L. ADKINS, R.A. ADKINS, <i>HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME</i> (FACTS ON FILE 2004) 110-115, (115-119)</p>
JAN 28	<p>ROMAN SOCIETY</p> <p><u>READING #2:</u></p> <p>M. WARD, F. M. HEICHELHEIM, C. A. YEO, <i>A HISTORY OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE</i>. 6TH ED., (PRENTICE HALL 2016) 40-48</p>

WEEK 3

FEB 2	<p>ROMAN SOCIETY</p> <p><u>READING #3:</u></p> <p>A) B. CAMPBELL, <i>THE ROMANS AND THEIR WORLD. A SHORT INTRODUCTION</i> (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS 2012) 171-178</p> <p>B) L. ADKINS, R.A. ADKINS, <i>HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME</i> (FACTS ON FILE 2004) 379-380</p>
FEB 4	<p>ROMAN RELIGION</p> <p><u>READING #4:</u></p> <p>L. ADKINS, R.A. ADKINS, <i>HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME</i> (FACTS ON FILE 2004) 274-275, 277</p>

WEEK 4

FEB 9	<p>ROMAN RELIGION</p> <p><u>READING #5:</u></p> <p>L. ADKINS, R.A. ADKINS, <i>HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME</i> (FACTS ON FILE 2004) 307-314</p>
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FEB 11	<p><i>ROMAN FAMILY</i></p> <p><u>READING #6:</u></p> <p>A) L. ADKINS, R.A. ADKINS, <i>HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME</i> (FACTS ON FILE 2004) 376-378</p> <p>B) B. CAMPBELL, <i>THE ROMANS AND THEIR WORLD. A SHORT INTRODUCTION</i> (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS 2012) 182-186</p>
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WEEK 5

FEB 16	<p><i>ROMAN FAMILY</i></p> <p><u>READING #7:</u></p> <p>T. PARKIN, "THE ROMAN LIFE COURSE AND THE FAMILY," IN B. RAWSON, ED., <i>A COMPANION TO FAMILIES IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLDS</i> (WILEY-BLACKWELL 2011) 276-290</p>
FEB 18	<p><i>ROMAN HOUSE</i></p> <p><u>READING #8:</u></p> <p>A) J. BERRY, <i>THE COMPLETE POMPEII</i>, (THAMES & HUDSON 2007) 88-91, 156-177</p> <p>B) J.-A. DICKMANN, "SPACE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE ROMAN WEST," IN B. RAWSON, ED., <i>A COMPANION TO FAMILIES IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLDS</i> (WILEY-BLACKWELL 2011) 53-72</p>

WEEK 6

FEB 23	<p><i>RECKONING TIME IN ROME</i></p> <p><u>READING #9:</u></p> <p>L. ADKINS, R.A. ADKINS, <i>HANDBOOK TO LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME</i> (FACTS ON FILE 2004) 374-376</p> <p>+</p> <p>REVIEW</p>
FEB 25	<p>MIDTERM EXAM</p>

SEMESTER BREAK = MARCH 1-9

WEEK 7

MAR 9	<p><i>POMPEII: URBAN LAYOUT.</i></p> <p><u>READING #10:</u></p> <p>P. WILKINSON, <i>POMPEII. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE</i> (I.B. THAURIS 2017) 64-71</p> <p>+</p> <p><i>POMPEII IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.</i></p> <p><u>READING #11:</u></p> <p>P. WILKINSON, <i>POMPEII. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE</i> (I.B. THAURIS 2017) 3-5, 7-20</p>
MAR 11	<p><i>SOCIETY</i></p> <p><u>READING #12:</u></p> <p>A) S. CORMACK, "THE TOMBS AT POMPEII," IN J. J. DOBBINS, P. W. FOSS, EDs., <i>THE WORLD OF POMPEII</i> (ROUTLEDGE 2007) 585-606</p> <p>B) J. BERRY, <i>THE COMPLETE POMPEII</i>, (THAMES & HUDSON 2007) 92-99</p>

WEEK 8

MAR 16	<p><i>POLITICS</i></p> <p><u>READING #13:</u></p> <p>A) M. BEARD, <i>POMPEII, THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN</i> (PROFILE BOOKS 2010) 188-215</p> <p>B) P. WILKINSON, <i>POMPEII. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE</i> (I.B. THAURIS 2017) 98-101</p> <p>C) J. BERRY, <i>THE COMPLETE POMPEII</i>, (THAMES & HUDSON 2007) 128-133</p>
MAR 18	<p><i>RELIGION</i></p> <p><u>READING #14:</u></p> <p>A) M. BEARD, <i>POMPEII, THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN</i> (PROFILE BOOKS 2010) 276-309</p> <p>B) J. BERRY, <i>THE COMPLETE POMPEII</i>, (THAMES & HUDSON 2007) 186-208</p>

WEEK 9

MAR 23	<p><i>FOOD</i></p> <p><u>READING #15:</u></p> <p>M. BEARD, <i>POMPEII, THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN</i> (PROFILE BOOKS 2010) 216-233</p>
MAR 25	<p><i>BATHS</i></p> <p><u>READING #16:</u></p> <p>A) M. BEARD, <i>POMPEII, THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN</i> (PROFILE BOOKS 2010) 241-250</p> <p>B) P. WILKINSON, <i>POMPEII. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE</i> (I.B. THAURIS 2017) 118-125, 139, 143-148</p>
MAR 27-29	<p><u>POMPEII & NAPLES FIELDTRIP</u></p>

WEEK 10

MAR 30	<p><i>SEX</i></p> <p><u>READING #17:</u></p> <p>A) M. BEARD, <i>POMPEII, THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN</i> (PROFILE BOOKS 2010) 233-240</p>
APR 1	<p><i>THEATRE</i></p> <p><u>READING #18:</u></p> <p>A) M. BEARD, <i>POMPEII, THE LIFE OF A ROMAN TOWN</i> (PROFILE BOOKS 2010) 253-275</p> <p>C) J. BERRY, <i>THE COMPLETE POMPEII</i> (THAMES & HUDSON 2007) 134-148</p>

WEEK 11

APR 6	NO CLASS
APR 8	<p><i>AMPHITHEATRE</i></p> <p><u>READING #19:</u></p> <p>C. PARSLow, "ENTERTAINMENT AT POMPEII," IN J. J. DOBBINS, P. W. FOSS, EDs., <i>THE WORLD OF POMPEII</i> (ROUTLEDGE 2007) 212-223</p>

WEEK 12

APR 13	<i>DOCUMENTARY SCREENING</i>
APR 15	<p><i>THE 79 CE ERUPTION.</i></p> <p><u>READING #20:</u></p> <p>P. WILKINSON, <i>POMPEII. AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE</i> (I.B. THAURIS 2017) 47-62</p> <p>J. BERRY, <i>THE COMPLETE POMPEII</i>, (THAMES & HUDSON 2007) 18-34</p> <p>+</p> <p><i>DOCUMENTARY SCREENING</i></p>

WEEK 13

APR 20	FINAL REVIEW
APR 22	FINAL EXAMINATION