

Americal Classical League 2011 Institute: *Fines Latiores*

Perspectives on Roman Marriage

Sunday, June 26, 3:00-4:30 pm

Session Presider & Panel Coordinator: Ann R. Raia araia@cnr.edu

Marriage was central to Rome's very earliest beginnings and effecting a *iustum matrimonium* was key to Roman citizenship for one's heirs. The Romans extended to special allies the *ius conubium*, the right of marriage, as a privilege of association granted by treaty, using it to build empire. Despite the critical importance of this institution to Roman civilization and history, however, few courses on antiquity deal with the topic of Roman marriage and misconceptions about its legal forms continue. Using ancient visual and textual evidence, the panel will address various aspects of Roman marriage for both the elite and non-elite classes, and will present three activities that could be incorporated into a language or culture class dealing with the Roman world.

Introductions & Presentations: 3-4 pm

1. Ann R. Raia araia@cnr.edu, The College of New Rochelle

"*Matrimonium: From Puella to Materfamilias*"

Marriage was the prize for which elite citizen parents prepared their daughters from birth. The paucity of texts on the subject of marriage and the absence of women's voices is felt most keenly here, for marriage was the rite of passage for a pubescent female, enabling her as bride, wife, and mother to make a unique contribution to the State by producing new citizens. Expectations of her as primarily responsible for the harmony and well-being of her household are symbolized by the betrothal ring of clasped hands (*concordia*), the groom's welcome of his bride to his house with fire and water, and the gifts of spindle and distaff the *nova nupta* carried in her procession to her husband's home. Using PowerPoint slides of material remains and the text of Pliny's *Ep.* 5.16, I will describe the upper-class *puella's* journey to marriage.

2. Sarah Hull, hull.sarah@gmail.com, Huntington Union Free School District

"Class Unit and Project on Roman Marriage"

This unit plan was designed to help teachers guide their class through an analysis of one of Rome's core institutions and is now published on the *Companion* website. Studying the types of valid marriage permitted under Roman law and simulating the steps toward a Roman marriage gives the contemporary student of Roman culture insight into the significance it had for the Romans. This activity invokes as well the related topics of gender, class, and power that were operative in Roman society. The unit is adaptable to the needs and goals of each teacher and class. While I designed the unit for a middle school population of boys and girls, it can be used with older students as well. I will distribute a handout of detailed instructions and bibliography describing my experience of offering this unit to my middle-school class this spring.

3. Rachel Meyers rlmeyers@iastate.edu , Iowa State University

"Representations of Elite Roman Marriage"

The weddings of the Roman elite may have been lavish affairs which included a procession, musicians, and a feast, but works of art rarely depict all these features. The *dextrarum iunctio* was not a component of a legal marriage, yet the gesture has been interpreted as symbolizing marriage on a number of Roman monuments, including biographical sarcophagi. Why was this gesture depicted more often than another element of the wedding? Does it symbolize a desired virtue or an emotional connection between husband and wife? I will use a number of monuments and texts to explain the legal aspects and to explore the sentimental nature of marriage.

4. Keely Lake klake@wayland.org, Wayland Academy

"Ausonius on Love and Marriage"

Students have a fairly unsophisticated view of women in antiquity. What little time is devoted to the ancient Greeks and Romans in World Civilization classes leaves almost no time for women. Furthermore, those assigned to teach high school survey courses have often not been trained as Classicists. While teachers of Latin need to focus on reading Latin, we also seek to incorporate culture and history in our classes. I will use Ausonius' *Epigram* 20 to illustrate how this 4th century Christian writer's poem can open up discussion of love in Roman marriage. Because the poem uses vocabulary and themes from Catullus and Ovid, as well as from Vergil and the epic tradition, it is a valuable classical reception piece on marriage. I will present a unit plan suitable for high school and college courses which includes readings on women in antiquity and elegiac *mores*, a commentary and vocabulary list for *Epigram* 20 suitable for intermediate Latin students, and a bibliography of possible passages from primary and secondary sources. These materials will be published on the *Companion* website.

5. Judith Sebesta JL.Sebesta@usd.edu, University of South Dakota

"Monumental Evidence for Non-Elite Roman Marriage"

In discussing elite Roman marriages Latin textbooks rightly emphasize the public nature and public importance of what to our students would seem to be a private, family celebration and rite. The families involved, however, hoped that that marriage would lead both to the production of future citizens and the continuance of the family line, prestige, and rituals, and so crowded their homes with witnesses and emphasized the public procession of the bride to her husband's house. But what about the non-elite classes? How can we recover their view of and their valuation of marriage? In a PowerPoint presentation, I will use several funerary monuments pertaining to marriage particularly among freedpersons to show how students can use texts, images, and comparative positioning of images to learn about how non-elite Romans viewed and valued marriage.

Questions and Discussion: 4-4:30 pm