

INTRODUCTION: 2011 ACL INSTITUTE PANEL ON MARRIAGE

Convinced of the importance of the institution of marriage to the study of ancient Rome, we put this panel together to share information and strategies for "broadening the boundaries" of Latin and culture classes. Marriage, legitimate and not, lies at the very heart of Rome's best-known founding stories – those concerning Aeneas and Lavinia, Rhea Silvia and Mars, and the kidnapped Sabine brides. The right to a Roman marriage, *conubium*, was awarded by the Romans to privileged allies through treaty. The subject of marriage appears in many different genres (law, oratory, history, philosophy, letters, poetry, drama) and media (statues, frescoes, numismatics, reliefs, monumental inscriptions). It is strange, therefore, that so little information remains about it and that so much of it is fragmentary. Even though our knowledge of the institution in classical times would be enlarged if Seneca's *De Matrimonio* had survived, it would still be another text about women written from a male point of view.

The Roman conception of marriage was quite different from our own:

marriage was a public not a private affair.

marriage was regulated by law but needed no written documentation

marriage needed no ceremony, only the intent to be married (*maritalis affectio*)

Roman law stipulated three conditions for a *iustum matrimonium*, a valid marriage, which alone guaranteed the citizenship of children born of the union:

1. The foremost of the three was *conubium*, which signified "the right to marry." It was achieved by, most importantly, having Roman citizenship; being within the right degree of kinship; having reached the age of puberty (12 for girls, 14 for boys)

2. The second condition was the consent of all parties: the *patresfamilias* and each of the partners

3. The third was not already being in a valid marriage

Our panel handout contains profiles of our five presentations. They span Roman history from the 1st century BCE to the 4th century CE and use texts and material remains that reflect on the experiences of elite and plebeian women. I will explore cultural expectations of young upper-class Roman girls as they prepare for marriage. Sarah Hull will share a classroom activity on the Roman Wedding that she created for her middle school students. Rachel Meyers will offer images of the *dextrarum iunctio* that appear on funerary monuments and have been thought to represent the highpoint of the wedding ceremony. Keeley Lake will describe the instructional materials she developed for reading Ausonius' poem to his wife with a Latin class. And Judith Sebesta will demonstrate how students can learn to interpret class attitudes toward marriage from viewing non-elite funerary monuments.