

ROMAN BIOGRAPHY

Instructor: K. Kapparis

Summary: In this class we will have the opportunity to study the Roman biographical tradition in context. As the Romans inherited biography from the Greeks, it is important to begin the discussion in this course from works like Xenophon's *The Education of Cyrus*. While biography essentially started as a subgenre of historical writing focusing on one important individual rather than any specific historical period or major incident, eventually it acquired a life of its own as an independent genre. Biography focuses on a single human being and aims at illustrating not only his/her actions, but also the thoughts, motives, emotions, and values system that triggered these actions, as well as how these actions had the broader influence in contemporary society, politics, or the course of history as a whole. It is not surprising that the Romans, who had a strong appreciation for the influence of individuals in the course of history embraced the biography and made it their own. In the extant body of classical literature, with few exceptions, the most significant biographical works come from the imperial era, whether these had been written in Greek or in Latin.

Weekly Schedule

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Week

- 1: Biography in context.
- 2: Xenophon: *The Education of Cyrus* (in English translation)
3. Xenophon: *Agesilaos* (In English translation)

PART 2: *Cornelius Nepos, Liber de excellentibus viribus exterarum gentium*

4. Agesilaus (and comparison with the work of Xenophon)
5. Lysander and Thrasybulus
6. Epaminondas
7. Alcibiades
8. Themistocles
9. Hannibal

PART 3: Suetonius: *Caligula* (Weeks 10-15)

16. Conclusions

Assessment: The assessment is based on participation, preparation and performance in class. Students will be expected to make a 30-45 minute presentation (topics will be announced in the first week of the fall semester), and complete a 2000 words research paper on their topic. All course materials will be available online, and students will be encouraged to share research papers and other course materials with their peers.