Monday 5 September

10.00 Introduction

10.30 Lecture One Hörsal E

Professor David Konstan, New York University

“Of Love and Loyalty: The View from Ancient Greece”

Abstract:

The great German sociologist, Georg Simmel, wrote: “If love continues to exist in a relationship between persons, why does it need faithfulness?” Is loyalty implicit in love or is it a kind of duty? Is it a virtue? Is it obligatory? In my talk, I will compare ancient Greek and modern attitudes toward love and fidelity, and suggest some surprising differences.
"Philo of Alexandria and the Allegorical Interpretation of Myths."

Abstract:

A most important part of the extensive work by the Jewish thinker Philo of Alexandria (c. 50 B.C.-50 A.D.) is a running allegorical commentary on Genesis 2-41, in which he interprets the Biblical text by applying a methodology very similar to that employed by the Stoic philosophers and at least some of the authors whom we call mythographers. Philo not only adapts this method to the purpose of his commentary (which in part is a defence of the Jewish religious tradition), but goes even further than the Stoic authors that preceded him in expanding the uses of allegory. Various examples of Philo's use of allegory will be presented and discussed.

Mantegna (Le Louvre) Minerva expelling the Vices from the Garden of the Virtues
15.15 Open Seminar HC206

Dr. Pura Nieto Hernández, Brown University & Professor David Konstan, New York University

“Poet and Performance: From Epinician to Epigram.”

Abstract:
The seminar will be a close reading of selected epinician poems (victory songs) of Pindar (522- c.443 BC) and epigrams (short and sometimes satirical poems and sayings) of Marcus Argentarius (Augustan (?)). Texts of the selected poems will be distributed beforehand. The reading will be followed by a discussion in which we explore differences in style, eroticism and performance of poetry, and reflect on questions of continuity and change.
Tuesday 6 September

10.15 Lecture Three Hörsal G

Professor Judith P. Hallett, University of Maryland, College Park

"Consent and Consensuality in Ancient Greco-Roman Marriage"

Abstract:

Marital unions among the ancient Greeks and Romans were shaped and controlled by several different socio-cultural practices which limited the amount of consent permitted to the actual partners: arranged marriages, forced divorces, and sexual performance pressures on marital couples to produce male children (even though wives were often barely into their teens). While men were allowed to engage in sexual relationships outside marriage as long as they did not involve freeborn boys and married or maritally-eligible women, often these relationships were with slaves and not consensual. Consensuality was, however, central to men's and women's adulterous unions, and to men's relationships with the kinds of women featured in Roman comedy, satire and elegy.

Funerary relief depicting a Roman family: father, mother, and child
13.15 Open Seminar HD108

Professor Judith P. Hallett, University of Maryland, College Park

“Gendering Roman Notions of Female Leadership: The Binary and Beyond”

Abstract:

An article in the December 7 issue of the BBC News magazine, entitled “Beyond ‘he’ and ‘she’: the rise of non-binary pronouns,” examines a surging trend on US college campuses. It reports that “in the English language, the word ‘he’ is used to refer to males and ‘she’ to refer to females. But some people identify as neither gender, or both—which is why an increasing number of US universities are making it easier for people to choose to be referred to by other pronouns.” Helpfully, the article includes a glossary, which defines the following terms: transgender (applied to a person whose gender is different from their “assigned” sex at birth); cisgender (applied to someone whose gender matches their “assigned” sex at birth—i.e. someone who is not transgender), non-binary (applied to a person who does not identify as “male” or “female”), genderqueer (similar to non-binary, observing that some people regard “queer” as offensive, others embrace it), and genderfluid (applied to a person whose gender identity changes over time).

My paper shares concerns with both this particular article, and with the American linguistic movement it chronicles: a movement that admirably seeks to transcend the limitations imposed by a binary model of gender identity. For it focuses upon a very specific linguistic phenomenon, the different contexts in which three classical Roman authors employed the Latin noun dux, ducis “leader”, when describing women. The first, and best known, is Aeneid 1. 36 4, where Vergil represents the disguised goddess Venus, mother of Aeneas, as narrating how the legendary queen Dido led a band of exiles from her native Phoenicia to found the North African city of Carthage, and as punctuating her narrative with the statement dux femina facti, “a woman was the leader of the deed.” The second is Valerius Maximus, Memorable Doings and Sayings 6.1.1, which labels the legendary Roman matron Lucretia as dux Romanae pudicitiae, “leader of Roman sexual respectability,” before relating that and how she took her own life after being raped by Sextus Tarquinius, the son of Rome’s last Etruscan king. The third is Tacitus, Annales 1. 69, relating how a historical woman, the elder Agrippina, rallied the beleaguered troops of her husband Germanicus along the Rhine River in 15 CE, editorializing that “a woman great of spirit performed the functions of a military commander in those days (femina ingens animi munia ducis per eos dies induit).

To be sure, these linguistic usages may appear to imply a binary concept of women’s proven and potential capacities as leaders, one which contrasts women who assume public, political and military, responsibilities ordinarily undertaken by elite men with women who set a private example through moral rectitude of a kind only available to members of their own sex. But I will argue that the contexts in which these usages occur ultimately reveal a more complex scheme, one that also complicates a formulation articulated by Hallett in 1989. Namely, that Roman society simultaneously held notions of elite Roman women as ‘same’ and ‘other.’ Hallett’s formulation itself seeks to build on and yet complicate Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that all women are ascribed with “alterity”, perceived as a species totally separated from men, in large part because of their more powerful and uncontrollable sexual desires. Hallett notes that while some Roman authors represent women in this way, as totally different from men, others stress the similarities between elite women and the men of their blood families by attributing to them
valued qualities of mind, character and speech which rightly earned their male blood kinfolk public distinction and influence. Finally, I will maintain that the specific concept of genderfluidity, applied to an individual whose gender identity changes over time, has some relevance to my claim that the Romans regarded leadership itself as a fluid entity, requiring different qualities in different individuals of different genders in different circumstances. Hence I contend that Roman women were valued for displaying different kinds of leadership, conduct specific to their own gender as well as conduct resembling that expected of privileged males.

Dido and Aeneas

Fulvia Antonia (77 – 40 BC)