

CC 348: Nero in Life and Death

Time: T/TH 12:30-2 pm

Place: WAG 10

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Ebbeler

Office: WAG 211

Phone: (512) 471-7570

Required Texts (available at The Co-op on Guadalupe or Amazon.com)

- Anthony A. Barrett and J.C. Yardley, *The Annals: The Reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero* (Oxford World Classics, 2008)
- Edward Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)
- Catherine Edwards (trans.), *Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars* (Oxford World's Classics, 2000)
- P.G. Walsh (trans.), *Petronius' Satyricon* (Oxford World's Classics, 1999)
- E.F. Watling (trans.), *Seneca, Four Tragedies and Octavia* (Penguin, 1966)
- Additional secondary readings to be available for download from PCL E-Reserves

Course Description

He famously fiddled while Rome burned. He was said to be a persecutor of Christians, a sexual deviant, overly fond of the theater (and his mother). His biographer claimed that he was responsible for the deaths of his aunt, mother, and several wives. He built a lavish palace known as the "Golden House" and undertook several other expensive and imprudent building projects. He was also the fifth emperor of the Roman Empire and the last of the Julio-Claudians. In this course, we will be studying the rise and fall of Nero in his own historical context. Nero was a remarkable historical figure whose life has provided inspiration to writers and artists throughout the middle ages and into the modern era. Soon after his death, he was memorialized as a "bad emperor", a tyrant. Subsequent generations of Christians believed that he had martyred Peter and Paul and saw him as the Antichrist. The stories about Nero's life and exploits are marvelously entertaining, but to a large extent they leave us with only a caricature of an emperor who, despite his flaws, had great strengths. In this course, we will read these narratives with a critical eye, in an attempt to better understand and articulate the complexities of Nero's life and reception.

Classroom Etiquette

Please plan to arrive on time to class and remain until 1:45. When you are in class, I expect you to pay attention and to actively participate; be respectful of me and your other classmates; and to approach the course material with an open and inquisitive mind. If you find that you are having trouble in the course, I expect you to come to my office hours and seek advice as early as possible in the semester. If you are having personal problems, I also expect that you make me aware of the situation as soon as possible. If you wait until the end of the semester, there is very little that I can or will do. In return, you can expect that I will come to class on time, prepared, and excited to teach you the day's material. I will return graded exams and writing assignments in a timely manner (typically the next class meeting). Finally, I will be available to you to answer any questions you might have about the course material or your performance in the course.

Grading Policies

- 2 Midterm Exams (50%): there will be two, non-cumulative midterm exams during the semester. Exams will consist of a mixture of short answer questions, written passage and image IDs, and an essay. You will be responsible for all material covered in the reading and in class lectures. The dates of the two midterm exams are **2nd March and 29th April**). Study guides will be provided one week in advance of each exam.
- 10-12 page Research Paper/Peer Review (25%): you will be asked to produce a substantial research paper on some topic of your choosing related to the course topic. Your topic must be approved by Dr. Ebbeler. As part of the paper-writing process, you will also peer-review a draft of another student's paper. Rough drafts of the papers (7-9 pages) will be due on **13th April**. Peer-reviews will be due on **20th April**. Final drafts will be due on **6th May at 12:30 pm**. For each 24 hours after 12:30 pm on 5/6 that the paper is late, you will lose one full letter grade from the earned grade, regardless of the reason. Specific details about this assignment will be made available in mid-February.
- Short Response Papers (10%): throughout the semester, there will be five opportunities to write short response papers to assigned readings. I will provide a short prompt to help you focus your response. Your four highest scores will be counted towards your final grade in the course. These papers are due at the start of class and no short response papers will be accepted late or by email, regardless of the reason. You must be in class to hand them in and must remain in class for the subsequent discussion.
- Attendance and Participation (15%): Attendance and participation are crucial elements of the course. Students are expected not only to be in class but to be in class prepared and eager to discuss the assigned readings. I do not expect that you will always have a brilliant contribution, but I do expect that you have prepared the assignment to the best of your abilities. Each student is permitted two absences, no questions asked; after this point, your participation grade will be lowered. For this reason, it is to your advantage to save these "free passes" for a time when you are ill or have a family emergency. Frequent and enthusiastic participation will likewise be reflected by a higher participation grade. Whether or not you are in class, you are responsible for everything covered in class.

Your final percentage grade will be translated into a letter grade according to the following table. I will round in your favor if you earn .5 or higher (e.g. 73.5=74; 73.2=73). If you are taking this course on a credit/no credit option, you must earn at least a 70 to receive credit for the course:

100-93: A

92-90: A-

89-87: B+

86-83: B

82-80: B-

79-77: C+

76-73: C

72-70: C-

69-67: D+

66-63: D

62-60: D-

Below 60: F

Make-up Policies

Make-up exams will be given only in cases of documented athletic commitment; documented illness, death of an immediate family member (documented by an obituary listing you as a

survivor), or other documented emergency. You must **also** notify me in person or by phone as soon as possible and **at least 3 hours** BEFORE the time of the exam that you will miss the exam. If you fail to do so, you will receive a zero on the exam, regardless of the reason. **If you are an athlete, you must make me aware of scheduling conflicts during the first two weeks of the semester.** You should also expect that the make-up exam will be of a different form and significantly more difficult. Make-up exams will be permitted no more than one week from the time of the originally scheduled exam. After that point, the instructor reserves the right to refuse a make-up exam. I highly encourage you to take all exams at the time that they are scheduled.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with the University of Texas's Honor Code:

“The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”

Any student caught or facilitating cheating on any assignment will receive an F in the course and immediately be referred to the Dean of Students. In cases where dishonesty is strongly suspected, I reserve the right to re-examine the student(s). I will, however, assume absolute integrity on your part until shown otherwise. If you are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php>. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the contents of this website and to avoid any behavior that might be interpreted as academic dishonesty.

Add/Drop Policy

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Texas's official add/drop policy. Any requests to drop the course after the fourth week will be handled in accordance with these rules. Be forewarned: while you may use a “one time exception” to late-drop the course, the exception is to the deadline, not to the requirement that you must be earning at least a 70% in order to receive a Q-drop.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic adjustments for qualified students with disabilities. For more information contact the Dean of Students at (512) 471-6259 or see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd>. In order to receive accommodations, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). This office will document your disability, inform me of your situation, and instruct me on the necessary accommodations. If you chose not to register with SSD, I cannot make special accommodations for you.

Religious Holidays

If you will miss class (including exams) to celebrate a religious holiday, you must notify me AT LEAST 14 days prior to the holiday so that we can make arrangements for you to make up the assignment. All make-up work must be completed no later than one week after the missed class.

Course Outline

January 19: Introduction to Course; Foundation of Rome and the Problem of Tyranny

- 21: The Rise and Fall of the Roman Republic; the Birth of Empire
 26: The Julio-Claudians
 28: Nero: The Early Years
- February
- 2: Agrippina: Marriage to Claudius, Scheming
 4: Agrippina: Nero's Oedipal Complex
 9: Death of Agrippina; **Response #1**
 11: The Wives (Octavia)
 16: The Wives (Poppaea)
 18: Sexual Deviancy
 23: Fire of 64; Persecution of Christians; **Response #2**
 25: Persecution of Christians; Review for Midterm
- March
- 2: **Exam 1**
 4: Out of the Ashes: Rebuilding Rome
 9: Guest Lecture by Dr. Rabun Taylor on Nero's Building Program
 11: The Emperor's Spring Break in Greece; **Response #3**
 16: SPRING BREAK
 18: SPRING BREAK
 23: The Emperor on Stage
 25: The Birth of a Tyrant
 30: The Birth of a Tyrant, con't; **Response #4**
- April
- 1: Another Problematic Dinner Party in Neronian Rome
 6: The Pisonian Conspiracy and the Suicides of Seneca and Petronius
 8: No Class
 13: The Rebellion of Vindex and the Death of Nero; **Response #5**
(Rough Drafts Due)
 15: Remembering Nero in the Middle Ages
 20: Monteverdi's "The Coronation of Poppea"; **Peer Reviews Due**
 22: Nero on Film: Quo Vadis and the Sign of the Cross
 27: Nero on Film: Quo Vadis and the Sign of the Cross
 29: **Exam 2**
- May
- 4: Nero on TV: The Mad Emperor
 6: **Final Papers Due**