Stephanie McCarter
Sewanee: the University of the South
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GSIC Panel
samccart@sewanee.edu

Planning Small Seminars in Translation

I. Women and Gender in Classical Antiquity

A. Course Objectives: This course examines the lives of women and the formulation of gender in the ancient world. We will explore how the Greeks and Romans constructed both female and male gender and what behavioral and sexual norms they assigned to each, and we will attempt to draw some conclusions about the lived experiences of women in this period.

B. Greek Readings

2009	2012
Odyssey selections	OMIT
Hesiod *Theogony*	
Hesiod W&D (Pandora)	
Semonides 7	
Sappho, Erinna, Corinna	OMIT Erinna & Corinna
Xenophon *Oeconomicus* selections	
Lysias 1	
Antigone	CHANGE: *Trojan Women*
Medea	CHANGE: *Hippolytus*
Against Neaera	
Lysistrata	
Ecclesiazousae	OMIT
Plato, *Republic* selections	OMIT
Plato, *Symposium*	CHANGE: Archaic lyric selections ADD: Plutarch *Life of Lycurgus, Sayings of Spartan Women*

C. Major Themes and Topics for Greek Readings

1) Reproduction & Legitimacy
2) Misogyny
3) Status of women (e.g. wife, prostitute, concubine, metic, slave)
4) Sexuality
5) Ideals of Gender
6) Power Dynamics & Patriarchy
7) Traditional Roles of Women (Religion, Burial & Lament, Spinning, etc.)

C. Sample Topics & Readings (February 2012)

Feb.	1 (W)	Women in Athens: Ideals and Realities	Pomeroy chapters
	3 (F)	Domestic Ideals	Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* selections
	6 (M)	Adultery and Domestic Life	Lysias 1
	8 (W)	Beauty & Adornment; Women in Art Eroticism, and	Llewellyn-Jones, "Dress, the Ideal Female Body in Greek Art"
	10 (F)	Greek Prostitution	*Against Neaera*
	13 (M)	Neaera & Social Class	*Against Neaera*
	15 (W)	Women in Religion & Comedy	*Lysistrata*
	17 (F)	Lysistrata: Priestess, Wife, or Hetaira?	*Lysistrata*
	20 (M)	Women in Athenian Tragedy	*The Trojan Women*
	22 (W)	Women in Athenian Tragedy	*The Trojan Women*
	24 (F)	Gender Conflict in Tragedy	*Hippolytus*
	27 (M)	Gender Conflict in Tragedy	*Hippolytus*
	29 (W)	Women in Sparta	Pluarch *Life of Lycurgus; Sayings of Spartan Women*

II. Latin Literature in Translation

A. Course Objectives: In this course our aim is to read extensively from the literature of the Roman Republic and Empire. We will familiarize ourselves with the major authors whose works influenced not only each other but literature through the ages. We will examine both the literary and cultural backgrounds that shaped the themes, content, and style of these works.

B. Sample "Thesis" for Roman Elegy:

> Whereas traditional Roman thought emphasized old-fashioned morality and duty to the state, the elegiac lover prioritizes his individual interests while reveling in an inverted moral code.

<u>Recommended Reading</u>

Filene, Peter. 2005. *The Joy of Teaching: A Practical Guide for New College Instructors*. Chapel Hill.

I would like to begin by thanking the members of the graduate student issues committee for organizing this panel. I always found these presentations most useful when I was a graduate student and am happy that I can now attempt to offer some advice of my own. Let me say too how pleased but also intimidated I am to be on a pedagogy panel with Chris Craig, who was an exemplary teacher to me when I was a student at the University of TN and remains a model for me of outstanding classroom instruction. I am just glad I don't have to follow him.

I would like to talk with you today about planning small seminars in translation from the perspective of someone who is a fairly new professor. I received my PHD in 2007 and taught at St. Olaf College in Minnesota for a year before coming to Sewanee in 2008. Sewanee is the affectionate name of the University of the South, a small liberal arts college of approximately 1500 students located in the countryside of Tennessee. Though Sewanee's Department of Classical Languages maintains a rigorous dedication to courses in Latin and Greek we also try to offer a wide variety of courses in translation, such as mythology, Classical Drama, Greek and Latin Literature in Translation, and Classics in Cinema. My talk today will focus on my experiences planning two such courses: Women and Gender in Classical Antiquity and – to a lesser extent – Latin Literature in Translation. These are 300-level courses, and each was capped at 19 students. Such courses should ideally include extensive amounts of discussion and are not primarily lecture based, though I do find that the occasional lecture is unavoidable for reasons I will explain. These courses are particularly challenging to plan because, firstly, the range of students in the class can vary greatly; Classics majors and minors normally make up a minority of students enrolled, and the familiarity of the others with the Classical world varies significantly from one student to the next. Secondly, these courses normally cover a much broader spectrum of material than an upper-level Greek or Latin class, where one can spend an entire semester lingering over one author. Because of this breadth, choosing and organizing the material for a course in translation can be quite tricky. I will attempt to offer some

insights first into structuring such courses and choosing what topics and materials to cover and then I will outline some strategies for balancing lecture and discussion and some ideas for encouraging and focusing discussion.

My instinct whenever I teach a course for the first time is to try to include absolutely everything. This is true of courses in translation as well as upper-level Greek or Latin seminars. I can become quite distraught at the thought of not covering, say, a favorite Horatian ode. In general I have had to learn to follow the old adage, "less is more," particularly since my instincts tell me that "more is more." This, I find, is particularly true when it comes to discussion based courses, since having a narrower focus leads to deeper discussion and a greater likelihood that students will fully digest the material. Assigning a hundred or more pages for each class, for example, requires one to run through at a marathon pace without stopping to let students linger over interesting points of discussion or ask important questions.

But knowing what material to include and what to exclude is really a process of trial and error, and, no matter how hard one tries, the perfect syllabus is simply not going to be self-evident the first time one plans a new course. Let me focus on the Women and Gender course and take you through the steps I took when planning it; I choose this class because its organization was more difficult for me than any other course in translation I've taught due to the sheer volume of material that applies to the study of Greco-Roman women and gender. The first thing I always do is take a look at what other people have done. As one of my colleagues has put it to me, there's no need to "reinvent the wheel" every time you teach a new course. Search online for sample syllabi, ask your colleagues for syllabi for similar classes, write to a colleague at another university. For Women and Gender I first wrote to Sara Myers, who teaches a Women & Gender course at UVA, and she gladly sent me her syllabus to consult. I also went to the website Diotima, where one can find a large repository of syllabi for courses on women and gender in antiquity from leading scholars. Such

syllabi will give you lots of ideas and provide you models for putting together a course that is ultimately your own.

I next attempted to outline the course objectives for inclusion on the syllabus, which helps me clarify goals for my own benefit as well as my students'. For women and gender my course objectives are stated as follows:

> This course examines the lives of women and the formulation of gender in the ancient world. We will explore how the Greeks and Romans constructed both female and male gender and what behavioral and sexual norms they assigned to each, and we will attempt to draw some conclusions about the lived experiences of women in this period.

This outline presents two major approaches to the material: on the one hand we are considering the experiences of real flesh-and-blood ancient women and on the other the theoretical construction of gender. Having outlined these objectives I next began to consider what works would help me meet them. This is to me by far the most difficult part of planning a course. Would secondary or primary materials best help me meet these objectives, or a combination of both? While ultimately I use a combination, I tend to favor primary materials, so I start by making a wish list of what I would ideally include and measure that against the days I have available. I then proceed to eliminate much of my list.

The first time I taught this course I simply tried to do too much. On your handout I have listed just the Greek readings (I left out the Roman readings) I included in 2009 and then what I changed when I rethought the course for this semester (and one might think I need to eliminate even more, and I've already started to rethink the syllabus for the next time I teach the course). I must say that doing less has been tremendously beneficial, as has changing the meeting times from TR to MWF, which allows each class to be more narrowly focused. Some classes work better MWF and others TR, which is another very important consideration.

How then did I choose what to omit? It was a combination of assessing the needs and experiences of Sewanee students and considering what texts worked best with my stated course

goals. For example, I love teaching the *Odyssey*, and this is a very fruitful text for the study of women in antiquity. However, this is a text I chose to omit this second time around so that we could pay more attention to less often read texts such as the *Against Neaera* and *Lysias* 1. I also gave up Antigone and Medea in favor of Euripides' Trojan Women and Hippolytus. On the Roman side I grudgingly omitted the *Aeneid*. How, you might ask, can I possibly teach a Women & Gender in Antiquity class that fails to discuss Penelope or Dido or Antigone or Medea? Certainly this wouldn't be right for every program. One thing that surprised me when I arrived at Sewanee was the number of opportunities students have to read major Classical works. The English department, for example, offers a very popular course with multiple sections every semester called Representative Masterpieces that covers such readings frequently. Every year sixty or so freshman enroll in the university's Humanities sequence, the first semester of which focuses on the ancient world and covers Homeric epic, the *Medea* or *Antigone*, and the *Aeneid*. Other regular Classics courses such as Ancient Drama or Mythology or Greek Literature in Translation also frequently cover these popular texts. But in far fewer classes will they read about Neaera or the nameless wife of Euphiletos in Lysias 1 or the also unnamed Mrs. Ischomachus of Xenophon's Oeconomicus, or the pig or bee woman of Semonides. The *Trojan Women* and *Hippolytus* are less well known to Sewanee students, and I wanted the chance to introduce them to something new. At other institutions Classics might not have so strong a presence, and your course might be the only chance for them to read the Odyssey or the Aeneid, in which case you perhaps be more inclined to include them.

Another consideration is how well the readings fit in with the overall structure and themes of the class. For example, it made better sense to me to use archaic poetry to illustrate pederasty than Plato's *Symposium*, which is often used as a source, because I wanted to introduce this concept before reading Sappho, who some have suggested is a female pederast. It makes better sense to compare Sappho's archaic poetry with that of another archaic poet than a philosopher from the

Classical period. One therefore has to consider carefully how one class builds on and responds to those around it. Furthermore, for all of its interesting female characters and what it reveals about the construction of gender, the *Odyssey* is a much trickier text for shedding light on the experiences of real ancient women, so I decided to omit it in favor of works that better fulfilled my course goals.

Once I have a clear idea of the materials I would like to assign I try to come up with a few overarching themes or concepts to make sure these readings work well together. I have listed seven themes for the Greek half of my Women and Gender class that I felt were important and that engaged with multiple texts.

1) Reproduction & Legitimacy
    -Theogony, Lysias 1
2) Misogyny
    -Pandora, Semonides, Hippolytus
3) Status of women (e.g. wife, prostitute, concubine, metic, slave)
    -Neaera
    -Lysistrata (the line between wife and prostitute become blurred)
    -Oeconomicus (the ideal duties of a wife)
4) Sexuality
    -Sappho
    -Neaera
    -Hippolytus
5) Ideals of Gender
    -Oeconomicus
    -Trojan Women
6) Power Dynamics & Patriarchy
    -Theogony
    -Trojan Women
    -Pederasty
7) Traditional Roles of Women (Religion, Burial & Lament, Spinning, etc.)
    -Oeconomicus (woman as manager of oikos)
    -Lysistrata (woman as religious agent)
    -Trojan Women (female lament and mourning)

This is a lot of major themes with which to contend and I would urge you to try to limit these as much as possible. In this particular example each of these themes could be viewed under the larger umbrella theme of male control over the female, and I wanted each work to shed light on as many of these themes as possible; if not, it got the axe. These themes and concepts need to be introduced

early and repeated often, so it's essential that you yourself have them clearly delineated beforehand, perhaps even including them on the syllabus.

To sum up so far: less is more; consult the expertise of others; choose material and readings with a careful eye on overarching themes and topics; consider also how each reading fits in with the larger experiences of the particular students at your institution.

I would like now to consider some ways of balancing discussion and lecture as well as planning each class with an eye toward fostering discussion. Though I teach at an institution which gives great weight to discussion-based learning, and though I too see the immense value of this approach, in these broad courses in translation I find it impossible to refrain entirely from incorporating some lecture. To a large extent this is because the familiarity students have with the subject matter varies greatly, and I need to make sure we all have the appropriate background for jumping into deeper discussions. If you look on the back of your handout (under C) you will see my daily assignments for the month of February (2012), in which we focused on women in the Classical period. Some days were more geared toward lecture and others discussion. For example, on February 1 I introduced the broad topic of "Athenian Women," which we would then explore in more depth through the month. This introduction required me to do a lot of the talking so that I could give them the background necessary for reading the assigned texts. Lecture therefore served as the springboard for the discussion-based classes that followed. Greek prostitution on Feb. 10 was also largely a lecture but was followed with a day of discussion. A couple of days were a combination of lecture and discussion; for example, February 8th's class on Women in art consisted partly of me presenting to them and partly of them responding to Llewellyn-Jones's article in light of what I had just presented. On February 15 I found it necessary to spend some time introducing them to women's role in Greek religion before jumping into a discussion of the Lysistrata, in which women's religious experiences are central. What is important is that you have a good balance

between lecture and discussion, with discussion following up and reinforcing the concepts from lecture.

Even on lecture-heavy days there are ways to keep the students engaged and talking. Once you've presented a fact or concept, for example, you should ask *them* to think of its causes or consequences. For example, upon introducing Pericles' Citizenship law of 451/50, which required that in order for a child to be a legitimate Athenian citizen both his mother and his father had to be Athenian, I would throw the discussion back to the students by asking them how this might affect the lives of women in Athens. Or after telling them that during the Thesmophoria women took over the meeting-place of the Assembly, the Pnyx, I would invite them to consider the reasoning behind this practice and its significance. When introducing Greek Prostitution I showed artistic representations of prostitutes and sexual acts, but I tried to open it up to the class to consider the motives behind these representations. Thus when I incorporate lecture into the syllabus I envision it as a springboard for launching deeper discussions among the students.

Let me end by saying just a little bit about another course in translation that posed different challenges, Latin Literature in Translation. This was a much easier class to organize, with half of the semester focusing on the greatest hits of Republican literature and the second half those of imperial literature. The course objectives were quite straightforward as well: "In this course our aim is to read extensively from the literature of the Roman Republic and Empire. We will familiarize ourselves with the major authors whose works influenced not only each other but literature through the ages. We will examine both the literary and cultural backgrounds that shaped the themes, content, and style of these works." What made this course tricky was tying together the various themes and works we encountered along the way, since our readings weren't organized around a central idea, such as women and gender. Let me offer one strategy that helped both me and the

students that you might want to consider not only in the planning stages of the course but also in your daily preparation for teaching.

For every class I tried to formulate a clear thesis that helped to focus my ideas for that day and to tie our reading in with other works of literature we read. I've listed my "thesis" for Roman Elegy: "Whereas traditional Roman thought emphasized old-fashioned morality and duty to the state, the elegiac lover prioritizes his individual interests while reveling in an inverted moral code." With my mind focused on this thesis I could easily draw contrasts between elegiac lovers and, say, Aeneas or Livy's heroes or find points of comparison with the young lovers of Roman comedy. Sometimes I presented this thesis to the class, but more often I simply used it as a way to focus myself beforehand. In having a clear idea or goal for each class I was able to keep discussion from getting sidetracked and became less likely to bombard them with less pertinent or more specialized information. Coming up with a central idea or argument promotes simplicity, which is often a struggle for me. In turn, I have the students do their own theses. Most days they were required to come in with their own thesis statement written on a notecard with three pieces of supporting evidence from the text. Sometimes I would give them a prompt such as, "How are Tacitus' aims different from those of Livy and why is this significant?" These thesis exercises provide a great way to jump into larger issues of discussion and get them to think of important points they can support with textual evidence in preparation for writing papers or essays.

There is much more I could say on this topic, but in compliance with my own advice to keep it simple and streamlined I offer this summarizing thesis, if you will: Less is more; make thematic connections; and finally, organize each class around a clear, simple goal or idea.