

Challenges for Male Instructors in Teaching Feminist Perspectives and Issues of Sexual Violence.

Drawing on discussions that took place at *Feminism and Classics* V and VI and at past APA roundtables, this paper shares experiences and offers advice and for instructors in teaching topics such as rape and sexual violence. This paper will also discuss approaches to incorporate feminist perspectives and scholarship (including those not necessarily part of the Classical scholarly canon) into a wide range of Classics courses.

It goes without saying that many standard texts and narratives from the ancient world involve instances of sexual violence, but often these incidents are quickly dismissed, glossed over, or avoided completely. For example, in Roman history and civilization courses students frequently read about the rape of Lucretia, but rarely pause to discuss the act of sexual violence in and of itself, and that such a story must have fundamentally affected perceptions of gender roles and expected norms in Roman society. And, despite the proliferation of courses on gender, sexuality and women in antiquity, feminist perspectives, scholarship, and discussions on many of these sensitive topics are absent from general introductory and survey courses. From on-going discussions it has been made clear that, though many instructors want to discuss these issues and introduce a wide variety of scholarly approaches to their classes, there is still confusion and uncertainty about the best means and place to do so.

While much of what will be explored in this paper applies to any instructor, the challenges I will discuss will focus, in particular, on those faced by male instructors. Many men feel that they should avoid discussing issues of sexual violence rather than suffer from embarrassment or scandal at mishandling a topic. The issue of perceptions of

male authority (or lack thereof) and expertise on these topics, as feminists, and in feminist scholarship will be addressed.

How to best prepare a class and manage a discussion are critical issues. Currently there is great debate on the extent instructors should provide “trigger warnings” for students. Though it is quite true that discussions on these topics can elicit strong student reactions, to avoid discussion of them at a time when sexual violence on college campuses is a focus of students, fellow professors, administrators and even the current federal administration seems insufficient and inadequate. I will offer suggestions on how to include these topics in lectures and in discussions, and the paper will conclude by offering advice in designing units and a syllabus for courses in which these topics consistently arise. In addition, I will detail some of the resources available to instructors and steps that can be taken to make instructors and students feel safer about engaging with these topics in their courses. The presenter will also have former students present who will address their experiences in class, as well as their perspectives on how various instructors addressed (or did not) these challenging topics in their coursework.