

Vox Populo: The Risks and Rewards of Public Scholarship

In April 2015, the Paideia Institute launched *Eidolon*, an online classics journal meant to encourage scholars to write for a non-specialist audience. Internet scholarship provides unique opportunities for classicists: opportunities to draw timely comparisons between the ancient world and current events, to engage with the ancient world informally or humorously, and to write in a personal or subjective style. But classical scholars, especially junior faculty and graduate students, are only rarely encouraged or trained to do this kind of unconventional scholarly writing.

There are many benefits to public scholarship. It allows scholars to share their experiences and work with an audience that reaches far beyond their sub-field: when executed well, an article published on the internet can reach thousands of readers within days. This kind of writing also can be a unique opportunity to establish the continuing relevance of Classics in the face of the “crisis of the humanities” and increasing pressure on undergraduate students to enter STEM fields. For younger scholars, it also provides a chance to share their work quickly and forge connections with more senior members of the field.

But public scholarship comes with potential risks as well as advantages. Writing for a wide audience and with a strong personal voice increases the potential to upset and anger some readers, including one’s friends, family, or potential employers. Writing for the internet is also fundamentally different than conventional scholarship, and it requires practice to do well. Since these articles are rarely given credit in hiring and promotion – and may actually impede hiring, promotion, or tenure – time spent working on them is time that could be spent working on peer-reviewed publications that would have more professional weight.

In this workshop, participants will begin by hearing brief presentations by several

scholars who have written for *Eidolon*. These presenters are at different stages in their academic careers, and they also have experience in other kinds of writing for a wider audience, from book reviews to memoirs to articles in widely-read internet publications. These presenters will explain why they chose to publish on these nontraditional platforms, the challenges they encountered while writing, the benefits and fears that did *not* materialize, and what kind of feedback they have received. A question-and-answer period will follow. Finally, participants will split into small groups to share and develop ideas and discuss appropriate venues for potential public intellectual articles.