Classics Day, 2011

A morning of lectures, discussion, and a competition for high school students studying Latin 3 and 4

Friday, October 21, 2011   9:00 am--1:30 pm

Sponsored by

The Institute for the Humanities and the Department of Classics & General Humanities

Montclair State University

Program

On Friday, October 21, 2011 the Department of Classics and General Humanities at Montclair State invites high school students who are studying Latin 3 and 4, together with their teachers, to our annual Classics Day, a morning of lectures, discussions and academic competition. Six students only from each school may participate in the competition (teachers may bring additional students to attend the lectures only).

Classics Day will begin with an opening session at 9:00 am with welcoming remarks and orientation. The lectures begin at 9:20. Following the lectures, at 11:20, students who are participating in the competition will go to their assigned room for the half-hour test. Students who are not participating in the competition can have lunch at that time.

The Lectures

You will be able to choose two lectures from the following topics. Groups of 10 or more may be split up between more than one lecture (see registration form).

1. The Latin Lover in the Middle Ages

Perhaps the most famous lover in Classical Latin literature is Vergil's Dido, the queen of Carthage, whose doomed love affair with Aeneas ultimately motivates her suicide. Aeneas and Dido's unhappy love affair remains a popular story in medieval literature, largely through twelfth-century adaptations of Vergil's text in French and German. In addition to Dido, the Middle Ages is also very familiar with another female queen from Antiquity, Semiramis. Like Dido, the medieval Semiramis becomes most famous for her love affairs. This talk will consider both these (in)famous queens through a medieval lens, looking at the changes in how these figures are portrayed between Antiquity and the Middle Ages and what such changes can tell us about medieval thought, beliefs, and institutions.

Speaker: Alison Beringer, Department of Classics & General Humanities, MSU

2. In Search of Cleopatra: Uncovering the Queen Behind the Myth

What do we know about Cleopatra? How do we know it? Direct evidence is hard to find. Even our biographies of Cleopatra come from outside Egypt and were influenced by the negative propaganda of her enemy, Augustus. Plutarch provides one of the most complete accounts of her life, but he was a

Greek author and lived over a century after Cleopatra. The Egyptians didn't produce narrative histories and Cleopatra didn't write an autobiography. This session will examine some other types of evidence, including documentary sources, archaeological finds, and the results of forensic analysis.

Speaker: Prudence Jones, Department of Classics &General Humanities, MSU

3. Heroes and their Women

Aeneas was not the only ancient hero who had woman trouble. This illustrated talk will focus on several other ancient heroes whose "boy meets girl" stories did not end well. Participants will be encouraged to compare ancient and modern thinking about relationships, and will receive a handout with ideas for further investigation.

Speaker: Susan Hussein, Department of Classics & General Humanities, MSU

4. Theseus: From a Greek Hero, to a Medieval Scoundrel, to a Hero Once Again

The Theseus myth spans many generations, with different aspects of the myth highlighted by various writers. This lecture will explore the Ovidian and medieval versions of the myth, and examine Mary Renault's historical fiction of the late 1950s to Jim Henson's 1987 retelling of the Greek myths, with a nod at the video game, "The God of War." Theseus is a figure who easily fits Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey" pattern, and his role as a hero can be compared to contemporary movie heroes today's high students will recognize. Rumors abound that Theseus will appear in a new Tarsem Singh film, *Immortals*, in November.

Speaker: Ellen Bakalian, Department of Classics & General Humanities, MSU