

**The Ancient World: Film and Reality**  
**HONR 1320 (freshman humanities course); 3 credit hours; 25 students**  
**Susan O. Shapiro, Associate Professor of History and Classics**  
**Utah State University**  
**University Honors Program**  
**Christie Fox, Director**

**General Description:**

In this course students learn about the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome by viewing popular films about the period and reading the historical and literary documents on which those films are based. In written essays and class discussions, students also analyze these films in terms of the contemporary historical contexts in which they were produced. By learning about the accuracies (and inaccuracies) in these historically-based films, students come to appreciate the substantial influence that the Greek and Roman civilizations have had upon our own.

**Film List**

1. *Troy* (2004), d. W. Peterson.
2. *The Three Hundred Spartans* (1962), d. R. Maté.
3. *The Three Hundred* (2007), d. Z. Snyder.
4. *Antigone* (1984), d. D. Taylor, BBC production.
5. *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1966), d. R. Lester.
6. *Spartacus* (1960), d. S. Kubrick.
7. *Julius Caesar* (1953), d. J.L. Mankiewicz.
8. *Ben Hur* (1959), d. W. Wyler.
9. *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1935), d. E. B. Schoedsack.
10. *Gladiator* (2000), d. R. Scott.

**Texts:**

D. Brendan Nagle, *The Ancient World: A Social and Cultural History*.  
Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by Robert Fagles.  
Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by de Selincourt.  
Plutarch, *On Sparta*.  
Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (selections).  
M. Blundell, trans., *Sophocles: Antigone*.  
Plautus, *Pot of Gold and Other Plays* (Penguin, 1965).  
Plutarch, *The Makers of Rome: Nine Lives*.  
William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*.  
Plutarch, *The Fall of the Roman Republic: Six Lives*.  
T. Urbainczyk, *Spartacus* (Bristol, 2004).  
Pliny the Younger, *Letters* (selections)  
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (selections)

**Syllabus:**

Weeks 1-3: Greek history (the Bronze and Dark Ages); Homer's *Iliad*; film: Peterson's *Troy*.

Weeks 4-5: Greek history (the Classical Age); Herodotus, Sparta and the Persian War; films: *The Three Hundred Spartans* (1962) and *The Three Hundred* (2007).

Week 6: Greek history (the Classical Age); Thucydides, Athens, and the Peloponnesian War; Sophocles, *Antigone*; film: the BBC production of Sophocles' *Antigone* (1984).

Weeks 7-8: Roman history (the monarchy and early Republic); Roman society and values; Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Mostellaria* and *The Pseudolus*; film: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Week 9: Roman history (the late Republic), slaves and gladiators; Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*; film: *Spartacus*.

Week 10: Roman history (the late Republic), Plutarch, *Life of Julius Caesar*; Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*; film: *Julius Caesar*.

Week 11: Roman history (Hellenism and the Jews; the Roman Empire); film: *Ben Hur*.

Week 12: Pliny the Younger, *Letters on Pompeii*; Film: *The Last Days of Pompeii*.

Weeks 13-14: Roman history (the Roman Empire); Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*; Roman Religions; film: *Gladiator*.

Week 15: Work on final projects.

**Grading and Class Requirements:**

Grades for this course will be calculated on the basis of the following class activities:

10 films - screened outside of class:	15 pts each	150 pts total
6 papers	100 pts each	600 pts total
final project/paper		150 pts total
Class Attendance		<u>100 pts total</u>
total possible points for the class		1000 possible points

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