

SAIL Curricular Project Submission

Overview

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Module Title: Catastrophe and Apocalypse in Herculaneum

Course Summary:

We have constructed a nine-session module entitled “Catastrophe and Apocalypse in Pompeii” that we will each be able to insert into our individual 200-level courses, with some adaptations. This module was adapted by Mary Trull in her January interim course, ENGL 270: Imagining Urban Ecologies (2014); Doug Casson will adapt it for his Classical Political Thought course (2015); Nancy Thompson will use this module and teach a version of the entire onsite seminar in her January interim course in Florence (Art 255) and hopes to use the module in her fall 2015 course Apocalypse and Disaster in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds (still in planning stages).

Course Context and Learning Goals

Context:

1) If this is an activity or module, briefly describe the course in which you use it:

The module has been adapted for Mary Trull’s ENGL 270: Imagining Urban Ecologies (2014). This course explores urban ecology through interdisciplinary readings and activities, with special attention to understanding how a city and its literature are shaped by land, water, technology, and natural catastrophes in specific places and times. Starting with ancient Rome, the course moves to 17th- and 18th-century London, and ends with contemporary Los Angeles. We pay special attention to the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE, the Great Fire of London in 1666, and Rodney King’s beating and the social upheaval of 1992, viewing these as historical and ecological events.

The module will be adapted in part for the 2015 version of Nancy Thompson’s course Art 255 (Italian Art in Context: The City of Florence), taught in Florence during the January interim. This course will include even more materials from the summer 2013 SAIL seminar (that syllabus will be submitted in the fall). The course is an intensive introduction to the history of the art and architecture of Florence. Through a study of Florence’s topography and geography, its built environment and painted and sculpted imagery,

students study first-hand the history of Florence from its inception as a Roman colony through the nineteenth century when Florence was the capital of the newly unified Italian nation. A central focus of the month-long study is the ways that human-built cities interact with and are affected by rivers, mountains, hills and volcanoes. Students' study of Florence is enriched by travel to other cities such as Siena, Pisa, Rome, and Pompeii, where they hike to the top of Mt. Vesuvius.

The model will also be adapted for Doug Casson's semester-length course, Political Science 259: History of Classical Political Thought, in Fall 2015. The course begins with Socrates' fundamental question: "What is justice?", which founded political philosophy. Students study the responses of different ancient Greek, Roman, and early Christian philosophers to Socrates' question, focusing especially on the relationship between truth-seeking and community-formation. The module will help students move beyond traditional approaches to ancient philosophy and engage them in an interdisciplinary study of ethics and justice in the ancient world. By combining close readings of philosophical texts with historical, environmental, economic, and political considerations, students will be encouraged to draw connections between these ancient texts and contemporary political themes.

2) If this is a module, briefly describe or list the skills and concepts that students must have mastered before they can successfully complete it:

Students should have taken a first-year college writing course or have attained the equivalent writing experience, so that they can complete a short paper that develops a thesis by choosing relevant evidence and making logical arguments in support of their analysis.

Students should have some experience with public speaking, in order to plan and execute their parts in the class debate. They will continue learning to present their ideas effectively and connect with an audience in an oral presentation.

Before the module is undertaken, instructors should discuss key background information and concepts with students. Students should understand the rationale behind undertaking interdisciplinary study and should have mastered the concept of empire, the basic historical background of imperial Rome, and the general geography of Italy and the Mediterranean.

The module is designed for juniors and seniors with a strong liberal arts background that includes intensive writing and public speaking, and that allows them to engage in informed interdisciplinary reflection. However, the course requires little background knowledge in the fields it covers. The course can also be adapted to suit an audience of advanced majors in one of the disciplines it addresses.

3) If your project is not a complete course, briefly describe how the module or activity is situated in the overall course (e.g., as a culminating project, as a stand-alone exercise, as part of a sequence of exercises):

The module is designed to take about nine class hours to complete (approximately three weeks of class in a standard semester), and to occur towards the middle or end of the term, after coverage of the

introductory concepts mentioned above. But the module has a great deal of flexibility; it can be positioned at various points in a semester. Mary adapted the module to fit a literary course by focusing one activity on a poem rather than a fresco, while keeping the general concepts and skills intact. Nancy plans to condense the unit while teaching on site in Italy in January 2015 and to adapt the module with little change when covering ancient Rome and Pompeii in her fall 2015 course, of which the module will comprise a little less than a quarter. Doug plans to use this module in a Classical Political Thought course that in the past has focused exclusively on philosophical texts. The module will help emphasize the links between natural environment, material conditions, and political thought.

Learning Goals:

1) Briefly describe the content/concepts goals for this course or module:

Our goal in this module is to analyze the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. This topic allows us to consider important questions from both ancient and modern times that range from philosophy and religion (How should a person respond to suffering? Why do catastrophes occur?) to political science and economics (What role do catastrophes play in undermining and/or centralizing political power? How do empires function through the exchange of ideas and material goods?) to art and culture (How and why do people plan cities in areas prone to natural disaster? How do visual images convey commercial and religious significance?). The module combines lectures, discussions, mapping, writing, and debate assignments, class presentations, and group and individual work.

2) Briefly describe the higher order thinking skills goals for this course or module:

After completing the module, students should be able to:

1. Think critically about the political and religious consequences of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE.
2. Apply the principles of Roman city planning to the urban remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum.
3. Consider possible religious responses to natural catastrophes and understand links between religious views and the natural world.
4. Understand the book of Revelation as a Christian response to Roman political and religious practices.
5. Make connections among built environments, visual arts, and geology, geography and economics.
6. Undertake basic GIS mapping, write a basic visual analysis of a painting, and write a point paper and debate their position in class.

3) Briefly describe the goals you have for students learning multidisciplinary analysis from this course or module:

After completing the module, students should understand some differences between the various disciplines and how researchers in each discipline ask and answer questions. An art historian looking at the wine jug fresco could ask questions about the artist's training and use of pigments, and/or about the

composition of the fresco and its effectiveness in promoting the wineseller's goods. A social scientist might ask what the social, economic, and political arrangements are presupposed in a community in which this jug fresco is publicly displayed. What sort of gathering does it signal? What sort of power relationships are fostered in this space? And what sort of exclusions does this space perpetuate? Overall, we want students to bring together questions from various disciplines in order to arrive at a more nuanced and richer understanding of the wine jug fresco. We want them to learn to "read" this material artifact from a variety of disciplinary perspectives so that they can recognize how art, commerce, and politics are intertwined.

4) Briefly describe any other skills goals for this module:

This module helps students develop or refine a variety of general skills that are taught in all of our courses.

1. In addition to learning how to make connections across disciplines, students will develop their oral communication skills through the debate as well as class presentations.
2. Students will also have the opportunity to hone their analytic and synthetic skills as they think through the implications of their work and articulate them in writing.
3. Finally students will learn to work in groups, brainstorming ideas, collecting data, researching arguments, and finalizing their projects in collaboration with other students who approach the same material from different perspectives.

Description and Teaching Materials

Description:

Daily class plan for the module (see Resources section for full citations of readings and other resources):

Day 1. Lecture on volcanic geology of Mt. Vesuvius

- Readings:
 - Doug Stewart, "Resurrecting Pompeii," from Smithsonian Magazine
 - Pliny the Younger, letters 6.16 and 6.20

Day 2. Lecture on cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum: art and city planning. Explain links among geology, city planning and philosophical issues. At the end, introduce the wine jug fresco (image below) and ask students to come to the next class with questions about it

Day 3. Introduce assignment, "Understanding Art through Place and Material Culture" (see supplementary materials for an adaptation of this assignment, "Understanding Poetry through Place and Material Culture"). The assignment asks students to think about how goods and natural resources travel through the Mediterranean. This assignment brings together geology, economics, religion, geography and art history. It also teaches students to develop geospatial skills and put these to work in a historical context.

Using the Herculanean wine jug fresco, groups will be assigned to map places and routes for the following:

1. Wine regions and transport routes in the area
2. Sources for clay for the jugs
3. Sources of materials for currency
4. Sources of paint and materials in the fresco
5. Urban spaces for wine consumption in Pompeii and Herculaneum
6. The spread of the cult of Bacchus

Day 4. Epicurus and Epicureans

- Readings:
 - Introduction to Epicureanism
 - Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, Book 3

Day 5. Stoics

- Readings:
 - Epictetus, *The Handbook*
 - Cicero, *On Obligations*, Book 2
 - Revisit Pliny the Younger's letters

Day 6: Mapping assignment due; class discussion of projects.

Day 7. Christian Apocalypse

- Readings:
 - The Bible: The Book of Revelation
 - Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Vision, Prophecy, and Politics*

Day 8: Point papers are due; in-class debate. The debate assignment teaches students to analyze philosophical, religious and political texts critically. Big question: How can human beings bear the inescapable suffering of life on earth? (See attachments for examples of debate assignments and rubrics.)

Create three philosophical camps among the students: Christians, Stoics and Epicureans.

1. Point paper: argue your position and offer counter-arguments to the other two points of view. Each student will be required to write a 5-page dialectical essay in which they lay out an assigned position (thesis), offer one or more persuasive critiques of that position (antithesis), and then arrive at some sort of resolution of the thesis and antithesis positions (synthesis). In the final section, they will not need to defend the position that they have been assigned for the in-class debate. They can follow the argument wherever it takes them. The paper should be structured around a clear, coherent, contestable thesis and supported by evidence from our readings. These papers must be written before the in-class debate.

2. In-class debate: students must orally represent their assigned philosophical point of view. They will be asked to present their positions, cross-examine other groups, defend their views, and summarize the debate in a closing statement.

Day 9: Multidisciplinary synthesis. This is a non-graded assessment of the extent to which students have been able to integrate disciplinary perspectives. Students should come to this final discussion with questions about the ways in which the movement of goods and ideas throughout the region might relate to the philosophical, religious, and political attempts to come to terms with natural catastrophe. This structured discussion will begin with the following question: What are the connections between our understanding of the material and ideological foundations of community? (See Resources section for a description of structured discussion and assessment).

Supplementary teaching materials included as attachments:

From Mary Trull's course, English 260: Imagining Urban Ecologies: Rome, London, Los Angeles:

1. Syllabus
2. Assignment. Understanding Poetry through Place and Material Culture. Assignment grading rubric included.
3. Assignment. Point Paper: Epicurean and Stoic Responses to Suffering
4. Powerpoint: Lecture on Pompeii and Augustan Rome

Supplementary materials from Doug Casson's Political Science classes:

5. Introduction to Political theory debate paper rubric
6. Introduction to Political Theory debate rubric
7. Debate Assignment for module

Teaching Notes:

Interdisciplinary learning involves entering uncharted waters. Unforeseen questions and unplanned discoveries make this module both challenging and potentially rewarding. In order to create an atmosphere of cooperative learning at the very beginning, we have found it important to convey to students that we are not simply their guides, but also fellow explorers. There are sections of this module that are beyond the particular expertise of each of us. One way to encourage interdisciplinary discussion is to draft particular students into the common project, encouraging those with special interest in geology or economics or philosophy, for example, to research and report on particular aspects of the module.

However we also think that it will be important to support especially anxious students as they venture into new territory, pointing them toward helpful resources during the mapping exercise and debate (See Resources section below). With the help of a few resources, most students should be able to find basic information concerning material culture, trade, and geography in the period. Yet they will generally need help with basic GIS mapping. Make sure you have everything prepared to make the technical side of this assignment as seamless as possible.

Assessment and Resources

Assessment:

Describe briefly how you determine whether students have met the goals of this course module. If you anticipate using a rubric to assess student learning, include an example of that rubric. You should indicate both how you will assess content goals as well as the ability of your students to do multidisciplinary analysis.

1. The debate assignment teaches students to think critically about philosophical and religious responses to the eruption of Vesuvius. A rubric will be provided and discussed prior to the assignment (See Resources section). Faculty will use this rubric while grading both the written and oral components of the assignment and return the rubric with feedback to the students.
2. The point paper requires students to analyze religious and philosophical responses to catastrophe. The instructor will give students written feedback along with the debate assessment rubric.
3. The mapping assignment requires students to make connections between urban environments, visual arts, geology, geography and economics. The instructor will use a rubric shared with students beforehand to assess their ability to apply geospatial analysis to visual arts, economic exchanges, and social and political structures. This assignment involves peer review as well as instructor feedback, so that students can learn from assessing others' work.
4. The final discussion will allow faculty to assess the degree to which students understood the module material from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Students will prepare their own questions or ideas before the discussion (see multidisciplinary section above), and we will develop a set of questions for instructors. The student-provided questions will be used as data for assessment of their ability to ask complex, relevant questions crossing multiple disciplines. In this exercise, we are focusing on the ability to ask key questions as much as on the adequacy of the answers.

Resources:

Wine Jug Fresco

The fresco that serves as the centerpiece of the module is located in Herculaneum, on the exterior wall of the "House of the Black Hall" (Case el Salone Nero) facing a street called Decumanus Maximus (Insula VI 13). The fresco advertises the price of drinks for a shop next door (Insula VI 10).



For detailed information about Herculaneum, Pompeii, and other sites buried in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79CE (including excellent maps and photos of the site today) see <https://sites.google.com/site/ad79eruption/home>.

The British Museum has also had an exhibit in 2013, entitled Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum, that would be of interest to students. https://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/past_exhibitions/2013/pompeii_and_herculaneum.aspx.

Texts

Geology of Rome

- Grant Heiken et al., *The Seven Hills of Rome: A Geological Tour of the Eternal City* (Princeton University Press, 2007; 978-0691130385)

Roman Geology and Hydrology

- Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, Book 1 chaps. 1-3; Book 8 chaps. 5-6: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Vitruvius/home.html>
- Frontinus, *De Aqueductibus Urbis Romae* 1-22: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/De_Aquis/text*.html
- [AQUACLOPEDIA: a picture dictionary of Roman aqueducts](#)

Roman Trade and Material Culture

- Walter Scheidel, Ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy* (2012).
- Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Herculaneum: Past and Future* (2011)
- Alan Bowman and Andrew Wilson, Eds., *The Roman Agricultural Economy: Organization, Investment, and Production* (2013)
- Neville Morley, *Trade in Classical Antiquity* (2007)
- Peter Temin, *The Roman Market Economy* (2012)
- [Orbis: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World](#): Wonderful interactive map of trade routes that calculates time and cost of travel between locations in ancient world.

Stoicism and Epicurianism

Overviews

- Excellent accounts of each thinker as well as Epicurianism and Stoicism in Stanford Encyclopedia: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Epicurianism

- Introduction to Epicureanism: <http://philosophyforlife.org/philosophies-for-life/epicureans/>
- *Epicurus Reader*, trans. by Brad Inwood and Lloyd Gerson (Hackett 1994): Letter to Menoeceus 28-31 and Principal Doctrines 32-36.
- Peter Adamson (Philosophy, LMU Munich and King's College London) podcasts on Epicurus: <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/epicurus-principles/> and <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/epicurus-gods-death>.
- Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, Book 3: http://classics.mit.edu/Carus/nature_things.3.iii.html

Stoicism

- A conversation with John Sellars on Roman Stoicism: <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/sellars-stoics>
- Cicero, *On Obligations*, Book I. sections 1-10 (intro), sections 34-41 (just war and natural law), sections 50-58 (obligations to world, state, and family): http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm
- Peter Adamson (Philosophy, LMU Munich and King's College London) podcast on Cicero: <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/cicero>
- Peter Adamson (Philosophy, LMU Munich and King's College London) podcast on Epictetus: <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/epictetus>
- Epictetus, *The Handbook*, trans. by Nicholas White (Hackett 1983)
- Seneca, "On the Happy Life" http://www.stoics.com/seneca_essays_book_2.html#BEATA1
- Seneca, "On Suicide"

The Bible and the Book of Revelations

- Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Vision, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelations* (Penguin 2012).
- Review of Pagels by Adam Gopnik in *The New Yorker*: http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2012/03/05/120305crbo_books_gopnik?currentPage=all

- An interview with Elaine Pagels:
<http://www.npr.org/2012/03/07/148125942/the-book-of-revelation-visions-prophecy-politics>

Roman Literature and Myth

- Ovid, *Metamorphoses*: Book 3 (all), Book 15: 60-478: <http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html>
- Virgil, *Georgics*, II.1-258: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/georgics.html>
- Horace, Odes, 1.9, 1.11, 3.13, 4.7:
<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horacehome.htm>

Roman Architecture and City Planning

- Diane Favro, "Making Rome a World City," *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (2005)
- Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, Book 36 chaps. 1-16 (skim chap. 4):
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D36%3Achapter%3D1>
- Juvenal, Satire 3: <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/JuvenalSatires3.htm>
- Horace, Odes 1.37, 1.38, 2.16:
<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horacehome.htm>

Mt. Vesuvius Erupts

- Doug Stewart, "Resurrecting Pompeii," from *Smithsonian Magazine*:
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/ist/?next=/history/resurrecting-pompeii-109163501/>
- Pliny the Younger, Letters 6.16 and 6.20: <http://www.smach-international.org/PlinyLetters.html>