

COLORADO CLASSICS ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE SPRING MEETING

4/30/2022, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Hosted in Person (Eaton Humanities 1B80) and on Zoom by CU Boulder

Respectfully submitted by Pierre D. Habel, CCA Secretary (pdhabel@gmail.com)

9:30-10:00 Conversation and reconnection over refreshments took place prior to the formal convening of the meeting

10:00-10:30 CCA business meeting:

- Introductions of officers and meeting attendees:
Jackie Elliott (CU Boulder, CCA Co-President), Amy Sommer Rosevear (Cherry Creek High School, CCA Co-President), Amanda Sherpe (Mullen High School, CCA Treasurer), Richard Buxton (Colorado College, CCA Communications Director), Pierre Habel (Retired, CCA Secretary), Elizabeth Bowman (D'Evelyn Jr./Sr. High School), Carole Newlands (CU Boulder), Reina Callier (CU Boulder, CAMWS Vice President for Colorado), Rachel Grimes (CU Boulder), Lukas Nicholson, (Vanguard Classical East) Mary Zang (Smoky Hill High School); Julia Byers (Eaglecrest High School)
Attending by Zoom: Lynn LiCalsi (Fairview), Barbara Hill (CU Boulder, retired)
- Amy Sommer Rosevear passed on two announcements from colleagues:
 - Karen Karpinnen (karp1248@gmail.com) has reserved the YMCA for an in-person Colorado Junior Classical League (<https://coloradojcl.com/>) convention set for March 30-31, 2023. Teachers are encouraged to contact Karen to communicate possible numbers of attendees, give input on convention in its new iteration, and learn about setting up a JCL chapter.
 - Tim Smith (Timotheus.magister@gmail.com) wishes both potential and dedicated speakers of Latin to know that SALVI (<https://latin.org/wordpress/>) is gearing up for the return of Latin immersion events, including Biduum in Colorado, October 21-23, 2023, at a beautiful location off the Peak to Peak Highway at the peak of fall colors. Registration will likely open in early June.
- Approval of minutes of the Fall 2021 meeting:
Elizabeth Bowman moved to accept the minutes as written; Amanda Sherpe seconded. Unanimous approval with two abstentions.
- CCA Teacher of the Year announcements:
 - Amy Sommer Rosevear presented Pierre Habel with the plaque for the CCA Teacher of the year for 2021.
 - Jackie Elliott announced the lack of nominations for 2022 award, and intensified call for members to submit nominations for 2023, citing the pool of excellent candidates who have not yet received the award and the success of past award

winner in receiving further recognition by regional (CAMWS) and national (ACL, SCS) organizations.

- Election of officers for the next biennium:
 - Jackie Elliott, who will continue as Co-President (Post-Secondary) for 2022-2023, announced the open positions and the nominees for them.
 - Pierre Habel conducted balloting of the members-in-good-standing who attended in-person, but had not voted by postal or online ballot, then added the results to the counts of the latter. The following candidates received unanimous approval and will assume the indicated role effective June 1, 2022:
 - Co-President (K-12): **Elizabeth Bowman (D'Evelyn Jr./Sr. High School)**
 - Vice President: **Helen Vickery (Boulder High School)**
 - Treasurer: **Amanda Sherpe (Mullen High School)**
 - Secretary: **Pierre Habel (Retired)**
 - Communications Director: **Richard Buxton (Colorado College)**

10:30-11:20 Discussion, led by Reina Callier: Continuing the conversation: the diverse challenges of confronting classical texts in today's classroom

- Reina Callier began by introducing a quotation that she found resonant with her instructional experiences in the post-secondary context:

“Even if students don’t speak up and out, or don’t voice objections and alarm, the instructor must raise the subject.” Talking Rape in the Classics Classroom: Further Thoughts,” from *From Abortion to Pederasty: Addressing Difficult Topics in the Classics Classroom*, ed. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Fiona McHardy (Ohio State University Press: 2014).
- Acknowledging the differing contexts in elementary and secondary classrooms, and also the institutional constraints of particular school communities, Reina invited attendees to speak of their own practices, concerns, and questions using these four questions as springboards:
 - *To what extent do you want to/ feel obligated to confront controversial topics and texts in your classroom?*
 - *What are some of the limitations you face in addressing these matters, given your students and school environment?*
 - *What are some of the strategies you use to deal not only with problematic texts but also with students’ varied responses to them?*
 - *What are some of the specific areas in which you feel you could improve your and your students’ experience with problematic texts/topics?*
- Discussion participants contributed the following points, which are organized by subtopic, but also overlap somewhat. The points are not attributed to specific participants, yet it is hoped that they reflect what the numerous interchanges among participants offered as helpful considerations or techniques:

- The observed current mental health crisis among teens, their closeted thoughts, and their potential lack of trust within the classroom can (especially around texts presenting self-harm or suicide) make teaching such texts particularly fraught. Options for an instructor to consider as mitigating strategies include:
 - the teacher may be upfront about the alien values and behavioral standards of the target cultures and establish a dual intention both to discuss the text academically and with contemporary emotional awareness;
 - the teacher may choose/ be able to speak of personal experiences (including of friends or family members) and make known the school's resources available to students in distress as a lead-in to instruction;
 - the teacher may use written advance communications to parents/guardians and/or permission slips to bring students' families into a supportive role;
 - the teacher may create venues (surveys, confidential email, etc.) for students who feel distress at a topic/ topics to communicate such distress directly to the teacher in advance and may set flexible standards for oral participation in the whole-group setting;
 - the teacher may establish a practice of using journals to give students a place to express thoughts they may be reticent to share in the classroom;
 - the teacher may, as needed for some or all students, modify the circumstances/tone of instruction (work through the most challenging material together in class rather than as homework when students may be isolated from support; option to opt out; work with an alternative passage, or demonstrate understanding of the passage by an alternative work product);
 - the teacher may take steps to address issues of trust among students before, if possible, the challenging content is assigned;
 - the teacher may de-romanticize the 'traditional' readings of the text (e.g., Pyramus and Thisbe) by decentralizing it and offering contrasting perspectives (characters' perspective(s) v. author's perspective. v. ancient reader's perspective, v. modern perspectives);
 - if the dynamics among the student group are suitable, teachers may create opportunities for "reacting to the past" role-playing, or may set assignments which ask students to build a reactive or creative response to a text (e.g., have students write in the voice of Lesbia responding to one or more of Catullus' poems);
 - teachers may choose, if one is available, to bring in guest speakers who can address modern iterations of timeless problems, e.g. a speaker who addresses contemporary human trafficking when the class is set to address analogous material (e.g., sexual violence in warfare, enslavement) from the ancient world;

- teachers may consider the importance of not guiding a subset of students (e.g., students of indigenous heritage who are in a class reading *de Bello Gallico*) into the role of speaking to the effects of colonization, forced removal, and the like.
 - In response to the problem of limitations (curricular, administrative, or in student culture and school climate) which teachers face in teaching about challenging material from the ancient world, participants noted that:
 - some basal texts present skewed typecasts/ harmfully stereotyped characters in their story lines, especially with characters who are slaves and/or females, and that budget constraints can delay replacing said texts;
 - in selection of stories like Lucretia's or Dido's, or setting long required passages of imperialistic conquest, colonization, and (arguably) genocide, from authors like Caesar, the gatekeepers of standardized assessments (such as AP, IB) and academic competitions (translation contests, NLE, etc.) force teaching of these challenging texts to students who, whether on their own or under parental or community influence, seek the prestige of these academic opportunities;
 - administrative/institutional support may or may not be effective or forthcoming either as the teacher seeks to address the school or classroom environment or as the teacher seeks to replace problematic curricular materials/ requirements;
 - In addition to offering the considerations and techniques mentioned earlier, participants shared ideas for texts that may offer a teacher needed flexibility for presenting challenging topics in the classroom:
 - if a class is disposed to see the over-the-top quality of it, choosing an extreme text may be useful in confronting a challenging topic, e.g. centering Juvenal's misogynistic Satire VI may allow the teacher to sensitize students to subtler forms of misogyny elsewhere;
 - where available and appropriate, the teacher may choose to supplement an ancient text with modern English novels (e.g. Madeline Miller's *Circe* or Ursula K. LeGuin's *Lavinia*) as a way of including voices for characters who are silenced or stripped of agency;
 - the teacher may choose to offer alternative Latin texts in the form of the many recent novellas which give modern perspectives on ancient tales
 - the paradoxically liberating and challenging task of building Latin 3 students' extended reading abilities after they have completed basal grammar, vocabulary, and related skills can be a great opportunity to introduce authentic and diverse texts; participants mentioned favored authors whose works can be culled for engaging, stimulating material, including: Martial, Plautus, Cicero's *De Amicitia*, the *Noctes Atticae* of

Aulus Gellius, Mediaeval pedagogical colloquia, and the span of Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin in the *Latin for the New Millennium* series; that said, considerable challenges remain for the teacher to select texts and make them available to students in appropriate formats, including supportive introductions, contextual reading, notes, and assessments.

- Jackie Elliott sincerely thanked Reina Callier for her work, insights, and skills in leading the day's pedagogical discussion.
- She also announced that CU Classics Day will not occur in 2022 due to the numerous pandemic-related unknowns which have recently limited participation and will be on hold until the input can be collected and appropriate resources allotted for future iterations. Teachers may reach out to her with ideas (jackie.elliott@colorado.edu).
- Jackie Elliott announced the date and venue for the next meeting of the CCA. It will be hosted by Elizabeth Bowman (Elizabeth.Bowman@jeffco.k12.co.us), incoming CCA Co-President (K-12), at D'Evelyn Jr./Sr. High School at 10 a.m. on September 24, 2023. Please save the date. Additionally, this year's practice of having a theme for presentations and discussions has been well received, and Jackie welcomes suggestions for themes for CCA meetings next year, emailed to her and/or Elizabeth.
- The meeting concluded with thanks to Amy Sommer Rosevear for her service as a "dream co-president" during her term, and to the incoming and outgoing officers of the CCA for their collegiality, support and service to the CCA.