

**WRIT 026.304: Critical Writing Seminar:
Cleopatra: History, Myth, and Legacy**
TR 4:30-6
WILL 304

Dr. Alison Traweek

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Open office hours Weds 2-5, Mark's Cafe (Van Pelt Library basement)

Office hours by appointment only Tues and Thurs 2-4

Course description

As a critical writing seminar, this course provides an introduction to college-level academic writing, and culminates in the production of multi-draft research paper. As a freshman seminar, it offers an introduction to the discipline of sociology.

For many people, Cleopatra, the queen of ancient Egypt, is synonymous with aggressive sexuality, as exemplified by Elizabeth Taylor in the 1963 film. Others may think of the ingenious and savvy figure from HBO's *Rome* miniseries. Behind these various portrayals, though, stands the historical figure of Cleopatra VII Philopater, the last pharaoh of Egypt in the last years of the 1st c. BCE. Although today we assume she must have been beautiful, the ancient sources refer to her as plain, but charismatic and highly intelligent, and this is just one of the many contradictions that confound our understanding of the queen. The mysteries surrounding her have captured our imagination for two millennia. In this class, we will learn about the historical queen and compare the historical record to the widely divergent ways that she has been interpreted and portrayed in the west from Roman antiquity to the current day.

How this class works

This is not a lecture class where you will be passively soaking up knowledge, but rather a place for discussion, collaboration and debate. We will spend our class time thinking together about how interpretation and argumentation work, and will examine our own writing and the writing of our peers with an eye to figuring out how to make our scholarship as effective as possible.

Informed participation is the key to a productive semester. Read your texts actively and critically, and come to class ready to debate. Not all students participate in the same way, however, and the most important contributions to a discussion are not always those that are made first, or most frequently, or most insistently. Within the bounds of your own personal style, I demand that you take risks and think out loud. Apart from occasional mini-lectures, I will act primarily as a guide and referee to make sure that our discussions stay on track and respectful. Beyond that, you are in charge of the direction of discussion, and the more engaged you are, the more interesting and rewarding the class will be for all of us.

Readings

The readings for this course fall into three groups: the first is the primary texts, the subject of our course; the second is the secondary text, an academic work related to our primary texts; and the third is a selection of writings about reading and writing. The first provides the subject matter for your own writing, the second provides a model for academic writing in the discipline and on the subject, and the third offers instruction on how to write effectively.

The following text is required, and will be available in the Penn Book Center, 34th and Sansom. If you choose to get your book elsewhere, please be sure to order the same edition by using the ISBN given below.

- Mary Hamer. *Signs of Cleopatra: Reading an Icon Historically*, updated 2nd edition. University of Exeter Press. ISBN 9780859898096.

A digital coursepack with a selection of other readings will be made available at the start of the semester.

You are also required to obtain the following, which are not on order at any bookstore but are easily available online from Amazon and elsewhere by using the ISBN / AISN provided:

- Christine Hult and Thomas Huckin, *The New Century Handbook*, 4th ed. Pearson Longman, 2008. 0205553680.

Major assignments (subject to change)

Book outline and summary (150-200 words)
Literature review (1400-1600 words, 5 or more sources)
Public argument (600-750 words)
Cover letters (1-1.25 pages)
Resume (1 page)
Peer reviews, outlines, in-class writing

Note on Assignment Submissions

Most assignments are due by 11:59PM on dates listed on the schedule; anything submitted after the deadline will lose a letter grade per day, and will not receive feedback. If you want feedback on a late assignment, please visit the writing center or office hours.

Please bring two hard copies of assignments or your laptop to class in order to facilitate your peers' and professor's reviews. All assignments must be submitted to the Canvas site, where individual assignment links are provided.

Grading Policy

Final grades are based on:

- Participation and appropriate engagement in class, including responsible and respectful use of technology;
- Timely submission of all assignments;
- Quality of assignment submissions;
- Quality of work based on portfolio assessment.

Note that grades are not negotiable, and will not be discussed over email. Final grade changes are made only in the event of a mathematical error.

Grading breakdown

Coursework (including Midterm Portfolio): 45%

Final Portfolio: 45%

Participation: 10%

Failure in any category of the final portfolio assessment means a failure on the portfolio and retake of the writing seminar. Wrong, empty, corrupt, or missing midterm and final portfolios will drop one full grade per 24 hour period from due date and time.

Please note that technology issues are not a valid excuse for late or missing assignments; students are encouraged to avail themselves of the many computer labs around campus in the event of personal computer problems.

The participation grade is based on active presence in class, engagement in collaborative work, peer reviews, discussions, and collegiality; unexcused absences, serial late arrival, inappropriate use of laptops, and any use of phones during class will count against this grade. Missing days when collaborative work is done (including peer reviews) will affect the grade, along with the quality of your participation in class as a whole.

Course Policies

Attendance is required.

Students who miss a class must make a reasonable effort to contact their instructor in advance. No later than their return to class, students must report the absence and the reason it occurred using the Course Absence Report system (CAR) in Penn InTouch. Be sure to submit documentation materials to your advisor in the event of an excused absence other than a religious holiday.

With few exceptions, no distinction is made between excused and unexcused absences. The following are regarded as excused absences:

1. Absences resulting from religious holidays
2. Absences resulting from legal obligations, e.g., jury duty
3. Documented family or medical emergencies

All assigned written work, including peer reviews, must be submitted on time, whether or not students are able to attend class; however, instructors may provide a 24-hour extension. This extension policy does not, however, apply to the mid-term or final portfolios, which must be submitted on time. A late portfolio will drop one full grade each day, or partial day, it is late.

A student's failure to provide an accurate statement will be regarded as a violation of academic integrity and reported to the Office of Student Conduct. Regardless of the reason for absence, students are responsible for learning what happened in class. Students who anticipate missing one or more classes should contact the instructor ahead of time, just as they should make arrangements to meet with their instructor immediately upon returning from an absence. Attendance includes being present in the class, including refraining from using tech devices for non-class-related purposes.

On-time arrival to class is expected. Late arrivals will count against participation.

Late assignments will drop one full grade each day of lateness, and will not receive feedback. If you turn in late assignments and want feedback, you may visit the Writing Center.

Writing Support

Students are encouraged to make generous use of the Writing Center while enrolled in their writing seminars as well as thereafter. Tutors in the Writing Center were nominated by their writing instructors for their outstanding work; the ten finalists chosen each semester from across the schools and disciplines are not only superb writers and peer reviewers, they are also well-versed in the assessment criteria of the writing seminars. In turn, they complete a semester of coursework and fieldwork devoted to writing pedagogy, co-taught by the director of the writing program and the associate director of the writing center. Students who use the Writing Center are thus assured of carefully selected, knowledgeable writing tutors.

Appointments and drop-in hours are available from Sundays through Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information, visit http://writing.upenn.edu/critical/writing_center/

Students with Disabilities

Please let me know if you anticipate any issues that might affect your performance in the class, for example related to the format or requirements of the course; or if you need to make any special arrangements or have emergency medical information you wish to share with me.

If you require disability-related accommodations, such as a note-taker, extended time on timed writings, or captioning, please register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Disabilities may include learning, psychiatric, or physical disabilities. ODS can assist you with finding out if you qualify for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations.

*Office of Disability Services
Stouffer Commons, Suite 300
3702 Spruce Street*

Phone: (215) 573.9235

Email: sds@mail.zimbra.upenn.edu

Monday-Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm

For additional resources, visit http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/cs_resources.php