



Course Title: Reading Antiquity: Historical Fiction Book Club

Course Code: LIT 106 C

Instructors: Michael Shanks and Gary Devore

Quarter: Winter 2022

Course Schedule: 9 Thursdays, January 20 - March 17, 7:00 - 9:05 pm (PT)

Course Summary:

All history requires creative reconstruction, and we never possess a full picture from the sources. Today we are in a golden age of the historical novels and films that return us to ancient Greece and Rome. Those who write fictionalized accounts of any period in history work with the remains of the past and can deliver extraordinary insights into the way things were or even could have been. In the best fiction, reader and viewer are drawn into a revived past. Creative works make the past live again, forging personal links through human experience.

Each quarter in this ongoing series we will read works of fiction and watch a film, all set in antiquity. We will range far and wide in our discussions both in our definition of antiquity and the themes covered, including the shape of history, the deep movements and structures of change, sexual representations, violence and politics, famous and marginalized voices, constructed realities, and the agendas that drive the writings of history.

Our reading planned for this quarter includes *The King Must Die* by Mary Renault, a re-imagining of the legend of Theseus rooted in the archaeology of Minoan Crete; David Elliott's novel-poem *Bull*, the same story from the point of view of the Minotaur; *Shadows in Bronze*, a murder mystery by Lindsey Davis, set in the Bay of Naples; and *Julian*, Gore Vidal's marvelous fictional biography of the Christian emperor who renounced his faith. Our film will be Anthony Mann's epic *Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Note About Live Attendance and Recording

This course will be recorded.

Grade Options and Requirements:

Each text will receive a video introduction from the instructors, a collection of supplemental readings providing historical context, and students will be invited to share their thoughts and questions with their peers and the instructors on an online forum in the class Canvas website as they read. We will hold a 2-hour online Zoom session to discuss the material (Thursdays from 7-9pm Pacific time). (The Zoom

discussions are optional and will be recorded so those not able to attend can watch them later.)

A brief final essay exam is available for those wishing to take the course for a grade. The grade options are:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
 - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)
 - Score will be determined by passing grade on the final essay exam.
- Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)
 - Score will be determined by the final essay exam.

**Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Jan 20: Introduction to the Course

Jan 27: Reading: *The King Must Die* by Mary Renault

Feb 3: Reading: *The King Must Die* by Mary Renault

Feb 10: Reading: *Bull* by David Elliott

Feb 17: Reading: *Shadows in Bronze* by Lindsey Davis

Feb 24: Reading: *Julian* by Gore Vidal

Mar 3: Reading: *Julian* by Gore Vidal

Mar 10: Reading: *Julian* by Gore Vidal

Mar 17: Movie: *Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), directed by Anthony Mann