

## HIST 3160: WOMEN AND GENDER IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

### ESSAY TOPICS

**DUE DATE:** 25 November 2022, 11:59 p.m. (EST)

**LENGTH:** 2,500 words, +/- 10% (please include a word count with your essay)

**WEIGHTING:** 25%

**LATE POLICY:** The assignment is to be submitted on the due date. Assignments that are late without an extension will be penalized at the rate of 3% OF THE TOTAL MARKS AVAILABLE FOR THE TASK PER DAY (including holidays and weekends). Assignments submitted more than eight days after the due date will be marked on a pass/fail basis (pass = 50%; fail = 0%).

There is a 48-hour grace period after the due date for these major assignments, during which late penalties will accrue but will not be applied. However, if an assignment is submitted later than 48 hours after the due date, the full accrued late penalty will be applied. Please see the syllabus for more details.

**SUBMISSION POLICY:** An electronic copy of the essay is to be submitted via the eClass website. This copy will establish the date of submission. It will also be scanned with Turnitin software to identify any problems with plagiarism. Once you have successfully uploaded your essay, a digital receipt will be emailed to your yorku.ca email address. It is your responsibility to retain this receipt in case your essay goes astray. In accordance with the York Guidelines for the Use of Text Matching Software Services, students may opt out of submitting their essays electronically to Turnitin. Students wishing to exercise this right must contact the course director at least four weeks in advance of the submission date so that alternative steps to guarantee the authenticity of the assignment can be devised. The Guidelines are available at: <http://www.yorku.ca/acadinte/textmatching-guidelines.htm> .

All essays must be typed, double-spaced and in Times New Roman 12-point font. Students should read and follow the style guide posted on eClass.

### ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

The essay will be marked according to the following criteria:

- **Has a clear and consistent argument that answers the question**
- **Shows control of the essay form, including the introduction, conclusion, and use of quotations**
- **Constructs an argument based on the ancient sources**
- **Engages critically with the ancient sources and modern scholarship**
- **Writes in a distinctive voice, showing originality of thought and flair**
- **Writes in clear and correct English**
- **Cites evidence correctly**

Students are allowed to use ancient evidence or modern scholarship not set for the question, but they are not required to do so. General online encyclopaedic sites, such as Wikipedia or Britannica Online, are not acceptable modern scholarship.

If you want to cite an ancient source that is discussed in an item of modern scholarship, please do so like this: (Catullus 61.134-41, cited by Dixon 2003: 118). You should copy the reference to the ancient source as it is found in the modern scholarship (you do not have to abbreviate it).

**Please answer ONE (1) of the following questions:**

**1. How can we use the law-court speeches of the Attic orators to understand societal constraints on and gendered expectations for men and women in Classical Athens?** Your answer must take into consideration both the strengths and the weaknesses of such an approach.

**Ancient Evidence:**

- Lysias, *Against Eratosthenes*
- [Demosthenes], *Against Neaera*
- Demosthenes, *Against Conon*
- *WLGR* IV.96, 98, 102, 103

**Modern Scholarship:**

Lanni, A. (2006). *Law and Justice in the Courts of Classical Athens*. Chapter Two: "Athens and Its Legal System." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 15-40.

Levick, B. (2012). "Women and Law." In *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, eds. S. L. James and S. Dillon. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 96-106.

Roisman, J. (2005). *The Rhetoric of Manhood: Masculinity in the Attic Orators*. Chapter Two: "The Roles and Responsibilities of the Adult Male." Berkeley: University of California Press. 26-63.

Wallace, R. W. (2006). "Law and Rhetoric: Community Justice in Athenian Courts." In *A Companion to the Classical Greek World*, ed. K. H. Kinzl. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 416-31.

**2. In Classical Greece, fertility was the most important quality a woman could possess. Does this statement accurately reflect societal attitudes in both Sparta and Athens?**

**Ancient Evidence:**

- *WLGR* II.76-7, 79; IV.94, 96-103, 114 and 116; VII.278-9, 319; IX.424, 427\*, 429\*
- Lysias, *Against Eratosthenes*
- [Demosthenes], *Against Neaera*
- Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*

\*These texts are part of the Hippocratic Corpus and are not from Athens or Sparta. Their content, however is believed to have reflected the general state of medical knowledge in Greece.

**Modern Scholarship:**

Millender, E. G. (2017). "Spartan Women." In *A Companion to Sparta*, ed. A. Powell. Volume Two. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 500-24.

Ogden, D. (1995). "Women and Bastardy in Ancient Greece and the Hellenistic World." In *The Greek World*, ed. A. Powell. London and New York: Routledge. 219-44.

Osborne, R. (1997). "Law, the Democratic Citizen, and the Representation of Women in Classical Athens." *Past and Present* 155: 3-33.

Pomeroy, S. B. (1995). "Women's Identity and the Family in the Classical *Polis*." In *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, eds. R. Hawley and B. Levick. London and New York: Routledge. 111-21.

Pritchard, D. M. (2014). "The Position of Attic Women in Democratic Athens." *G&R* 61.2: 174-93.

**3. To what extent was independent action for Roman women in the late first century BC dependent on the absence of men?** You must consider both Terentia (the wife of Cicero) and the unnamed wife in the so-called *Laudatio Turiae* in your answer.

**Ancient Sources:**

- All of Cicero's letters set for Module Three
- *CIL* VI 41062, the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*

**Modern Scholarship:**

Bauman, R. A. (1994). *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*. Chapter Six: "The Political Strategists of the Late Republic." London and New York: Routledge. 60-77.

Brennan, T. C. (2012). "Perceptions of Women's Power in the Late Republic: Terentia, Fulvia, and the Generation of 63 BCE." In *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, eds. S. L. James and S. Dillon. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 354-66.

Claassen, J.-M. (1996). "Documents of a Crumbling Marriage: The Case of Cicero and Terentia." *Phoenix* 50.3/4: 208-32.

Grebe, S. (2003). "Marriage and Exile: Cicero's Letters to Terentia." *Helios* 30.2: 127-46.

Hemelrijk, E. (2004). "Masculinity and Femininity in the *Laudatio Turiae*." *CQ* 54.1: 185-97.

Lindsay, H. (2009). "The Man in Turia's Life, With a Consideration of Inheritance Issues, Infertility, and Virtues in Marriage in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. B.C." *JRA* 22.1: 183-98.

#### 4. To what extent did the Roman elite view marriage as more than just a means for the production of legitimate children?

##### Ancient Sources:

- Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 1.14; 4.19; 6.4; 6.7; 7.5; 8.10-11
- *CIL* VI 41062, the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*
- Plutarch, *Advice to a Bride and Groom*
- Sources for divorce on the grounds of infertility
- \*J. Evans Grubbs (2002). *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*. Chapter Two: "Marriage in Roman Law and Society." London and New York: Routledge. 81-7, 91-102.
- \*E. Hemelrijk (2020). *Women and Society in the Roman World*. Chapter One: "Family Life." Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 15-38.

\*Remember that if you are citing the commentary on a text in a sourcebook, and not the ancient source itself, you need to cite it as modern scholarship (see page 3 of the course style guide).

##### Modern Scholarship:

Dixon, S. (1992). *The Roman Family*. Chapter Three: "Marriage." Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 61-97.

Dixon, S. (2003). "Sex and the Married Woman in Ancient Rome." In *Early Christian Families in Context*, eds. D. L. Balch & C. Osiek. 111-29.

Glazebrook, A. and K. Olson (2013). "Greek and Roman Marriage." In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities*, ed. T. K. Hubbard. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 75-80. [Do NOT use the pages discussing marriage in Greece.]

Treggiari, S. (1991). *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*. Ch. 8: "Coniugalis Amor." Oxford: Oxford University Press. 229-61.

Family and Freedom: A Study of Terentia and 'Turia'

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AP/HIST 3160

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The late first century BC saw a relatively abrupt change in Roman cultural attitudes to the obligations, and accompanying purview, of citizen women. Two examples - each appearing to be the other's opposite at first glance - of this dynamic can be found in Cicero's letters to his wife Terentia, and the so-called *Laudatio Turiae* that memorialises a cherished wife. While both Terentia and the unnamed wife (henceforth Turia) are lauded for their independent actions taken in their male relatives' absences, Cicero's letters and the *Laudatio Turiae* also demonstrate a cultural shift allotting women of means a significant degree of influence in the public sphere. As such, Terentia and Turia were often independent in action, but not necessarily motivation; rather, their histories reflect a Roman understanding of family as a collaborative effort between all parties for the common goal of an improved future for them and their descendents.

Unfortunately, history is only able to view Terentia and Turia through the lens of their husbands' writings. The fact that none of their own words survived to be studied presently serves as a reconstruction and reinforcement of the traditional Republican Roman gendered ideal of separate spheres as described by Emily A. Hemelrijk (2004: 188). Terentia and Turia's experiences are relegated to the privacy of their home and family in a way that is not reflective of their lived reality - that is, we know each woman entered the public sphere on her husband's and her family's behalf, but not her personal reasoning for doing so, nor the extent to which she operated as her own agent without warranting a mention in her husband's eyes. Furthermore, each woman's actions are described in her absence (Terentia due to Cicero's exile, and Turia owing to her own death). These limitations frustrate any attempt to glean a detailed understanding of each woman's motivations and her view of what might constitute independent action, which very well may have been defined differently than our modern sensibilities dictate.

### **Marriage and Property**

The two women's status as wives cannot be taken as equal to one another; each woman's marriage reflects a shifting cultural view of the institution and what it means for female

guardianship. Terentia's *sine manu* marriage with Cicero allowed her full control of her own financial affairs, including property. It can be argued that this financial independence was itself dependent on the absence (i.e. death) of her father, and hence the inheritance of her patrimony without guardianship, but Richard A. Bauman considers the patriarchal standard of guardianship "little more than nominal" (Bauman 1994: 60) at this point in time. Conversely, Turia's *cum manu* marriage to the *laudator* had already become uncommon by the first century BC: Hemelrijk suggests that the husband's emphasis on their communal organisation of their affairs is rooted in an awareness that their arrangement was old fashioned by contemporary standards (Hemelrijk 2004: 195). In this liminal period, however, each woman's story demonstrates that the line separating these two types of marriage was perhaps as blurred as that between the private and public spheres.

In his letters to her during his exile, Cicero acknowledges Terentia's liberty to make her own decisions with her funds and property. From his precarious political position, he instructs her as to the management of his own property, telling her that should his possessions be seized or his ownership of them dissolved, she is to manumit his slaves accordingly (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2). In a following letter, he goes on to lament the loss of his house and begs her not to spend her own money to support their household, but rather to accept the charity of others (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2). As Jo-Marie Claassen notes, these exchanges support Plutarch's argument that Terentia had full control of not only her own affairs, but her husband's in his exile (Plutarch *Cic.* 41.2-6, as cited by Claassen 1996: 210). However, the dire picture Cicero paints may have been more reflective of his own limited resources rather than Terentia's "impoverished state" (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2); Terentia's family wealth meant that her financial resources were greater than her husband's at the time of their marriage, and this state persisted for the duration of their coupling (Claassen 1996: 208, Grebe 2003: 129). This calls several aspects of Cicero's letters into question: namely, the reliability of the intelligence he received from Terentia and others, and whether his self-focused tendency for hyperbole influenced the way Terentia is portrayed as



serving the family - and his - interests in *absentia*. It is also worth noting that Terentia was not the only person Cicero expected to carry out his instructions, but perhaps the one whose judgement he encouraged most: his instructions to Atticus are prescriptive and straightforward, as seen in 51 BC (Cic. *Att.* 5.1), and he told Caelius Rufus that he “had no choice but to approve [Cicero’s] decision” (Cic. *Fam.* 2.15).

Claassen’s analysis of the marriage’s slow decline posits that, despite Terentia’s resources and independence, her status and wealth was not as secure as one might otherwise believe. Even conceding that his exile effectively dissolved their marriage, if only temporarily, Claassen insists that Cicero’s letters to Terentia nearing the end of their relationship and working through divorce can be read more amicably than assumed in previous scholarship (Claassen 1996: 212, 225). Indeed, in 47 BC, Cicero defers to Terentia’s judgement regarding when to submit notice of divorce (Cic. *Fam.* 14.3). Claassen suggests that this divorce could have been an attempt to firmly divide the couple’s assets, therefore insulating Terentia’s funds from any judgement against Cicero - although from the contract of their marriage, this should have already been assumed in principle (Claassen 1996: 225). If Terentia’s assets could indeed have been affected by a “political crash” (Claassen 1996: 225) of significant enough proportion, then it is possible that a *sine manu* marriage did not prevent the intermingling of financial and property matters between spouses - especially those married as long as Cicero and Terentia.

If the Cicero family’s marital arrangement can be considered slightly ahead of its time, then that of the *Laudatio Turiae* is somewhat behind, though its presentation seems to recognize this fact. If the funerary inscription is to be believed, Turia had a chance to inherit her father’s estate as his only daughter that remained under guardianship (her sister having already been married at the time of his death) (CIL VI 41062 1.13-18). Again, this financial independence would be owed to her father’s absence through death; but she rejected this challenge to her father’s will, choosing instead to distribute her inheritance between her and her sister’s households (CIL VI 41062 1.18). The *laudator* states that it was her “firm decision that

[she] would defend [her] father's written word" (CIL VI 41062 1.19), even noting that she intended to share with her sister regardless of the legal ruling. The legal savvy required of this woman speaks to a level of education and confidence managing such affairs, indicating not only her status, but the shifting role of womanhood from the private to at least an intermittently public role, and the community acceptance thereof (Lindsay 2009: 190).

The couple in the *Laudatio Turiae*, in accordance with what appears to be a *cum manu* marriage, intermingled their assets for management under the husband's guardianship (CIL VI 41062 1.38-41). However, the *laudator* is careful to characterise their 40-year partnership as precisely that - a *partnership*. Rather than simply a posthumous defence of what Bauman argues is a waning institution (1994: 60), and therefore driven by insecurity as suggested by Lindsay (2009: 192), the husband's narrative is supported by the decision to change the venue for this *laudatio* from the gravesite to a public monument, memorialising the couple as a joined unit to be observed by generations to come (Hemelrijk 2004: 187, Lindsay 2009: 184).

Furthermore, Turia's actions in her husband's exile somewhat mirror Terentia's in that she provided for him not only financially, but also furnished him with provisions and entreated for clemency on his behalf (CIL VI 41062 2.2a-6a). But even in her husband's presence, it appears that she exercised influence - if not outright control - over the family's resources, bringing up her female relatives within her own home and setting aside dowries to see them wed (though, rather than letting her "own patrimony suffer diminution," [CIL VI 41062 1.42-52] her husband and brother-in-law paid these sums). The husband's awareness of his wife's inheritance suggests that he did not view their wealth as communally as he alludes, again indicating a difference between ideal norms and actual common practices. Among married women of class in general, then, it stands to reason that marital property and finances were viewed at once as communal and separate, and were perhaps mutually controlled accordingly.

### **Agents of the Family**

Rather than operating as a factor of her husband's absence, a married woman like Terentia or Turia was likely expected to make decisions based on her immediate family's best interests - which naturally included those of her husband. As married women, their lives were expected to orbit around their husbands and, in Terentia's case, their children - but evidence suggests that men were also expected to prioritise their family and legacy, albeit in a different manner. It appears that independent action was limited for both parties in marriage. Cicero's political ambitions led him away from home due to both exile and obligation, and he is seen to fret about his family's welfare (in particular his daughter Tullia, as described to Atticus in June of 50 BC [Cic. *Att.* 6.4], but also Terentia's ill health and the family's financial situation [Cic. *Fam.* 14.4]). Likewise, Turia suffered for her husband's politics, being assaulted by one Marcus Lepidus in the *laudator's* absence, but apparently echoing the *laudator's* Augustan allegiance in a show of either fidelity, or truly held belief; in either case, it is clear the couple operated as a single unit in the eyes of the public, with Turia acting in her family's interest even after her husband's reinstatement as a citizen (CIL VI 41062 2.11-19). Considering that both couples reaped the benefits of each other's successes and shared in their sorrows, a more corporate view of actions on both sides of first century BC marriage may be warranted.

To that end, Claassen's assertion of the Cicero family's exceptionalism because of Terentia's independence is not undisputed. As noted by Sabine Grebe, conceded by Claassen (1996: 216), and evidenced by Turia's actions, it was par for the course that a woman act as her husband's public representative in the event of his exile (Grebe 2003: 127). Brennan compares ancient criticisms of Terentia to those of Marc Antony's wife, Fulvia, who also advocated on her husband's behalf but had the misfortune of being immortalised by her enemies (Brennan 2012: 358). Taking this assertion further, however, Bauman and Brennan both contextualise Terentia's actions within a broader, normalised community of politically influential Roman women that included Vestals and other free women of social rank (Bauman 1994: 62-63, Brennan 2012: 355). While this practice of semi-private, semi-public influence fits with Grebe's view of female

action while their male family was present as living in her husband's "shadow" (Grebe 2003: 127), the significance of this role cannot be understated. Cicero's letters themselves suggest that Terentia and his daughter Tullia would have been expected to exercise their own judgement regardless of his presence, with his recommendations for the latter's marriage taken into account, but as he notes, still hinging on Tullia's "consent" (Cic. *Att.* 5.4). While he undoubtedly would have exercised further influence if he had been present, and even states so himself (Cic. *Att.* 5.4), the impression is that the women's' preferences would have still been forthright.

The most notable point of contention in Cicero's early letters to Terentia is the matter of her intention to sell several houses, which he cautions her against (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1). Instead of citing concern for Terentia's immediate circumstance, he occupies himself with what will become of their son Marcus should he be left with neither his father nor his mother's inheritance (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1). This was of further concern for him later in life, when he encouraged Terentia to resolve her will so as to provide for their children - something he could not force her to do, regardless of their relationship or his status as the children's father (Claassen 1996: 220). These concerns about Terentia's affairs, over which she had authority, are exclusively family-focused.

Expectations of Roman women to act according to family interests were so strong that Turia's husband felt it necessary to memorialise her self-sacrificing nature in the *Laudatio*. Faced with a failure to bear children as their marriage progressed, Turia apparently approached her husband with a pragmatic offer to divorce him and select a new, hopefully fertile, wife on his behalf (CIL VI 41062 2.31). In this respect, she would be acting in the interests of the family - of which she considered herself a part, and expected to remain as "a sister and a mother-in-law" (CIL VI 41062 2.39) - rather than her husband, who claims he was horrified at the suggestion (CIL VI 41062 2.40). That Turia would be so willing to carry out something of this magnitude suggests that it was not nearly as transgressive to Roman sensibilities as it is to our modern

ones, and again points to the obligations of Roman citizen women as agents of their family - often including, but not exclusively, their husbands, whether or not these male relatives were present.

### **Conclusion**

It would be overzealous to suggest that the women depicted in Cicero's letters and the famed *Laudatio Turiae* were paragons of independent action regardless of their husbands' influence. However, close study of these two subjects reveals that the paradigm of Roman female independence as directly proportional to male absence lacks nuance; rather, it is vital to approach these histories, as best we can, with a willingness to view the Roman family as a unit of complicated individual people with their own lived experiences, influencing each other, and working to navigate the cultural norms and societal realities of their time period. Considering this dynamic, the primary evidence alludes to a complex network of female influence working not just underneath its male counterpart, but alongside and throughout it as well. The unique environment of the late first century BC required citizen women, whose families were inextricably woven through the country's politics, to exercise their own judgement and wield their influence in an attempt to maintain their own stability while advancing their families' positions to the best of their abilities.

Word count (including in-text citations): 2440

## Works Cited

**Modern Scholarship:**

- Bauman, R. A. (1994). *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*. Chapter Six: "The Political Strategists of the Late Republic." London and New York: Routledge. 60-77.
- Brennan, T. C. (2012). "Perceptions of Women's Power in the Late Republic: Terentia, Fulvia, and the Generation of 63 BCE." In *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, eds. S. L. James and S. Dillon. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 354-66.
- Claassen, J. M. (1996). "Documents of a Crumbling Marriage: The Case of Cicero and Terentia." *Phoenix* 50.3/4: 208-32.
- Grebe, S. (2003). "Marriage and Exile: Cicero's Letters to Terentia." *Helios* 30.2: 127-46.
- Hemelrijk, E. (2004). "Masculinity and Femininity in the *Laudatio Turiae*." *CQ* 54.1: 185-97.
- Lindsay, H. (2009). "The Man in Turia's Life, with a Consideration of Inheritance Issues, Infertility, and Virtues in Marriage in the 1st c. B.C." *JRA* 22.1: 183-98.

**Ancient Sources:**

Cicero, *Letters to Friends*, <https://www.loebclassics.com>.

Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, <https://www.loebclassics.com>.

E. Wistrand, trans. *Laudatio Turiae*, <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~afutrell/survey/laud%20tur.htm>.