An Historical Construct--Women of Rome and Renaissance Florence.

Edmund M. Burke
Fall 2009

Course Description and Objectives:
In both ancient Rome of the late Republic and early Empire and Renaissance Florence, the images we have of and about women have been created for us largely by men, and typically the images, whether written or visual, were intended to serve as affirmation of a male ideology.

The course looks to explore the phenomenon of the constructed image of women in two of Italy’s most socially sophisticated city-states. There will be multiple levels to the analysis. An early concern will be defining the character and ideology of the ascendant male culture: setting the context. Within this world, we will explore what society dictated the official role of women to be—what were the constraints imposed by laws, what normative social rules confronted women, and what duties were women expected to fulfill. In juxtaposition to the analysis of established expectations will be an investigation of how women actually lived, conforming and not conforming within the constraints, and what praise or opprobrium they earned as a consequence. In the effort to get at the complex reality of women’s lives in Rome and Florence, we will also employ a variety of modern theoretical models, differing analytical perspectives, to help unpack and better understand the constructed image of women.

Required Texts:

All other class readings are in a bound Xeroxed volume and are designated as RR (Reserve Readings) on the Syllabus.

The Roman Experience

Friday, September 25:
*Field Trip: The Roman Remains and Museum at Fiesole.*

Tuesday, September 29:
Lecture and discussion: the Roman Republic and the dominant ideology.

Thursday, October 1:
Discussion: Roman Women within the Ideological Frame: An
Overview.
For the design of a typical Roman villa, see:
http://www.vroma.org/~bmcmanus/house.html

Tuesday, October 6:
Discussion: Ways of ‘Seeing’ Women.
J. Berger, Chapter 3 from Ways of Seeing, pp. 45-64 (RR).

Thursday, October 8:
Discussion: Wives, Mothers and Daughters: Reality or Fiction?

Tuesday, October 13:

Thursday, October 15:
Lecture and discussion: The Late Republic and a Shifting Reality.
Catullus, ‘Poems’ (Catullus’ verse: #s 6, 10, 12, 16, 32, 39, 48, 56, 69, 89, 48, 80, 81, 101. Lesbia #s 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 37, 51, 58, 70, 72, 75, 83, 85, 87, 92, 107, 109).

Week of October 19:
Fall Break

Tuesday, October 27:
Discussion: Clodia Metelli: Reality and the Pornography of Art.

Thursday, October 29:
Lecture and discussion: Augustus: Change and Continuity.  
Read: Tacitus, *Annals* I.1-15.3 (*RR*).

*Friday, October 30:*

*Site Visit: The Ancient City of Florence and the Museo Com’ Era.*

*Tuesday, November 3:*

Discussion: Livia: Change and Continuity?  
S. Fischler, ‘Social Stereotypes and Historical Analysis: The Case of the Imperial Women of Rome’, pp. 115-130 (*RR*).

*Thursday, November 5:*

EXAMINATION.

### The Florentine Renaissance

*Friday, November 6:*

Lecture and Discussion: Women in the Renaissance: an Overview.  
P. Tinagli, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-20 from WIRA.

*November 7-10: Saturday-Tuesday*

Trip to Rome

*While in Rome we will explore the Roman Forum, a number of imperial fora, notably the Forum of Augustus, the Flavian Amphitheater, various imperial triumphal arches, visit the Museo Nazionale Romano (esp. its collection of Republican and early Imperial portraiture), and make a side trip to the Roman port-city of Ostia. Sculpture and site visits will provide complementary information on the physical context in which Roman women lived and how they were represented.*

#### A. The Domestic World

*Thursday, November 12:*

Discussion: Women and Marriage Ritual.  
P. Tinagli, ‘Women, Men and Society: Painted Marriage Furniture’, pp. 21-46 from WIRA.

Tuesday, November 17:
Discussion: Wives, Widows and Family: Subverting the Norm?
Site Visit: The Museo Horne and Palazzo Davanzati: Domestic Space and Ideology.

B. Social and Public Contexts

Thursday, November 19:
Discussion: Profile Portraits: Whose Status?
Read: P. Simons, ‘Women in Frames: the Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture’ pp. 4-30 (RR).
P. Tinagli, ‘Profile Portraits in the Quattrocento: Virtue and Status’ pp. 47-83 in WIRA.

Tuesday, November 24:
Discussion: Women in the Public Sphere.
Samuel Cohn, ‘Women and Work in Renaissance Italy’, pp. 107-126 (RR).
Site Visit: Museo del Bargello: Male Portraits and Mary.

C. Women Imagined

Thursday, November 26:
Discussion: The Constructed Image Changes.

Tuesday, December 1:
Discussion: The Nature of the New Construction.
Read:       P. Tinagli, ‘Portraits 1480-1560: Beauty and Power’ and
            ‘Female Nudes in Renaissance Art’, pp. 84-120, 121-154 in
            WIRA.

D. Women and Religion

Thursday, December 3:
Discussion: Women and Religion.
Read:       P. Tinagli, ‘The Cult of Female Saints: Images of Devotion
            and Exempla’, pp. 155-190 from WIRA.
            173-192 (RR).

Tuesday, December 8:
Discussion: Religion in Practice.
Read:       G. Brucker, ‘Monasteries, Friaries, and Nunneries in
            Quattrocento Florence’, pp. 41-62 (RR).
            Richard Trexler, Celibacy in the Renaissance: the Nuns of
            Florence’, pp. 343-372 (RR).
            C. Klapisch-Zuber, ‘Holy Dolls: Play and Piety in the
            Quattrocento’, pp. 310-329 (RR).

Thursday, December 10:
Final Examination

Course Requirements:

Participation. Students are expected to attend all classes and to have read all
assignments with care prior to class. Some class time will be devoted to lecture, but the
majority will be given over to focused discussion of the assigned readings and various
site visits. Class participation will constitute 25% of the grade.

Examinations. There will be two examinations, a midterm and final. The examination
grades will constitute 50% of the final grade. Specific details will be provided.
Paper Assignment. Each student will be required to write a single 5-7 page paper, to be submitted the last week of class. The specific paper topic will be determined by the student in consultation with me. There will be opportunity for preliminary drafts and revision. Paper grades will constitute 25% of the final grade.