

Classical Studies at McGill

Newsletter 1, 2008-09



Photo: Hans Beck

Welcome to the new academic year! These are exciting times for Classical Studies. Over the past years, our new professors vigorously rebuilt Classics and Ancient History. Every stone was turned around. The result is nothing less than a new chapter in the history of Classical Studies at McGill.

The course offerings were revised from scratch and curricula streamlined. A new research profile was developed, which already receives much attention; our faculty members are cooperating with various international research networks that attract funding from both Canada and abroad. Our all-new Classical Studies website contains frequently updated information concerning these research activities, as well as the growing number of guest speakers, colloquia and other events. Our students have re-launched the Classics Students Association (CSA), driven by the same vibrant spirit and passion that has become so characteristic of their teachers. The CSA held a very successful undergraduate colloquium last year, and its annual journal 'Hirundo' won the award for 'Best Student Publication of the Year' in the Faculty of Arts. Once again, I congratulate them on these achievements and thank them for their commitment and hard work. It makes a huge difference.

Much more needs to be done. Many students of last year's graduating cohort landed spots in top-notch graduate programs in North America and Europe. This alone makes it clear that the re-launch of our own graduate program in Classics is a top priority. So is the introduction of two separate (cont. page 3)



McGill University
Department of History
855 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec, H3A 2T7

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Tangible Classics: Summer Class in Florence (by Mike Fronda)



Speaking stones. Professor Fronda and students examine epigraphical documents in Pompeii.

For the second consecutive year I taught a Classics course in Italy during the May term, as part of the McGill Summer Program in Florence. This year thirteen excited undergraduates registered for CLAS 347: Special Topics in Classics. The course focused on how ancient cities were lively centers for political, religious, economic, and social activity.

Conducting a course about the ancient world in Florence offers tremendous benefits both to the students and the professor. We visited key archaeological sites, including the famous cities of Ostia (a busy Roman port), Pompeii, and Rome. The class also visited lesser known ancient cities: Assisi, most famous as the birthplace of St. Francis but also once a Roman town, and Fiesole, overlooking Florence, which was an important Etruscan center and later a Roman settlement. Florence itself was originally a Roman colony called Florentia, founded by Julius Caesar. By walking through the remains of ancient cities and examining

the remnants of monumental architecture, students get a tangible sense of the physical space and organization of ancient city life. Exploring archeological sites is great fun, and it also gives real insight into the everyday lives of the ancient Romans. It brings the classical world alive in a way that textbooks and the classroom alone can not. When the emperor Constantius II visited Rome for the first time in AD 357, he stood in awe as he looked at the already ancient monuments. Visiting archaeological sites today has very much the same impact. The enthusiastic students who joined me this May probably agree! For information on the McGill Summer Program in Florence, go to <http://www.mcgill.ca/italian/summer/florence/>.

Highlighting new Faculty

Dr. Bill Gladhill (Assistant Professor, Latin) specializes in Roman Republican and Imperial poetry. He studied at Michigan State University, University of Georgia, International University at Venice and Stanford University and has taught at both UGA and Stanford. His dissertation, 'Foedera: a Study in Roman Poetics and Society,' discusses the social and political implications of the ritual event of a *foedus* (treaty) on Roman society and empire and analyzes particularly problematic *foedera* in Roman epic. His current research interests include the relationship between law and poetry, the poetics of Roman religion, the formation of poetic space, cosmology and empire, and the interplay between visual, material, and literary representations of the ancient body. In addition to problems in Roman poetry, he has more than an amateur interest in ancient Greek dance culture, choral lyric poetry, Greek hymns and Hellenistic poetry. A central question in his research of things Roman and Greek is how and why cultures develop narratives about the collapse of their own societies.



Dr. Nikos Pouloupoulos (Phrixos Papachristidis Assistant Professor, Modern Greek Studies), a Classics graduate of UC Berkeley, studied Modern Greek Literature and History at Harvard University. He has taught courses on Modern Greek Culture and Literature at Harvard and at Hellenic College. He specializes in nineteenth and twentieth-century Greek Literature and Culture. The subject of his dissertation, 'The Poetics of Decline: Demetrios Papareggopoulos and his Epigones,' is a study of post-Romantic perceptions of cultural and socio-political decline as registered by one of the leading poetic voices of Greece in the nineteenth century. In addition to the focus of his dissertation work, his research interests range from the nascence of Modern Greek literature in Byzantium to the reception of the Classical tradition. Currently he is working on a project that examines early twentieth-century Greek anthropological and literary discourses of national and racial identity formation.

Research Spotlight: Ancestral Fault in Ancient Greece (by Renaud Gagné)

'The wheels of the gods are slow in turning, but they grind to fine flour,' says the proverb. Immortal gods can take their time. The justice of Zeus will bid its moment, but in the end it always finds its prey, even through generations. This thought remained a recurrent idea in ancient Greek culture. From the Archaic period to Late Antiquity, children were to be held accountable for the crimes of their forebears, a principle that we find expressed in philosophical treatises and social practice, in myth, ritual, and law. It was, more significantly, a fundamental theme in almost all literary genres. The punishment of a perjurer's kin was already a cornerstone of the Homeric oath formula, and the legally sanctioned punishment of whole families played an important role throughout antiquity. By the Classical period, ancestral fault had become a defining element of many mythic cycles. It was problematized by tragedians and historians, as well as denounced by critics of conventional religion. Hellenistic writers of theodicy, in turn, systematized delayed punishment and the causality of ancestral fault in their theories of cosmic justice. Their work was continued and expanded by a number of Imperial and Late Antique philosophers, most notably Plutarch and Proclus.

Greek ideas on ancestral fault had a decisive influence on the development of the early Christian understanding of original sin. These ideas also had a direct impact on the later evolution of Western thought concerning responsibility, fate, and historical causality, from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. Today, with the rising prominence of questions pertaining to collective responsibility and historical reparations, concern over the moral and genetic legacy of parents, as well as the renewed emphasis on original sin manifest in many

Christian churches and congregations, the Greek experience of ancestral fault continues to be of topical and direct interest for a large number of debates inside and outside the field of Classics. This is the main object of my current research interests.

In order to understand Greek ancestral fault, we have to read the individual expressions of the concept in individual texts against the larger background of its semantic field, as it existed at each moment in question. Following the progression of such an idea does not correspond to a literary study in theme and motif, the narrow theological study of an artifact of dogma, or the diffuse reconstruction of an exotic belief. The study of ancestral fault is an original experiment in cultural philology. It has to surpass the structure vs. pragmatics dichotomy, and to combine vertical diachrony with horizontal synchrony in investigating the institutions and discourses in which Greek ancestral fault came to be anchored. This research deals with changes in meaning over long periods of time and a great variety of forms and contexts. The objective is to trace the comprehensive literary and cultural history of an idea central to ancient Greek culture.

The first volume of this study, which is now nearing completion, covers the Archaic and Classical period. Individual chapters discuss passages from Homer and Hesiod, Archilochus and Alcaeus, Solon and Theognis, Pindar, Empedocles and Herodotus, oratory, and drama. A second volume, already well along the way, will cover texts from Plato to Proclus. Having obtained an FQRSC Grant for this project, I will have the pleasure to hire outstanding students to help me on this and other research.

Director's Welcome (cont. from page 1)

undergraduate study options, one that is geared toward cultural studies of the ancient Mediterranean and one that puts even more emphasis on ancient languages and literature.

With the arrival of two new colleagues, Classical Studies has now reached a critical mass to form a true academic community. We look much forward to shaping a new Classics future at McGill. Surf's up!

Hans Beck
MacNaughton Professor and Director

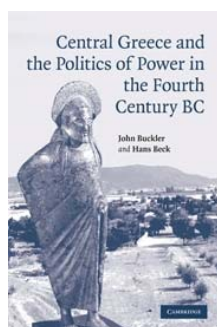
Classics Students Association (CSA)

The CSA is a vibrant undergraduate community that brings together students who love the ancient Mediterranean World. The objective is to make Classics more visible and accessible on campus, organizing events of a social and academic nature that will both further the study of antiquity and enrich student life.

We routinely hold wine and cheeses, pub nights, the ever popular ancient history movie nights and sponsor guest lectures from visiting scholars. For a full list of contacts, including the editorial board of our journal 'Hirundo,' visit www.mcgill.ca/classics/csa/.

Faculty and Teaching Staff, 2008-09

Baronowski, Donald	Faculty Lecturer	LEA 828 514.398.8222	Language Instruction
Beck, Hans	Professor, Director of Classical Studies	LEA 626 514.398.2234	Ancient History
Fronza, Michael	Assistant Professor, Advisor	LEA 625 514.398.7169	Ancient History
Fossey, John M.	Emeritus Professor	688 Sherbrooke, room 477 514.398.6209	Greek Archaeology and Epigraphy
Gagné, Renaud	Assistant Professor	LEA 826 514.398.8827	Ancient Greek Language and Literature
Gladhill, Bill	Assistant Professor	LEA 825 514.398.2409	Latin Language and Literature
Menn, Stephen	Associate Professor	LEA 921 514.398.6056	Ancient Philosophy
Palczynski, Margaret	Faculty Lecturer	LEA 828 514.398.8222	Language Instruction
Poulopoulos, Nikos	Papachristidis Assistant Professor	tba tba	Modern Greek
Serrati, John	Adjunct Professor, CEGEP Liaison	LEA 817 514.398.4889	Ancient History



New Books in 2007-08

- Gilbert Argoud, Albert Schachter, Guy Vottéro (eds): *Paul Roesch, Les Inscriptions de Thespies*. Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée Jean Pouilloux, 2007
- Philip J. Smith: *The Archaeology and Epigraphy of Hellenistic and Roman Megaris*. BAR International Series, 2008
- John Buckler and Hans Beck: *Central Greece and the Politics of Power in the Fourth Century BC*. Cambridge UP, 2008

Highlights in the New Academic Year

As usual, this year's academic calendar includes many activities and exciting events that go beyond the classroom. At the time of writing this newsletter, the list of guest speakers had already grown into a long bill, including Professors Rosenstein (Ohio State), Leppin (Frankfurt), Hopman (Northwestern), and Edmondson (York). The CAC lecturer this year is Professor Mark Golden (Winnipeg). In addition, we welcome Professor Jan Bremmer (Groningen) as an Onassis Fellow in the fall term. In August and December, one-day workshops on Roman Cyprus and 'Rome in Space' will be held.

Other items to watch out for: A one-day conference on 'Representations of Human Sacrifice' will be organized by Professor Gagné in November. The Classics Students Association will hold a Classics books sale in the fall term. We will celebrate the opening of the all new Classics Studies Lounge (LEA 817) with a wine and cheese. 'Classics Chats - Les Causeries Classiques' features Professors Serrati and Gladhill. For a full list of events and detailed info on times and locations, visit <http://www.mcgill.ca/classics/news> hb

