

**Department of Classical Studies**  
**Course Outline**  
**CS 9450B: THE ROMAN FAMILY**  
**WINTER 2026**



**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. K. Olson ([kolson2@uwo.ca](mailto:kolson2@uwo.ca)) (she/her)

**OFFICE:** Lawson Hall 3227 (661-2111 x 84525)

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays, 4:00-5:00 PM, or by appointment

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- S. Dixon. 1992. *The Roman Family*. Johns Hopkins (\$45). = **Dixon 1992**
- Other readings: see the 'course readings' section of our OWL site

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

This course will analyze the different ways in which, from 200 BCE -200 CE, Romans lived together as families. We will examine the strategies they developed to secure the continuation of the family and its property; how families and their constituent members fitted into public life, and how these issues affected individuals of different social backgrounds. Using literary and artistic source, we will study what concepts such as childhood, adolescence, and familial affection meant to Romans; what sentiments were invested in the various family-related roles and how these sentiments differed from our own. We will also look at such topics as slavery, adultery, and the dissolution of marriage, and their effects on family.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- To become familiar with the main evidence for the Roman family in the central period.
- To become aware of the problems with and limitations of that evidence.
- To investigate modern reactions to, interpretations of, and preconceptions about that evidence.

**TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:**

- To develop critical, analytical and problem-solving skills through the writing of an essay and through the close analysis of ancient texts and artefacts in seminars.

- To gain a knowledge of the different types of evidence available for this area of Roman history, primarily the main literary texts and the archaeological evidence.
- To gain an appreciation of the historiographical and analytical skills needed to handle these sources.
- To gain an ability to use these different sources together to assess the main issues in the interpretation of the Roman family.
- To develop and enhance skills in oral presentation through participation in seminars.
- To develop the skills necessary for conducting in-depth research.
- To develop an ability to discuss these issues in written work with coherent and logical arguments, clearly and correctly expressed.

### GRADES:

Essay	40%
Presentation	25%
<b>TWO</b> article reviews (15% each)	30%
Questions on student presentations	5%
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	100%

This will be a discussion-based seminar which will require participation from **all** students. I do not give a 'participation grade' as such, but factor a willingness to speak up in class into the final grade.

### ESSAY AND PRESENTATIONS:

- **Essays** should be 5000 words, and are due **Monday Apr 27<sup>th</sup>**.
- I encourage you to write the essay on a topic of interest to you (in consultation with me). Although we cover many topics pertinent to the family in ancient society in the class readings and discussion, some we simply do not have time to examine. One of those may be appropriate for your paper: for instance, the Roman family and the house; the family in art; the early Christian family; domestic religion and the family, etc.
- **Presentations** should be about 15-20 minutes in length (in other words, conference-paper length, or **8-10** double-spaced typed pages). You will choose a date for your presentation in the first week or two of classes; if you need to cancel or change your date **you must find a classmate willing to take your place**.
- Your essay should incorporate and address questions, suggestions, and comments raised during your presentation; thus, the essay and presentation are on the same topic.
- **Article reviews:** students are required to choose **TWO** of our readings in advance and prepare questions and comments for discussion in class. (Our textbook is **excluded** from these). For each article presentation, in 10-15 minutes:
  1. please summarize the article in question
  2. tell us what the author set out to do, and using what evidence
  3. if s/he achieved this, in your opinion
  4. Tell us what you liked or didn't like about the article or chapter.
  5. Please also pose questions to us about the content

6. Please type up your report and turn it in to me (it should be 1-2 double-spaced typed pages, or thereabouts).

#### **Use of AI:**

In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT, etc.) **is prohibited**. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

#### **Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education**

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity.

“Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students” [https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

#### **Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

**Mental Health Support** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

#### **Gender-based and sexual violence**

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

#### **Learning Development and Success**

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

#### **SOGS**

Additional student-run support services are offered by SOGS: <https://sogs.ca>