

## Tutorials: Classics

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### Art and Religion in the Classical World

From Archaic Greece to the height of the Roman Empire, art was employed to express the religious narratives and ideas of the Greeks and the Romans. While Jews and Christians had public sacred texts, Greeks and Romans did not, and their art was a powerful way of developing and communicating notions of the divine and of religious and spiritual experience. This tutorial will examine the varied religious experience of the Greeks and the Romans and ask how their art gives us insight into that experience, whether through representations of the gods, expressions of piety, depictions of religious narratives, the representation of worship, or, in some cases, tantalizing presentations of mystery cults in action. The rich archaeology of well-known sites such as Athens, Delphi, Rome, and Pompeii will provide fascinating case studies of the way art was used in both grand public settings and in hidden domestic contexts, and in Oxford itself the Ashmolean Museum contains a rich collection of Greek and Roman art relating to religion, which the student will be able to study at first hand. This tutorial will also consider the rise of Christianity to dominance in the fourth century AD, and the way Christian art transforms the public language of religion but at the same time draws on the very Greek and Roman traditions whose religious ideas it seeks to supplant.

### Augustus to Nero: The First Roman Emperors

Augustus was the enigmatic, impenetrable fulcrum around which the history of ancient Rome revolved. His rise through civil wars brought the final curtain down on the Roman Republic, and his rule provided the unavoidable pattern for the emperors who would rule Rome for the next three centuries. This tutorial will investigate the extraordinary establishment of rule by one man, an achievement of brutality and political cunning that succeeded against all the odds, and will continue to examine the succeeding fraught decades of rule by members of his family, until finally Nero took his own life to plunge Rome into civil war once again. The cynical Tacitus, most accomplished and cynical of Roman historians, provides a compelling if fragmentary lens for the period after Augustus' death, but the student will develop skills in employing archaeology, numismatics, epigraphy, and the study of fragmentary texts to build up a broader view of the period.

Although it is easy to concentrate on aristocratic politics and court intrigue, this was a period of expansion and change in the Roman Empire, and the student will have the chance to study the experience of people under Roman rule: the tumultuous attempts by the Roman government to regulate the Jewish state in Palestine, culminating with full-scale revolt under Nero, and the conquest of Britain (and the subsequent revolt by Boudicca) are significant examples.

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### Cicero's Speeches

While other Romans rose to the top through violence, Cicero owed his remarkable rise to the pinnacle of Roman society to his eloquence and his intellect. He was also a participant in and observer of a series of the most violent and shocking events in Roman history which culminated in the collapse of the Roman Republic and the establishment of Augustus as autocratic ruler, the first in the long line of emperors. Cicero lost his life in the process, but before that his career swung from giddy triumph to frustrated impotence over more than three decades. In this tutorial the student will trace this career through Cicero's speeches, which display a wit, an intelligence, and a rhetorical mastery that nobody could match. Among the speeches the student may study are the Verrines, in which a youthful, untried Cicero unexpectedly brought down a corrupt governor; the Catilinarians, in which Cicero viciously attacks an aristocratic enemy of the state and (in his own view) prevents the destruction of the Republic; the defence of Archias and the defence of Balbus, two very different speeches in which Cicero argues that his clients, both born foreigners, should not be stripped of their Roman citizenship; the defence of Caelius, a comic tour de force in which Cicero uses the misogynistic character assassination of a wealthy woman, Clodia, to destroy his opponents' case; and the Philippics, the vitriolic attacks on Mark Antony following Caesar's assassination, whose brilliant invective led ultimately to Cicero's own murder. The student will gain a knowledge of the historical background to the speeches, a fascinating and highly significant period, as well as a deep understanding of Cicero's rhetorical technique and an appreciation of these varied speeches on a literary level.

### The Fall of the Roman Republic

The century between the 140s and 40s BC saw unprecedented expansion of the Roman Empire running in parallel with the implosion of the Republican political system that fuelled it. Ambitious military generals sought more power than ever before, at the expense of their rivals, and shocking violence marked both the wars of conquest and the civil wars that wracked the *res publica*. In this tutorial the student will examine the events that brought Rome to the brink of autocracy, tracing the century from the fall of Carthage to the dictatorship of Julius Caesar. Unlike the opaque period of autocracy that followed under the rule of the emperors, this period is blessed by an abundance of sources. Pride of place goes to Cicero, through whose speeches, letters, and books we have an unparalleled insight into the minds and detailed events of the final decades of our period. The historian Sallust is another vital source, as is Julius Caesar himself, but students will also learn to see beyond the major sources, using fragmentary texts as well as archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, and art to develop a complex picture of the period and a deeper understanding of these events.

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### Greek Art of the Classical Period

The city of Athens, between the establishment of democracy in the late sixth century BC and the loss of Greek autonomy to the Macedonian military might of kings Philip and Alexander in the second half of the fourth century, produced a body of art that has amazed subsequent viewers, inspired passionate emulation, and earned the period the label of 'Classical' in that it has seemed to many to represent a standard of excellence that no subsequent generation can afford to ignore. The student taking this tutorial will examine the revolutionary changes in artistic technique, style, and representation that characterized this period, from the austere patriotism of the early Classical style to the freedom and delight that reigned before the coming of the Macedonians.

Part of the challenge and charm of studying this period lies in the very partial survival of the art. The achievements of vase painters are well represented in the surviving archive, and while more and more sculpture has been recovered over the last two centuries, the famous works of the renowned sculptors of their age are known through texts and later copies. Painting has virtually vanished, though texts give us clues, but architecture is still well represented, if ruinous, and the accompanying architectural sculpture amazes to this day. Thus during this tutorial the student will indulge in an exercise in scholarly reconstruction, employing detective skills to exploit the evidence. They will also learn to appreciate this art from an aesthetic point of view, discerning its distinctive features and trying to understand its impact on its contemporary audiences as well. Lastly, the student will put the art in its social and historical context, grasping the way in which visual culture was the product of contingent circumstances and may express implicit social assumptions, political messages, and philosophical ideologies, all of which remain to be discerned by the careful scholar.

### Greek Grammar

This tutorial is intended for students who have already begun studies of Classical Greek or Biblical Greek. The sessions will be adapted to fit the student's level of expertise, and will help them improve their knowledge of the language by studying the complexities of Classical Greek grammar and exercising that knowledge through translation from Greek to English and vice versa, as well as through the careful analysis of ancient texts.

### Greek Reading

This tutorial is intended for students who have already begun studies of Classical Greek or Biblical Greek. During the semester, the student will read an original text (or texts) in Classical Greek with a view to improving their overall knowledge of the language and in order to appreciate the literary qualities of the text itself. The course

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of study will be shaped in conversation with the student, to ensure that it matches their level of experience and expertise.

### Greek Tragedy

This tutorial will allow the student to plunge into the exciting and transformative world of serious Athenian theatre of the fifth century BC. Inevitably it will focus on the three canonical tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, since theirs are the only plays that have survived in a substantial manner, but the great variety of theme and style offered by these three very different writers will give the student the opportunity to flex literary-critical muscles to a great degree. Aeschylus offers our only surviving historical tragedy in *The Persians*, which displays patriotic fervour and respect for ancient values, but also sees events from the point of view of the enemy. Sophocles, in his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, gives us a proverbially excellent display in plot management and raises deep metaphysical questions about chance, fate, and the relations between gods and mortals. Euripides shocked audiences in his lifetime and continues to do so, with plays that subvert aesthetic and moral expectations, from *Medea*, who murdered her own children in pursuit of justified revenge, to the god Dionysus, in *The Bacchae*, wreaking devastating retribution for failures to provide him with his true worship.

These are just some of many plays that the student may investigate during this tutorial, paying due attention to the literary techniques and the deep themes to be found in them. In addition, the student will put the texts in their wider contexts, thinking about the elaborate and expensive staging for which the texts were just the starting point, and the role of theatre in the vibrant (but doomed) Athenian society of the fifth century.

### Hellenistic Art

The three centuries between the death of Alexander the Great and the defeat of Cleopatra saw remarkable changes within Greek art. In addition to technical and thematic development, Greek art spread geographically and interacted with numerous local cultural traditions, and mutual influence led to radical transformation. Many aspects of art had their birth or first development during the period, such as naturalistic portraiture and mosaics. This tutorial will give students the chance to examine radical artistic developments against the backdrop of the new imperial Hellenistic kingdoms, which saw the mixing of people groups in new urban centres (such as Alexandria and Antioch) and novel expressions of centralized royal power. The student will be able to study sculpture, painting, mosaics, architecture, and numismatics, among other forms of art. Themes may include the visual expression of royal power, the role of women in art, religious art, the Greeks in Egypt, Jewish responses to Hellenistic culture (for example, the Temple in Jerusalem), and the influence and enduring legacy of Hellenistic art in Roman visual culture.

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### Hellenistic Poetry

Though much Hellenistic poetry has been lost, and large parts of it require reconstruction from tantalizing papyrus fragments found in the deserts of Egypt, its literary achievement represents one of the most original and fertile phases of ancient literature, and also one of the most influential. The Roman literature which forms a bedrock of subsequent European traditions would be impossible without the stimulating example of Hellenistic forebears. The student taking this tutorial will study Apollonius Rhodius, whose epic *Argonautica* deals with the narratives of Jason, Medea, and the golden fleece in a manner that subverts the earlier epic tradition of Homer and his followers and provides vital inspiration for Virgil's *Aeneid* and for novel treatments of romantic love in poetry. Callimachus is a giant of Hellenistic poetry, whose aesthetic ideas ('a big book is a big evil') led to some of the most surprising and original poetic projects of his time and gave rise to poetic notions of originality, delicacy, and wit that inform European poetry to the present. Theocritus's *Idylls* are a remarkable mixture of different types of poem, again subverting earlier traditions, but they also created a coherent picture of a musical and poetic pastoral world that spurred Virgil to great achievements and established the pastoral tradition in European literature. Any student of literature who likes to be surprised and delighted and desires to learn of the wellsprings of traditions that flourish today will find rich rewards in this tutorial.

### Herodotus and the Wars between the Greeks and the Persians

Herodotus is the first historian in the European historiographical tradition, and his scintillating narrative of the wars between the Greeks and the Persians has caught the imagination ever since, whether lying behind such films as *300* or underlying the idea of an unyielding divide between West and East that bedevils politics to the present. The battles of Marathon and Salamis were just the iconic moments in a train of social, political, and military events, that, as Herodotus and many of his readers supposed, could have resulted in a very different history of Europe if they had transpired differently. The student taking this tutorial will have the opportunity to dig deeply into Herodotus's great work, enjoying the literary brilliance of his narrative and descriptions as well as appraising critically his skills as an accurate and cogent historian. Contextual evidence will be brought to bear in an attempt to see the conflict without the lens Herodotus provides: archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, and some further literary texts can help us escape from the Herodotean straightjacket. This is a tutorial for a student who enjoys analysing great literature critically, engaging in the detective work that appraising historical events from the distant past requires, and thinking about the ways cogent historical narratives are produced and endure to the present, affecting modern attitudes to world affairs.

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### Historians of Greece and Rome

The Western tradition of history writing traces its origins to Classical Greece, and this tutorial will trace that tradition from the age of Pericles and Socrates in fifth-century Athens through to the Roman historians. Ancient historians were masters of narrative, which makes them very engaging, but they used many other techniques to evoke distant epochs and their own times, such as biographical sketches, the creation of speeches, vivid ethnographical and geographical diversions, and the application of literary techniques derived from poetry and drama to the description of historical events. Students will be invited to study primary sources, investigating how each one adapted the tradition to convey their chosen themes and comparing their varied styles, motivations, and relations with their audience. Among others, this tutorial will consider: Herodotus, the 'Father of History' and the 'Father of Lies', whose vivid account of the wars between the Greeks and the Persians contain narratives still famous today, such as the battle of Thermopylae and the battle of Marathon, and whose framing of generational warfare between West and East is still influential; Thucydides, whose pessimistic but penetrating analysis of contemporary conflict between fellow Greeks is still celebrated by students of military strategy; Polybius, an enslaved Greek who witnessed at first hand the rise of the Roman Empire and chronicled it with an outsiders discerning and critical eye; Caesar, whose laconic prose created a compelling narrative in which he was the heroic centre; Livy, whose rationalization of the traditions of early Rome created a complete mythology for the state; and Tacitus, whose pessimism and cynicism went beyond even Thucydides as he gave a bitter and terse account of the Roman emperors and the loss of liberty that their rule entailed.

### The History of Athenian Democracy

The rise and fall of Athenian democracy is one of the best-known narratives from the ancient Classical world, but it is also one of the most confusing and complicated, giving rise to diverse interpretations in subsequent centuries and earning enthusiasts and opponents in a manner that deeply affects the way we understand our political systems today. The history is exciting, from the overthrow of tyrants and establishment of democratic forms of government in the late sixth century, via the desperate resistance to imperialist ambitions during the Persian wars, to the excesses and arrogance of democratic rule in the late fifth century which led, variously, to the death of Socrates, the defeat by Sparta, and the overthrow of democratic government. The student will examine this history, learning to use critically some of the most compelling (but also slippery) historians of antiquity, Herodotus and Thucydides, but also employing numerous other vital sources, including inscriptions and archaeology. They will also be able to evaluate the way Athenian democracy functioned, with features that strike modern observers as very strange, such as the use of blind ballots to appoint magistrates and the remarkable process of ostracism. The tutorial is fascinating and intellectually challenging, and the student will end up understanding Classical Athens in great depth and also gaining a much deeper understanding of the political landscape of today.

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### Homer

Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, are the indispensable literary touchstones of Classical literature. The *Iliad*'s twenty-four books describe just a few days in the decade-long siege of Troy; they are packed with incident and drama as well as meditations on the human condition, and the reader rapidly becomes familiar with a lengthy cast of vivid personalities, from violent young warriors such as Achilles and Hector to the much older Priam and Nestor and to a range of striking women too, such as Hecuba, Andromache, and, of course, Helen. The *Odyssey*, equally lengthy, covers much more time and space through the interlinked narratives of Odysseus' attempt to return home, of the journeys of his son in search of him, and of his wife Penelope's attempts to keep the grasping suitors at bay. Odysseus' own account of his adventures, including encounters with the Cyclops Polyphemus and with the magical Circe, approaches the stuff of fairy tale. The student will be able to study both poems in depth, considering such themes as the role of the gods, Homeric morality, the epics' poetic technique (such as the extravagant use of simile and of ecphrasis), and the meaning of life and death. In addition the student will investigate the way the poems were fashioned across generations of oral poets, gaining understanding of the remarkable twentieth-century studies that exploded the Romantic notion of a single blind Homer. Through this tutorial the student will develop a profound knowledge of poems that are astonishing monuments of literature in their own right and that played an ongoing role in Greek literature, in Roman literature, and in many other literary traditions up to the present day.

### Introduction to Classical Literature

This tutorial is designed to provide students with an introduction to Classical literature. The emphasis will be on reading closely and interpreting works which may be unfamiliar and understanding them in their social context. Texts (which are studied in translation) are chosen from among the following authors: Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Callimachus, Theocritus, Lucretius, Catullus, Horace, Virgil, Propertius, Ovid, Tacitus.

### Latin Grammar

This tutorial is intended for students who have already begun studies of Latin. The sessions will be adapted to fit the student's level of expertise, and will help them improve their knowledge of the language by studying the complexities of Latin grammar and exercising that knowledge through translation from Latin to English and vice versa, as well as through the careful analysis of ancient texts.

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### Latin Reading

This tutorial is intended for students who have already begun studies of Latin. During the semester, the student will read an original text (or texts) in Latin with a view to improving their overall knowledge of the language and in order to appreciate the literary qualities of the text itself. The course of study will be shaped in conversation with the student, to ensure that it matches their level of experience and expertise.

### Ovid

This tutorial will allow the student to dig deep into the work of Ovid, one of the most mercurial of poets whose literary facility, wit, and playfulness make him hard to pin down, as much as he has delighted (and infuriated) readers ever since his own lifetime. His earlier poetry (in *Amores* and *Ars amatoria*) is a feast for students of romantic poetry, taking the tradition further than ever before in terms of detached, ironic, and self-knowing commentary (which nonetheless does not eschew passion) and of pushing the boundaries of what is socially acceptable. His *Heroides* present the point of view of the women, whose mistreatment in heroic legend had rarely been seen through their own eyes: however, is Ovid (a man) the person to do this, and should we see proto-feminism or further male exploitation in these original poems? Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a masterclass in subverting a grand literary tradition as well as one of the great sources of Classical imagination and story for later European culture, offers endless opportunities for critical approach, and the numerous commentaries over the centuries have never captured this fabulous and monstrous work in its entirety. Ovid's tendency to push boundaries had very real consequences when he found himself exiled from Rome by Augustus, and his exile poetry reflects this experience with hitherto unseen depth and sorrow, while his calendar poem, the *Fasti*, is one of the strangest and surprising productions of Roman poetry. Ovid is impossible to pin down, but this tutorial will give the student the chance to plunge into his varied productions and explore those evanescent qualities of wit, originality, humour, and subversion that make this poet such a challenge to encapsulate.

### Religion in the Roman Empire

Within the borders of the Roman Empire were represented an extraordinary variety of religious experience, as peoples migrated and mixed and as local religious traditions came to terms with the overwhelming political power of a state ruled by an emperor. This tutorial aims to examine this great variety and to analyse the remarkable and historically important religious changes that took place between the first century BC, when Rome came under the rule of a single man, and the fifth century AD, when the single man ruling the empire became a Christian. The traditional religion of the city of Rome is fascinating in its own terms, and the student will examine the ways in which practices and ways of thinking that had

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developed for a small settlement were adapted as they spread across an empire. Where the local gods of the city of Rome struggled, the emperor did not, and the extraordinary diffusion of the religious worship of the emperor and his family is a phenomenon this tutorial will grapple with. The birth and development of Christianity is another development whose success begs for an explanation against the backdrop of imperial society, and other groups who transcended geography to find adherents across the empire will be studied too, such as worshippers of Mithras and adherents of Isis. The Jews underwent the cataclysm of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the destruction of the Jewish state during this period; nonetheless, they flourished in numerous centres across the empire, including Alexandria and Rome itself, and their religious practices and ideas were transformed with the rise of Rabbinic Judaism. The student will study this wide variety of experience and change through the examination of numerous primary sources. Many fascinating texts will be examined, from religious texts to histories (from the Jewish historian Josephus, for example), to literary texts (e.g. Ovid's religious calendar poem, the *Fasti*, and Apuleius' rambunctious and outrageous *Golden Ass*) to philosophical works (e.g. Philo). In addition, material culture greatly enriches the picture, from inscriptions, architecture, and archaeology to coins and works of art.

### Roman Art

The art of Rome represents, at the same time, the visual self-presentation of a single city, whose political power, religious system, and social network of ancient aristocratic families find vivid representation in self-aggrandizing monuments across many centuries, and the hugely diverse visual culture representing numerous people groups that came into the Roman orbit and responded to Roman power with accommodation and resistance. This tutorial will capture the complexities and paradoxes of the art of an empire that stretched from Mesopotamia to Portugal and from Britain to the Nile. Students will examine the competitive display of wealthy rivals during the late Republic, and the refashioning of the Roman state in political and visual terms during the time of Augustus and his successors. While Roman art was sometimes seen both at the time and more recently as unoriginal and derivative of Greek models, this tutorial will examine the vibrant and imaginative strategies employed by those living in the Roman Empire as they expressed a rapidly changing political and social landscape in strikingly novel visual forms. Students will learn to interpret a wide range of primary sources, from sculpture, jewellery, ceramics, painting, and mosaics, to architecture and city planning and coins. They will put this visual culture in its historical context, making use of the surviving literary evidence to elucidate material remains. They will consider the artistic productions of those at the centre, familiarizing themselves with the astonishing remains of the city of Rome itself, as well as the extensive visual patronage of the emperor; but they will also examine the art of the periphery: both the underprivileged of Roman society, whose visual vestiges can be pieced together from sensitive archaeology, and those groups whose identities made them eccentric in the Roman universe, such as Jews, Christians, and others.

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### Roman Literature of the First Century BC

The first century BC was one of the most tumultuous in Roman history, and saw the old political system of the Roman Republic abused and overthrown, with the rule of one man, Augustus, the final result. Violence, conquest, and civil war characterized the age, and against this backdrop some of the most remarkable and revolutionary literature in European history was written. The student taking this tutorial will have the opportunity to investigate a wide variety of genres and writers. Roman love poetry reached an apogee of original thought and shocking expression in Catullus, who uses his own experiences as the ostensible foundation for a poetry by turns tender and virulent. Cicero was the greatest orator of his age (and perhaps any age), rising to the heights of power through his rhetorical skills and coming to a bad end for the same reasons, and his surviving speeches combine dramatic narrative, compelling intelligence, and irresistible wit in a manner that reveals why. Lucretius's poem *On the Nature of Things* is both beautiful and philosophical, giving voice to an Epicurean philosophy with its shocking atheistic ideas, which proved appealing to contemporary Romans and to many in subsequent ages. While freedom of expression characterized the earlier part of the century, Augustus's autocratic rule leashed the tongues of poets, who nonetheless found novel modes of expression and the opportunity for subtle subversion, from the love poetry of Propertius and Horace to the Virgilian masterpieces that commented on the contemporary situation through the traditional genres of pastoral, didactic, and epic. Ovid rounds the century out with a new type of playfulness, wit, and subversion, that would lead to his exile in the later years of Augustus's rule. Across this remarkable and varied landscape of writings the student will be able to address numerous themes, such as originality, political engagement, the representation of women, and many more.

### Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World

The study of gender and sexuality in ancient Greece and Rome affords the student numerous surprises, and challenges the assumptions we make about such subjects in the modern world. This tutorial takes in the broad sweep of ancient history, from Homeric epic and Archaic Greece through the height of the Roman Empire to the domination of Christianity in the fourth century AD, and examines the varied experience and representation of women and sexualities that can be detected across that sweep. The student will examine the representation of women in standard literary texts as well as in art and through obscurer forms of material evidence, and will aim to excavate the experience of women's lives in counterpoint to this representation (invariably by men). Gender boundaries were often strict, but were also frequently subverted, and the tutorial will look at evidence for such fluidity. What were the sexual norms and mores of Greek and Roman societies, and how were they flouted? In a cosmopolitan world, how did people respond to divergent ideas about gender and sexuality held by other groups? What was the understanding of these issues in Jewish circles, and in Christian circles, and how did the rise of Christianity influence society more broadly in this respect? These are some of the

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fascinating questions facing the student of this topic. This tutorial will involve the sophisticated use of varied historical evidence for getting behind traditional and dominant narratives, as well as subtle readings of literary evidence. There will also be the opportunity to read theoretical texts as a means of providing a firm methodological basis for this historical investigation.

### **Virgil**

Virgil's reputation is dominated by his *Aeneid*, the epic poem which traces the mythical origins behind the foundation of Rome and gives that city a sense of its imperial destiny. In writing it he had the temerity to rival Homer, but so successful was he that T.S. Eliot later regarded the poem as the epitome of the 'Classic', and C.S. Lewis treated it with reverence throughout his life. The poem is a rich tapestry, from its depiction of the fall of Troy (complete with horse) to the maritime wanderings of the eponymous hero, and from the influential descent to the underworld and the bitter fighting in Italy to the narrative of the doomed romance between Aeneas and Dido, queen of Carthage. The student will investigate Virgil's poetic art, his human sympathy, and his narrative skills in depth. However, the *Aeneid* was written during the rule of Augustus, the first Roman emperor, who won a bloody civil war and kept the state in his autocratic grasp, and in this tutorial the student will also be able to consider whether Virgil's praise for his regime amounts to craven propaganda or subversive commentary. In addition, the student will study Virgil's two shorter works: the *Eclogues* employed the world of musical shepherds to comment on contemporary social trauma and proved the touchstone of all subsequent pastoral poetry in numerous European traditions; in the *Georgics*, Virgil offers, superficially, a didactic poem devoted to the arts of farming (and, famously, bee-keeping) but also contributes profound analysis of the human experience.