

USCDornsife  
College of Letters,  
Arts and Sciences

**GSEM 120g: Cleopatra's World**  
**Units: 4 (section # 35366)**  
**Spring 2020—TTh— 11pm-12:20pm:**

**PROVISORY SYLLABUS**

IMPORTANT:

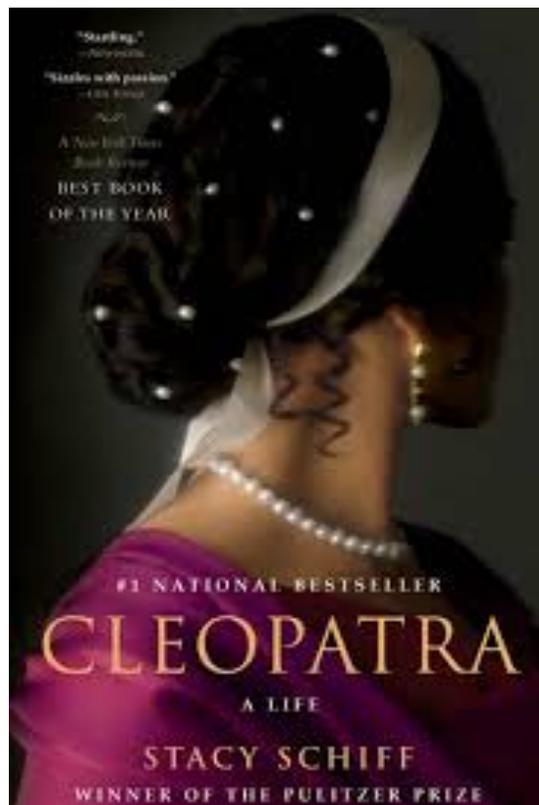
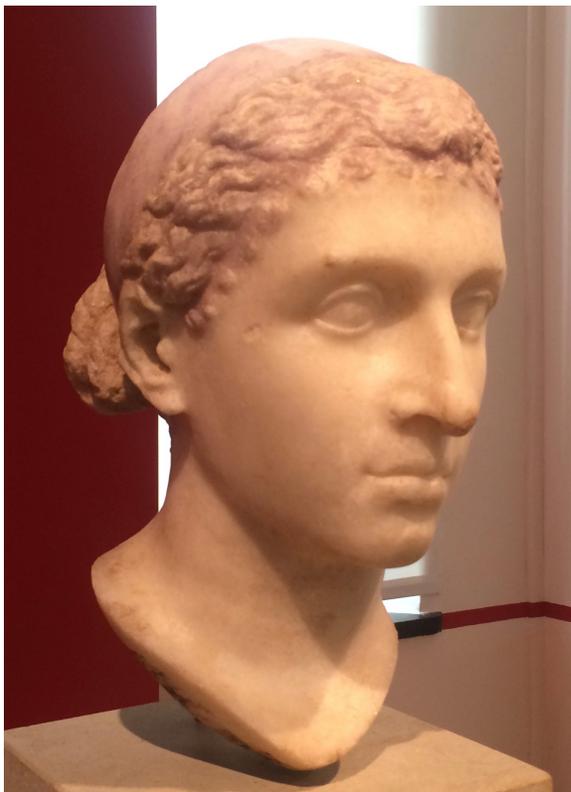
**Location: VKC 256**

**Instructor: C. Fischer-Bovet**

**Office: PED 130Q**

**Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30pm-2:30pm or by appointment**

**Contact Info: [fischerb@usc.edu](mailto:fischerb@usc.edu)**



## Course Description

Do you think you know who Cleopatra was? In this course, you will experiment with ancient texts and sources to get at the reality behind the legend and with the representations of Cleopatra in different literary genres, visual arts, movies and TV series. You will assess the role and political achievement of the real queen of Egypt beyond the mythical figure constructed over the ages by exploring one of the historical periods of antiquity whose legacy has been pervasive in western culture: the civil wars in Rome, from Julius Caesar to Mark Antony and Octavian, and the creation of the Roman empire across the Mediterranean, from Italy to Egypt. Why did it play such a role in western cultural history and how has it been distorted over time? Our investigation of Cleopatra's world will trigger reflections on ancient and modern anxieties regarding women as leaders, oriental and despotic rulers, imperialism, religion and politics, love and power, fame and infamy.

Our inquiry starts with Cleopatra's ancestors, the Ptolemies, a dynasty founded in Egypt by one of Alexander the Great's generals, and with their capital, Alexandria, well known for its famous library. You will discover the multifaceted evidence available to study this period of Egyptian history called Hellenistic (323-30 BCE): from the bilingual priestly decree engraved on the famous Rosetta stone to papyri and coins, from archaeological material to poetry written in Alexandria. The crossroads of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome become clear in the time of Cleopatra VII (69-30 BCE). We will examine the historical sources for her reign, distinguishing facts and fiction and at the same time comparing ancient literary texts and modern biographies on her. Could Cleopatra be considered as a model for modern women leaders, as asked in a recent article on *Leadership through the Classics*? By analyzing and comparing a variety of media, we will question how the historical figure of Cleopatra has been reinvented through the ages – immediately in Ancient Rome and later in early modern and contemporary western culture.

## Learning Objectives

All your reflections will be available to the other students in the class through a common blog, thus creating a mini-community on Cleopatra's world. You will develop collaborative skills and critical reading, not only through your examination of sources and scholarly material but also of other student's ideas and projects. By the end of the course, you will master strategies for finding, reading and understanding relevant information from different genres, for analyzing complex problems, for making and evaluating compelling arguments, for preparing effective presentations and for conducting your own final project. You will know how to bring historical depth to current events and ideas, such as imperialism, multilingualism and women's political power and how to make more informed decisions. You will gain new insights and be inspired by achieving six principal learning objectives:

- Reflect on human experience throughout time and across diverse cultures (Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome) – and on how a powerful female figure can be reinterpreted across ages.
- Cultivate a critical appreciation for various forms of human expression, including literature and historical inquiry, language, and the arts, as well as develop an understanding of the contexts from which these forms emerge.
- Engage with lasting ideas and values that have animated humanity throughout the centuries and assess how the critical examination of kings and queens' attitudes may make us reflect about ethical values and may make our life more purposeful and intellectually richer?
- Learn to read and interpret actively and analytically ancient literary accounts and official documents (in translation) of the period as well as later literary and artistic productions representing Cleopatra's world. Develop critical and creative thinking as well as persuasive writing and speaking by exploring a question of your choice reflecting on ancient and/or modern anxieties connected to Cleopatra and/or her world.
- Learn to evaluate ideas from multiple perspectives and to formulate informed opinions on complex issues of critical importance in today's global world, such as imperialism, war, the relationship between politics and religion.
- Learn to collaborate effectively and disseminate knowledge through teamwork, reading and commenting on each other's work and peer-review reports of final projects.

## Course Notes: Students' blogs

Copies of lecture slides and other class information will be posted on **Blackboard (BB)**.

Create **your own blog on wordpress.com** and send me your url by email to [fischerb@usc.edu](mailto:fischerb@usc.edu) by **Friday of Week 1, midnight**. I will link it to our course website at **XXX** under "student blogs". We may use nicknames (in this case, preferably an Ancient Greek or Egyptian place or person followed by a number, e.g. Osiris99) so that only the instructor knows your identity. It will be password protected (for legal matters if we post images etc.), please all use **the same password** "pharos". You are more than welcome to give the password to friends and family.

**No prerequisite.**

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- **Burstein, S. M. (2007) *The Reign of Cleopatra*, University of Oklahoma Press. [USC bookstore or Amazon: ISBN-10: 0806138718] – TO BUY (Amazon, c. \$25)**
- **Goldsworthy, A. (2010), *Antony and Cleopatra*, Yale University Press, [USC bookstore or Amazon: ISBN-13: 978-0300177459]– TO BUY (Hardcover starts at \$6)**
- **Schiff, S. (2010) *Cleopatra: A Life, New York* [USC bookstore or Amazon: ISBN-13: 978-0316001946] – TO BUY (paperback c. \$11; used starts at \$1 on Amazon)**
- **Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Folger Shakespeare Library) Mass Market Paperback, 2005 [buy it on Amazon: ISBN-13: 978-0743482851 – or use another copy you already own]**
- **Selections of ancient authors:** Plutarch, Arrian, Cassius Dio, Virgil, Horace, Propertius in Burstein (above) or on Blackboard.
- **Carney, E. D. (2013) *Arsinoë of Egypt and Macedon. A Royal Life*, Oxford University Press [USC bookstore or Amazon: ISBN-13: 978-0195365511] selection on Blackboard.**
- **Supplementary materials for the weekly readings** and pictures of objects will be **uploaded on Blackboard (BB)**. There is no course reader for this course. Online links or Netflix for movies.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

**Participation** in class: includes participation in discussions, oral analysis in class of documents or movies, comments on other students' blogs and peer-reviews of two final projects. **Every first weekly meeting, please bring a card** with one question or comment on the readings. Please email me if you need to miss more than two classes so that you do not miss important material discussed in class.

You will write **four papers** on your blog during the semester. The topic is assigned on Blackboard, as it will reflect on our discussions in class. ALWAYS check on BB to make sure you are doing the right assignment. Papers on your blog must be between **750 and 900 words** (= 2.5 - 3 double pages). The goal is to help you to develop your own ideas about the readings by exploring questions of particular interest to you.

If you write on your blog an additional paper of good quality **before** the last day of class (11/28/16) on a source of your choice or extra material that you found interesting and has been approved by the instructor (**600 words**, for a meeting where there is no blog assignments), you can get one extra credit. I will give **one point extra credit** only for one additional paper.

For your **short oral presentation** of a section of the material in one class, see the guidelines on the last page of the syllabus. Date of your presentation will be chosen during week 1. You are also required to **post on your blog** a summary of your oral presentation (short summary or slides) and of your final project.

**Exam:** midterm on all the readings and material covered in class until week 7 (included);

**Final exam** on all the readings and material covered in class from week 8 to week 15.

**Final project:** 7-8 pages double-space paper (= ca. 2,000 to 2,300 words) + bibliography (use MLA or Chicago style); specific guidelines and steps with deadlines to be indicated on BB. You must obtain the instructor's approval of the project outline.

**Example of final project: analytical paper**, e.g. comparative and critical analysis of the biography of a female historical figure from the pre-modern period with the biographies of Cleopatra read in class; a **research paper** on a topic in Hellenistic History, to be approved by the instructor; e.g. a comparative and critical analysis of how Cleopatra is represented in different sorts of media, ancient and/or modern, and of the different effects on the audience regarding one of the themes of the class (see course description, at least one play or movie must be different from those analyzed during the semester); or a **creative project** related to Cleopatra or Hellenistic Egypt (this also includes a written component explaining the goal of the project, the challenges faced, problem solving aspect, learning experience.)

### Grading Breakdown

All assignments receive a maximum of 100. A level = 100 to 90; B level = 89-80 etc.

- 15% Participation in class: (includes oral analyses in class of documents or movies, comments on other students' blogs and peer-reviews of two final projects).
- 25% 4 paper (blog posts) of 2.5 - 3 pages (= 750-900 words) = responses to the assignments on BB.
- 5% Oral presentation of a section of the material in one class (see last page of syllabus).
- 15% Mid-term exam on all the material covered on the syllabus until the exam: Week 7.
- 20% Final project, 7 - 8 pages = 2,000 -2,300 words (5% of this grade consists of the outline, personal meeting and update of outline and 5% for the presentation in week 14 or 15).
- 20% Final exam.

### Assignment Submission Policy

Papers are due on the blog **on the day and time indicated on Blackboard** under Assignments.

Make sure you **proofread** everything you post online for the class. Ideally have someone read it before you post it to avoid grammar mistakes, typos etc. I recommend you first write your text in Word with spelling and grammar check and then copy and paste it on your blog.

### Additional Policies

**Any late assignment (includes blogs and papers) will be penalized.** 10 points out of a maximum of 100 points are removed each day that passes, including weekend days. The fourth day the assignment receives a zero score. E.g. if an assignment that is worth 90 points is due on Monday 01/28, it will receive 80 points on 01/29, 70 points on 01/30, 60 points on 01/31 and zero on 02/1.

Please turn off your cellphones during class. **Laptops and other electronic devices** are to be employed only for course related purposes during class.

## Course Schedule with weekly readings (to be read BEFORE class)

### **IMPORTANT:** Always check Blackboard in case of modifications.

In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing, and other academic activities. **For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester.** See *Contact Hours Reference*, located at <http://arr.usc.edu/services/curriculum/resources.html>.

### **PART I. Setting the stage, weeks 1-4**

#### **WEEK 1: Introduction**

**Week 1.1, 01/14:** Who was Cleopatra? Introduction

**Week 1.2, 01/16: "Render unto Alexander": Alexander's foundation myth of Alexandria**

Burstein (textbook), p. 71–72 + 85–86; Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* (ch.1-30, includes passage in Egypt), Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* (selection on Alexander in Egypt) [pdf on BB]

#### **WEEK 2: Setting the stage: Alexandria and Egypt**

**Week 2.1, 01/21: Meeting Cleopatra's family: The Ptolemies**

*How was life at the royal court in Alexandria?*

Burstein (textbook), ch. 1. Historical background, p. 1-10 + p. 86–89 (biographies of Ptolemy I and II; Schiff (historical novel), ch. 2, p. 19-26; Athenaeus's description of the Ptolemaia (pdf).

+ compare biographies of either Ptolemy I or II with Brill, *Ancient Hist. Encycl.*, and Wikipedia [Links on BB]

**Week 2.2, 01/22: Alexandria, the capital of an empire**

Burstein, ch. 5. Alexandria + p. 80–81, 89–90, 90–91 on Isis, Ptolemy XII and Sarapis + DOC 6: Tacitus on Sarapis; Strabo's description (Austin #292, pdf); selection of objects from Goddio, *Egypt's Sunken Treasures* (underwater excavation, pdf): Royal couple, Sarapis, Foundation plaques of Ptolemy III, draped statues.

#### **WEEK 3: Alexandria, intellectual life and female royal status**

*What are the challenges to write a modern biography of a female historical figure?*

**Week 3.1, 01/28: The library of Alexandria:** Selections from Callimachus and Theocritus' poems

**Week 3.2, 01/30: Biography of Arsinoe II,** Burstein, p. 74–75 + E. Carney, p. 1-10 + 83-133

**PAPER 1** on Alexandria due on your blog by Friday before midnight

#### **WEEK 4:**

**Week 4.1, 02/04: The Rosetta stone - Religion and bilingualism: between Egypt and Greece**

Burstein, ch. 3, Ptolemaic Egypt, how did it work? p. 33-41 + ch. 4, Cleopatra's Egypt: a multicultural society, p. 43–52 + Rosetta stone on p. 146-148.

**Week 4.2, 02/06: Cleopatra's female models? The tribulations of her great-great-grandmother & great-grandmother – Cleopatra II and III:** Minas-Nerpel (2011) 'Cleopatra II and III: the queens of Ptolemy VI and VIII as guarantors of kingship and rivals for power.'

### **PART II. Cleopatra's life, weeks 5-9**

#### **WEEK 5: Cleopatra and Caesar**

**Week 5.1, 02/11: Cleopatra's "college years"**

*What did elite education look like in the first century BCE Mediterranean?*

Schiff, ch. 2, p. 26-38 on Cleopatra and Caesar; Goldsworthy, ch. 6, "adolescent", p. 81-95 on Mark Antony.

**Week 5.2, 02/13: Caesar in Egypt**

*Love and politics: who is seducing whom?*

Burstein, ch. 2, "Cleopatra's life", p. 11-23 + biographies of Julius Caesar, p. 81-2 and (revise) Ptolemy XII, p. 89-90; Schiff, ch. 3, p. 41-81 (esp. p. 41-46 and 71-81); Suetonius and Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* (short selections in Burstein, p. 98-99); Cassius Dio, book 42.34-45; Goddio (2012) – head of Caesarion (pdf)

**PAPER 2** due on your blog by Friday before midnight

#### **WEEK 6:**

##### **Week 6.1, 02/18: Cleopatra in Rome**

*How can we distinguish between facts and fantasies when almost no sources are preserved?*

Schiff, ch. 4-5, p. 98-132 + midterm review in class

**Special extra credit, T. 02/18, 5pm-6:30pm, SOS 250: by attending a special guest lecture by Prof. Paul Kosmin (Harvard) on *Trading Values: Ethnography and Exploration in the Ancient Indian Ocean World* (organized by the Pre-Modern Mediterranean Seminar of the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute) and write a short report (400-600 words) by Friday 02/21, before midnight on your blog.**

##### **Week 6.2, 02/20: The Serapeum in Ptolemaic Memphis: Egyptian king and Animal Worship**

Selection of papyri from the Serapeum + watch the BBC documentary on the Serapeum and the Apis cult at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8pFhb-fDGo&feature=youtu.be&list=PLGvSX6RtEoLSL5ylqS3BRnZwI94-JtTI> [Instructor presenting at a conference in UCLA] – send workshop to instructor before midnight on 02/20

#### **WEEK 7: Cleopatra and Antony (part I)**

##### **Week 7.1, 02/25: Cleopatra and Antony as Isis/Aphrodite and Dionysus**

Burstein, ch. 2, "Cleopatra's life", p. 23-32; Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, sections on Cleopatra in Burstein, p. 105-117; Goldsworthy, ch. 18, Goddess, p. 234-244, ch. 20, Dionysus and Aphrodite, p. 261-270.

##### **Week 7.2, 02/27: MIDTERM EXAM**

#### **WEEK 8: Cleopatra and Antony (part II)**

##### **Week 8.1, 03/03: Cleopatra and Antony against Octavian**

Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, sections on Cleopatra in Burstein, p. 117-126; Cleopatra's papyrus (Burstein, p. 138–139) + coin of Cleopatra and Antony in Rowlandson (1998) *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, #12 with fig. 4-5-6 & Burstein, plates; Goldsworthy, ch. 23, Lover of her fatherland, p. 293-303, ch. 25, Queen of kings, p. 321-335, ch. 26, Is she my wife?, p. 335-349, ch. 27, War, p. 349-355.

##### **Week 8.2, 03/05: Cleopatra's death**

Plutarch's *Life of Antony*, sections on Cleopatra in Burstein, p. 126-132; Cassius Dio (book 51, ch. 10-17) + Strabo (17.1.10) (pdf); Schiff, ch. 9, esp. 273-290 and p. 297-302; Goldsworthy, conclusion, p. 386-397; bronze coins in Burstein, plate.

#### **PART III. The Legacy of Cleopatra: Weeks 9-13**

#### **WEEK 9: Cleopatra and Octavian: from the Romans to Shakespeare**

##### **Week 9.1, 03/10: Cleopatra interpreted by Roman poets**

Horace and Virgil in Burstein, Appendix, p. 132-134; Kleiner, "Egyptomania" in *Cleopatra in Rome*, p. 163-178 (pdf).

##### **Week 9.2, 03/12: Cleopatra: from Rome to the middle ages: selection of readings on BB**

**PAPER 3** due on your blog by Friday by midnight

#### **SPRING BREAK**

## **WEEK 10: Shakespeare**

Week 10.1, **03/24**: Read Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts 1 to 3: short performances and analysis by group of students

Week 10.2, **03/26**: Read Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Acts 4 to 5: short performances and analysis by group of students

### **Cleopatra in modern and contemporary media**

## **WEEK 11: Cleopatra – from Black & White movies to Liz Taylor**

**Week 11.1, 03/31**: Wyke, "Glamour girls. Cleomania in mass culture" in *Cleopatra, a sphinx revisited*, 2011, p. 172-194 (pdf); In class we will watch and analyzed some extracts of the movie *Cleopatra* by Cecil B. Demille and a selection of representations to be distributed in class and analyzed in group.

**Week 11.2, 04/02**: Mankiewicz's Cleopatra, part I

- Selection and analysis of key scenes by pairs of students: to be posted on their blog.

### **SEND OUTLINE of FINAL PROJECT by 04/03 Friday before midnight**

## **WEEK 12: Cleopatra & Liz Taylor to the HBO TV series Rome**

**Week 12.1, 04/07**: Mankiewicz's Cleopatra, part II

- Selection and analysis of key scenes by pairs of students: to be posted on their blog

**Week 12.2, 04/09**: No class – individual meeting with instructor about final project

**PAPER 4** due on your blog by Friday before midnight

You are encouraged to visit the Getty Villa during the weekend and pick an object, see week 13.2

## **WEEK 13: Cleopatra in HBO TV series Rome and in paintings and visual arts**

**Week 13.1, 04/14**: Cleopatra in HBO TV series Rome: readings tba

**Week 13.2, 04/16**: Cleopatra in paintings and visual arts or visual art in the time of Cleopatra

Choose an object from the Getty villa's guide, selection of Hellenistic artifacts (pdf) + selection of paintings; Short presentations by pair of students in class

## **WEEKS 14 and 15: Conclusion and students' presentations**

**Week 14.1, 04/22: Conclusion: an example for modern women leaders?**

- Vanderbroeck, P. (2012). 'Cleopatra: An Example for Modern Women Leaders?', in G. P. Prastacos, F. Wang and K. E. Soderquist eds.), *Leadership through the Classics. Learning Management and Leadership from Ancient East and West Philosophy* (pdf on BB)

- Discussion on what you learn in this course; can it help you to formulate informed opinions on complex issues of critical importance in today's global world (such as imperialism, war, the relationship between politics and religion, anxieties regarding women as leaders, oriental and despotic rulers, love and power, fame and infamy? ...)

- Discussion about how to make the presentation of your final project stimulating and persuasive.

**Week 14.2, 04/23**: Presentations by students of their final project and peer-review of two final projects.

**Week 15.1, 04/28**: Presentations by students of their final project and peer-review of two final projects.

**Week 15.2, 04/30**: Conclusion

**FINAL PROJECT DUE on Wednesday 05/06/20 before midnight.**

**FINAL EXAM on TUESDAY 05/12/20, 11am-1pm, usual classroom**

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Submitting any previous assignments of yours – or sections of it – is also considered as plagiarism.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

### Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

#### LIST OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS BY STUDENTS – sign up in class in Week 2.1

**Tips for ca. 5 minute oral presentation:** Use the “who, why, when, where, how questions.” Identify keywords around which your analysis will evolve. When it is a long text, choose a small section on which you will focus and explain why you chose the passage; indicate how your passage relates to the rest of the text (position in the text, content, style, repetitions/new ideas, etc.); present what we/you can learn from the keywords and how you interpret this passage; how can we use this text for historical research on the topic explores on your presentation day? Any biases? You may end with a question/debate for the other students about their own interpretation.

W	Text 1 = presentation 1	Text 2 = presentation 2
3.2	Carney, ch. 4. Arsinoe’s wedding with her brother	Carney, ch. 5. Arsinoe as wife of her brother
4.1.	Rosetta stone, first half: benefactions by the king	Rosetta stone, second half: honors by the priests

4.2.	Lewis, p. 80–81, The twins of the Serapeum	Lewis, p. 68, petition about assault in Serapeum
5.1.	Poem by Callimachus Hymns 1	One poem by Theocritus, either <i>Idylls</i> 15 <u>or</u> 17
5.2.	Compare Caesar’s life by Plutarch (§48–49) and Suetonius (§35 + 52)	Compare Caesar’s life by Plutarch (§48–49) and Cassius Dio (42.34–45)
7.1.	Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i> , sections on Cleopatra in Burstein, p. 105–117	Goldsworthy, ch. 18, Goddess, p. 234-244
8.1.	Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i> , sections on Cleopatra in Burstein, p. 117–126	Goldsworthy, ch. 23, Lover of her fatherland
8.2.	Plutarch’s <i>Life of Antony</i> , sections on Cleopatra in Burstein, p. 126-132	Schiff, ch. 9, esp. 273-290
9.2	Shakespeare’s <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , Acts 1 to 3	Shakespeare’s <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , Acts 1 to 3
10.1	Shakespeare’s <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , Acts 4 to 5	Shakespeare’s <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , Acts 4 to 5