**Taught MA - Epigraphy**

**Seminar 5 – The ‘epitaphic’ habit**

This week we focus upon the most ubiquitous type of inscriptions, epitaphs, of which many thousands survive, and many hundreds are still being discovered and published each year. These range from the simple to the elaborate, and might at first glance seem comfortingly similar to modern examples. To what extent do epitaphs in any age present a ‘real’ picture of the society they commemorate?

There are four main areas of debate, which can be explored from different perspectives and with reference to different times and places; **please prepare a presentation of up to 20** **minutes (maximum) each**. Consider the following questions, and try to find some good examples to explore the problems posed by them. In your presentation, try to outline main debates and illustrate them with examples. The questions below are simply intended to act as starting-points. Feel free to explore beyond this bibliography, which is just designed to start you off. Conversely, you’re not expected to read the whole of this bibliography in one go!

### You should all start by reading the classic article:

@MacMullen, R. (1982) ‘The epigraphic habit in the Roman Empire’, *AJPhil* 103: 233-

46

**Then dip into some of the items listed on the general bibliography before plunging into your special areas of interest.**

### 1. Society

**Key questions**

* How representative of society as a whole are the tombstones that survive from it?
* Are particular groups under- or over-represented (and why)?
* How accurate is the information provided by tombstones?
* What can epitaphs reveal about demographic patterns?
* Can we trace social mobility?

### 2. Families/ Households

**Key questions**

* What do epitaphs reveal about family structures?
* What are the advantages and limitations of using epitaphs to reconstruct family relationships?
* Can we gauge levels of emotion or affection?
* How do art and text interact?

### 3. Identity

**Key questions**

* How did people use their funerary monuments as a way of asserting their sense of their own identity? Consider identities relating to ethnicity, professional occupation, social status.
* How do art and text interact?

### 4. Religion

**Key questions**

* Do funerary monuments reveal much about people’s religious practices and beliefs? Look out for grave-goods, dining-areas, gardens, as well as the actual epigraphic texts.
* How do you account for the changes between inhumation and cremation over time?
* How distinctive were Jewish epitaphs?
* Does the spread of Christianity bring about any major changes in the ways in which people represented themselves?

# General bibliography

**Introductory on death and burial in the Roman world:**

Hope, V. (2009) *Roman Death*

Hopkins, K. (1983) *Death and Renewal*

Toynbee, J. (1971) *Death and Burial in the Roman World*

Walker, S. (1985) *Memorials to the Roman dead*

**General surveys of funerary epigraphy**

Bodel, J. (2001) ‘Epigraphy and the ancient historian’ in Bodel, ed. *Epigraphic*

*Evidence* espec. pp.30ff

Carroll, M. (2006) *Spirits of the Dead. Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western*

*Europe*

Chioffi, L. (2015) ‘Death and burial’ in Bruun & Edmondson, eds *Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*

\*Cooley, A.E. (2012) *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy*

Lassère, J-M. (2007, 2nd edn) *Manuel d’épigraphie romaine* vol. 1 pp.220ff

\*McLean, B.H. (2002) *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman*

*Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine* ch.11 ‘Funerary inscriptions’

\*Oliver, G. ed. *The Epigraphy of Death*

**Important approaches:**

Hopkins, K. (1966) ‘On the probable age structure of the Roman population’,

*Population Studies* 20: 245-64 [Social science periodical]

@Martin, D.B. (1996) ‘The construction of the ancient family: methodological

considerations’, *JRS* 86: 40-60

@Meyer, E. (1990) ‘Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman Empire: the evidence

of epitaphs’, *JRS* 80: 74-96

Morris, I. (1992) *Death-ritual and social structure in antiquity*, ch.6

@Mouritsen, H. (2005) ‘Freedmen and decurions: epitaphs and social history in Imperial

Italy’, *JRS* 95: 38-63

@Revell, L. (2005) ‘The Roman life course: a view from the inscriptions’, *European*

*Journal of Archaeology* 8: 43-63

@Scheidel, W. (2007) ‘Epigraphy and demography: birth, marriage, family, and death’

[available online for downloading from Social Science Research Network]

@Woolf, G. (1996) ‘Monumental writing and the expansion of Roman society in the

early Empire’, *JRS* 86: 22-39

### Select bibliography by topic

### Society

**Roman**

Carroll, M. (2006) *Spirits of the Dead. Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western*

*Europe* espec. chapters 8-9

Fuks, G. (1985) ‘Where have all the freedmen gone? On an anomaly in the Jewish grave’,

*Journal of Jewish Studies* 36: 25-32

Graham, E-J. (2006) *The burial of the urban poor in Italy in the late Roman republic and*

*early empire*

Graham, E-J. and Carroll, M., eds. (2014) *Infant health and death in Roman Italy and beyond*

Hopkins, K. (1966) ‘On the probable age structure of the Roman population’,

*Population Studies* 20: 245-64 [Social science periodical]

Kertzer, D. and Saller, R. (1991) *The family in Italy: from antiquity to the present* –

espec. chapter by Shaw

Kleiner, D.E.E. (1977) *Roman Group Portraiture. The funerary reliefs of the late*

*Republic and early Empire*

McDonnell, W.R. (1913) **‘On the expectation of life in ancient Rome, and in the**

**provinces of Hispania and Lusitania, and Africa’**, *Biometrika* 9.3/4: 372- 77

Meyer, E. (1990) ‘Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman Empire: the evidence of

epitaphs’, *JRS* 80: 74-96

Morris, I. (1992) *Death-ritual and social structure in antiquity*, ch.6

Mouritsen, H. (1997) ‘Mobility and social change in Italian towns during the principate’,

in H. Parkins, ed. *Roman Urbanism. Beyond the Consumer City* pp.59-82

(2005) ‘Freedmen and decurions: epitaphs and social history in Imperial Italy’,

*JRS* 95: 38-63

Parkin, T. (1992) *Demography and Roman Society*

**Pearce, J.** et al (eds) ***Burial, society and context in the Roman world* (Oxford: Oxbow,**

**2000) – chapter by Martin-Kilcher**

Rawson, B., ed. (1991) *Marriage, divorce and children in ancient Rome* – espec. chapter

by Weaver

(1997) *The Roman Family in Italy: status, sentiment, space* – espec. chapter by

Weaver

@Revell, L. (2005) ‘The Roman life course: a view from the inscriptions’, *European*

*Journal of Archaeology* 8: 43-63

@Riess, W. (2012) ‘*Rari exempli femina*: female virtues on Roman funerary inscriptions’ in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, eds James and Dillon

@Scheidel, W. (2007) ‘Epigraphy and demography: birth, marriage, family, and death’

[available online for downloading from Social Science Research Network]

@Shaw, B. (1984) ‘Latin funerary epigraphy and family life in the later Roman Empire’,

*Historia* 33.4: 457-97

(1996) ‘Seasons of death: aspects of mortality in Imperial Rome’, *JRS* 86:

100-38

@Taylor, L.R. (1961) ‘Freedmen and freeborn in the epitaphs of imperial Rome’, *AJPhil*

82: 113-32

### Families/ Households

**Roman**

Bradley, K. (1991) *Discovering the Roman family*

Carroll, M. (2006) *Spirits of the Dead. Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western*

*Europe* espec. chapter 7

@Cohen, A. and Rutter, J., eds (2007) *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and*

*Italy* – espec. Part VI

@Curchin, L. (1983) ‘Familial epithets in the epigraphy of Roman Britain’, *Britannia* 14:

255-56

Edmondson, J. (2015) ‘Roman family history’ in Bruun & Edmondson, eds *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*

@Flory, M. (1984) ‘Where women precede men: factors influencing the order of names

in Roman epitaphs’, *CJ* 79: 216-24

George, M., ed. (2005) *The Roman Family in the empire*

@Golden, M. (1988) ‘Did the ancients care when their children died?’ *G&R* 35: 152-63

Graham, E-J. and Carroll, M., eds. (2014) *Infant health and death in Roman Italy and beyond*

Huskinson, J. (1996) *Roman Children’s Sarcophagi: their Decoration and its Social*

*Significance*

Kertzer, D. and Saller, R. (1991) *The family in Italy: from antiquity to the present* –

espec. chapters by Garnsey, Shaw, (cf. review article by @K. Bradley, *CPhil* 88.3 (1993) 237-50)

**Koortbojian, M. (1995)** Myth, memory, and meaning on Roman sarcophagi

Mander, J. (2012) *Portraits of children on Roman funerary monuments* (CUP)

@Martin, D.B. (1996) ‘The construction of the ancient family: methodological

considerations’, *JRS* 86: 40-60

Oliver, G. ed. *The Epigraphy of Death* – espec. chapter by King

Penner, L. ‘Gender, household structure and slavery: re-interpreting the aristocratic *columbaria* of early imperial Rome’, in *Families in the Greco-Roman world*, eds R. Laurence and A. Strömberg

@Rawson, B. (1966) ‘Family life among the lower classes at Rome in the first two

centuries of the Empire’, *ClPhil* 61: 71-83

@(1974) ‘Roman concubinage and other de facto marriages’, *TAPhA* 104: 279-

305

ed. (1991) *Marriage, divorce and children in ancient Rome* – espec. chapter by

Weaver

(1997) *The Roman Family in Italy: status, sentiment, space* – espec. chapters by

Saller, Nielsen, Rawson/Huskinson

@(1997) ‘“The Family” in the Ancient Mediterranean: past, present, future’, *ZPE*

117: 294-96

(2003) *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy*, espec. ch.8

@Riess, W. (2012) ‘*Rari exempli femina*: female virtues on Roman funerary inscriptions’ in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, eds James and Dillon

@Scheidel, W. (2007) ‘Epigraphy and demography: birth, marriage, family, and death’

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@Shaw, B. (1984) ‘Latin funerary epigraphy and family life in the later Roman Empire’,

*Historia* 33.4: 457-97

(1987) ‘The age of Roman girls at marriage: some reconsiderations’, *JRS* 77: 30-

46

@Saller, R. (1987) ‘Men’s age at marriage and its consequences in the Roman family’,

*ClPhil* 82: 21-34

(2001) ‘The family and society’ in Bodel, ed. *Epigraphic Evidence* ch.4

@Saller, R. and Shaw, B. (1984) ‘Tombstones and family relations in the Principate:

civilians, soldiers and slaves’ *JRS* 74: 124-56

### Identity

**Roman**

Benelli, E. (2001) ‘The Romanization of Italy through the epigraphic record’, in *Italy and*

*the West. Comparative issues in Romanization*, eds S. Keay and N. Terrenato, 7-16

Borbonus, D. (2014) *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*

Carroll, M. (2006) *Spirits of the Dead. Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western*

*Europe* espec. chapters 2, 6

Carroll, M. (2012) ‘*The Insignia of Women’*: dress, gender and identity on the Roman

funerary monument of Regina from *Arbeia*’, *The Archaeological Journal* 169: 281-311

Cormack, S. (1997) ‘Funerary monuments and mortuary practice in Roman Asia Minor’

in S. Alcock, ed. *The Early Roman Empire in the East* pp.137-56

Devijver, H. and Van Wonterghem, F. (1990) ‘The funerary monuments of equestrian

officers of the Late Republic and Early Empire in Italy (50 BC-AD 100)’ *Ancient Society* 20: 59-98

Edmondson, J. (2002) ‘Writing Latin in the Roman province of Lusitania’, in *Becoming*

*Roman, Writing Latin? Literacy and Epigraphy in the Roman West*, ed. A.E. Cooley (JRA Suppl. 48: Portsmouth RI) 41-60

George, M. (2006) ‘Social identity and the dignity of work in freedmen’s reliefs’, in E.

D’Ambra and G.P.R. Métraux, *The Art of Citizens, Soldiers and Freedmen in the Roman World,* 19-29

Hope, V. (1997) 'Constructing Roman Identity: Funerary Monuments and Social

Structure in the Roman World' Mortality 2: 103-121 [Social science periodical]

@(1997) 'Words and Pictures: the Interpretation of Romano-British Tombstones'

Britannia 28: 245-258

(1998) 'Negotiating Identity and Status: the Gladiators of Roman Nimes' in J.

Berry and R. Laurence (eds.), Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire (Routledge) 179-195

(2000) ‘Fighting for identity: the funerary commemoration of Italian

gladiators’ in *The epigraphic landscape of Roman Italy*, ed. A.E. Cooley (London: Institute of Classical Studies)

Hopkins, K. (1983) *Death and Renewal* espec. chapter 4

Koortbojian, M. (1996) ‘*In commemorationem mortuorum*: text and image along the

“Streets of tombs”’ in J. Elsner, ed. *Art and Text in Roman Culture* pp.210-34

@Meyer, E. (1990) ‘Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman Empire: the evidence

of epitaphs’, *JRS* 80: 74-96

Oliver, G. ed. *The Epigraphy of Death* – espec. chapters by Vestergaard

and Hope

**Pearce, J.** et al (eds) (2000) ***Burial, society and context in the Roman world*– espec.**

**chapter by Dexheimer**

@Woolf, G. (1996) ‘Monumental writing and the expansion of Roman society in the

early Empire’, *JRS* 86: 22-39

### Religion

**Roman**

Hope, V. (2009) *Roman Death*

**Hope, V. and Huskinson, J.,eds (2011) *Memory and Mourning***

**Pearce, J.** et al (eds) ***Burial, society and context in the Roman world* (Oxford: Oxbow,**

**2000) – espec. chapters by Polfer, Niblett**

Walker, S. (1985) *Memorials to the Roman dead*

**Jewish**

**@Johnson, M.J. (1997) ‘**Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared

Tombs?’ *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.1: 37-59

@Kraemer, R. (1989) ‘On the meaning of the term “Jew” in Greco-Roman inscriptions’,

*HThR* 82.1: 35-53

@(1991) ‘Jewish tuna and Christian fish: identifying religious affiliation in

epigraphic sources’, *HThR* 84.2: 141-62

Lassère, J-M. (2007, 2nd edn) *Manuel d’épigraphie romaine* vol. 1 pp.264ff

@Noy, D. (1995) *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe: City of Rome*

@Williams, M. (1992) ‘The Jewish community of Corycus – two more inscriptions’,

*ZPE* 92: 248-52

*@*(1994) ‘The organization of Jewish burials in ancient Rome in the light of

evidence from Palestine and the Diaspora’, *ZPE* 101: 165-82

**Christian**

Bari online database (EDB)

Carroll, M. (2006) *Spirits of the Dead. Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western*

*Europe* espec. chapter 10

**Cooley, A.E. (2012) *The Cambridge Manual of Latin Epigraphy***

**@Creaghan, J. & Raubitschek, A. (1947) ‘Early Christian epitaphs from Athens’,**

***Hesperia* 16: 1-54**

**@Handley, M. (2001) ‘The origins of Christian commemoration in late antique Britain’,**

***Early Medieval Europe* 10.2: 177-99**

Lassère, J-M. (2007, 2nd edn) *Manuel d’épigraphie romaine* vol. 1 pp.272ff

Mazzoleni, D. (2015) ‘The rise of Christiaity’ in Bruun & Edmondson, eds *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*

@Shaw, B. (1996) ‘Seasons of death: aspects of mortality in Imperial Rome’, *JRS* 86:

100-38