The Romans did not invent political strife, far from it, but they named the concept. Civil war \textit{(bellum civile)} is technically formal war among citizens. Since antiquity, the Roman civil wars of the first century BCE, which brought the Roman Republic to the point of collapse, have been paradigmatic not only for the modern conceptualization of political discord, but for its narration. As Marx said of various stages of the French Revolution, it was fought in Roman garb, first of the Roman Republic, then of the Roman Empire. Despite the formal definition, ancient and modern tales of civil war typically turn on discord within the family, among the sexes, and in the cosmic order. Civil war comes to stand for pervasive social collapse. Beginning with Thucydides’ famous description of stasis on Corcyra, readings will encompass selections from Roman history (Caesar, Sallust, Tacitus), biography (Plutarch), Latin poetry (Horace, Propertius, Vergil, Seneca, Lucan), modern novels on civil war with Roman resonances (Victor Hugo, Michel Houellebecq), and articles on civil war from political science and conceptual history. Central questions will be repetition in history, whether civil war can ever come to an end, and whether its ghastly horror is constitutive of the political order and, if so, of what kind.

**Assignments**

- **Participation (10%)**
  
  Joining discussion through Zoom will be the default method for participating in class. If you cannot for some reason join at the regular class time, please notify me as soon as you can, preferably in advance, to get authorization to substitute a paragraph of reaction to the day’s reading on Canvas.

- **Four two-page response papers (5% each)**
  
  All the response papers are close-readings. Frame a brief claim in response to a question. Support the claim with one or two short citations from the text (no more than 20 words) and explain your reasoning.
  
  Format: six hundred words, double-spaced, Times 12 pt. in Microsoft Word.

- **Six five-minute presentations (5% each) (2 or 3 presentations per class)**

- **Final paper (2,500-3,000 words) (40%)**

**Required Texts**

Books will be available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op, which is sending course books free of charge. Short texts will be available on Canvas. If you cannot get access to the specific editions below, translations of the classical texts can be found through the Loeb Classical Library, which you may access through the Regenstein portal (https://www-loebclassics-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/).

Alcaeus (Canvas)
Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. R. W. Dyson. Cambridge (Canvas)
Houellebecq, Michel, *Submission*. Picador
Horace (Canvas)
Hugo, Victor, *Ninety-three* (https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/ocm02561794; use Open Library link for volume one, Google books for volume two)
*Laudatio Turiae* (Canvas)
Propertius (Canvas)
Thucydides, (Canvas)
Vergil (Canvas)

University policies on plagiarism and disability accommodation will be followed.

**Schedule**

**Week 1**
April 6 Thucydides 3.82-5; Sophocles, *Antigone* (up to the first chorus; up to LCL 21.15)
April 8 Sophocles, *Antigone* (to end; LCL 21.15-end)

**Week 2**
April 13 Sallust, *Catiline’s Conspiracy* (LCL 116)
April 11, 5pm, Central Daylight Time: **response paper due**

**Week 3**
April 20 Caesar, *Civil War* pp. 3-10, 76-139
April 22 Lucan, *Civil War* books 1, 2, 3 (through Julia’s ghost), Vulteius, Scaeva

**Week 4**
April 27 Lucan, *Civil War* Cornelia scenes, books 7, 8, 10
April 29 Augustus, *Res gestae*
May 1, 5pm, Central Daylight Time: **response paper due**

**Week 5**
May 4 Alcaeus; Horace 3.37, 2.1; Propertius; Vergil, shield of Aeneas; *Laudatio Turiae*
May 6 Tacitus, *Agricola* opening; *Histories* opening; Vitellius selections from books, 2, 3, 4

**Week 6**
May 13 Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*; Hugo, *Ninety-three* 1.1-144 [not to worry, these are super-short pages]
May 16, 5pm, Central Daylight Time: response paper due

**Week 7**
May 18 Hugo, *Ninety-three* 1.145-260
May 20 Hugo, *Ninety-three* 2.1-131

**Week 8**
May 25 Memorial Day
May 27 Hugo, *Ninety-three* 2.132-257
May 30, 5pm, Central Daylight Time: response paper due

**Week 9**
June 1 Houellebecq, *Soumission* 1-120
June 3 Houellebecq, *Soumission* 121-246; NYTimes pieces on threats of civil war

**Week 10**
June 11 Final paper due