

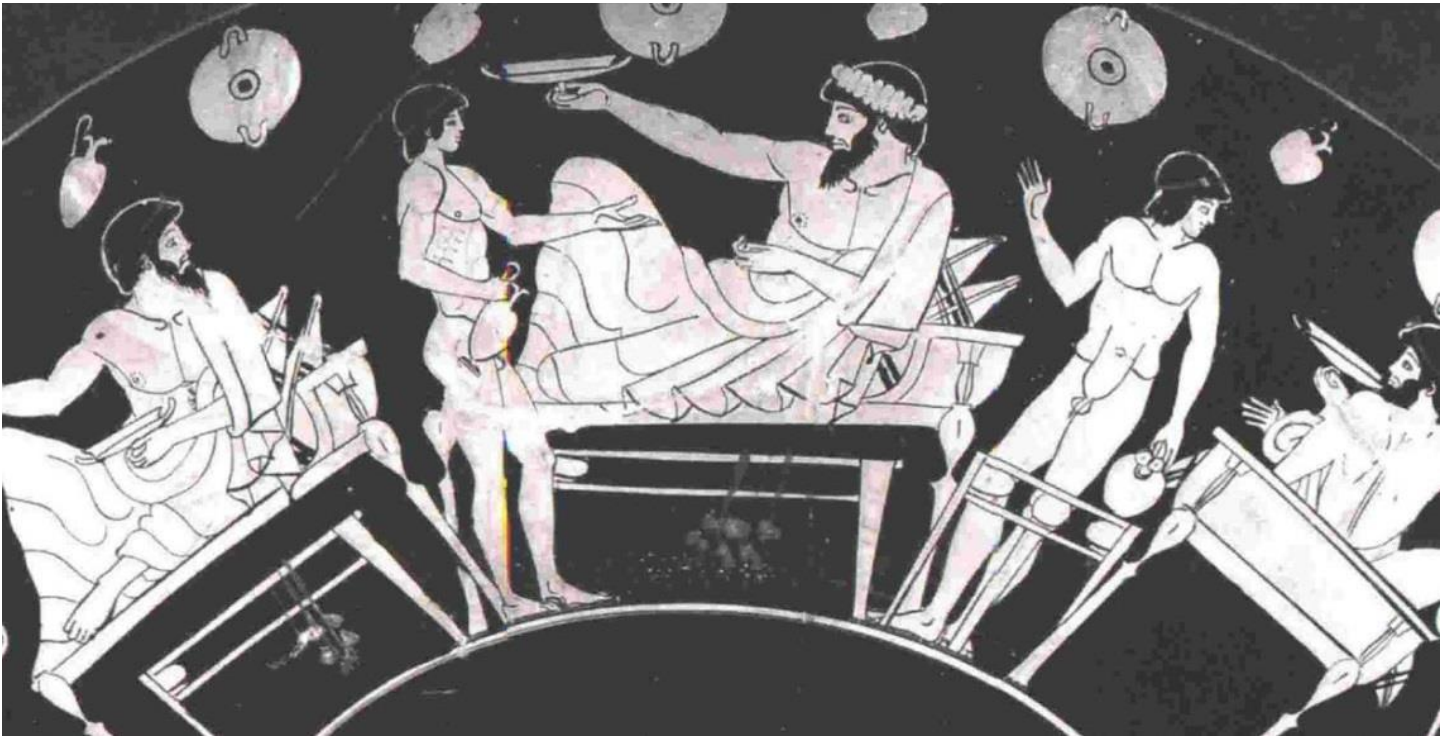
spring 2019 seminar:

Madness and Wine in the Ancient World

Prof. William Tortorelli

CLAS 4310 crn: 58955

MWF 11-11:50am



The ancient Greeks founded Western Civilization as an exercise of reason and rationality, but their writings show an equal fascination with the irrational: for every Apollo a Dionysus. Their poetry, their religion, their philosophies...all pay equal honor both to reason and to madness and intoxication.

In order to examine this apparent paradox, this course will sample some foundational Greek and Roman writings on madness, including Plato, Euripides, Aeschylus, and the archaic lyric poets, as well as modern scholarship starting from Nietzsche. We will consult scientific theories of mental illness and the effects of psychoactive intoxicants. Topics to be discussed will include the importance of wine in Greek and Roman culture, the role of irrational thought in Greek mythology and religion, the Eleusinian cult mysteries, the roots of drama in Dionysian cult worship, and the presence of madness at the heart of all personal poetry and art.

Class time will focus heavily on analysis and discussion, with lectures devoted mainly to putting the readings into their historical, cultural, and literary contexts. Methodologies will cross the lines between literary study, philosophy, anthropology, history, psychology, molecular biology, and neuroscience. All readings will be in English, but many ancient Greek terms will be learned.

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