

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID



HPAH5037; HPAH6037
**Murder, Mayhem and Megalomania: The
Life and Times of the Emperor Nero**

Module Code: HPAH5037; HPAH6037
Credit points: 20
Pre-requisites/restrictions: None
Taught: Semester 1
Lecturer: Dr Matthew Cobb

AIM(S)

- To provide an examination of the life and times of the Emperor Nero, including the biographical and historical record relating to Nero, as well as the literary, architectural and artistic developments which took place during his reign

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the subject in order to understand the historical and cultural developments which took place during the reign of Nero;
- to be able to place the development of this literature and art produced in this period in a broader social and historical context;
- to be able to engage with a wide array of modern scholarship that relates to the study of this period.

INDICATIVE CONTENT

- A study of the life of the emperor and the wider political, economic, military and cultural developments of the period.
- The student will be required to critically consider a range of questions, such as the extent to which it is possible to recover a valid sense of the reign of Nero and its impact from a frequently hostile source tradition;
- whether the cultural flowering which took place in his reign happened because of the Emperor's interest, patronage and participation or in spite of it;
- to become familiar and engage with a range of evidence. Not simply literary texts (historical, philosophical and poetic), but also wall paintings, architecture, sculptures and coin imagery.

LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

The study time for the module is divided as follows:

Activity type	Hours	Percentage
Scheduled learning	48	24
Independent learning	152	76
Placement learning		
TOTAL	200	100%

OFFICE HOURS/HOW TO CONTACT ME

Please feel free to come and see me if you would like to discuss any problems you may have concerning this module. Try, if at all possible, to come during my office hours. If you come to see me at another time and I am not in because of teaching or other commitments, please email me (m.cobb@uwtsd.ac.uk).

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

This 20-credit module has 48 contact hours. Attendance is compulsory for ALL lectures, workshops and seminars. If you cannot make a class because of illness or other good reason, you need to inform The Faculty Office by email.

Lectures will take place on Mondays, Tuesdays Thursdays and Fridays at: 10 am to 1 pm. Always check the Hwb calendar for room locations, as these can potentially change.

Course Outline:

WEEK 1

	University Induction	Session 1 Tuesday	Session 2 Thursday	Session 3 Friday
THEME		Nero Childhood and The Succession	The <i>quinquennium Neronis</i>	Philosophy and Culture under Nero
Hour one		Introduction	Nero's "Five Golden Years"	Literary culture and the court
Hour two		Workshop: Nero in the source tradition	Workshop: Seneca <i>Apocolocyntosis</i>	Workshop: Representations of Nero in Art
Hour three		Coming of age – the early years of Nero	Quiz 1 (assessment one)	Workshop: doing a gobbet analysis

WEEK 2

	Session 4 Monday	Session 5 Tuesday	Session 6 Thursday	Session 7 Friday
THEME	Debauchery and Decadence in Rome	Corruption and Revolt	Diplomacy and Conquest	The Great Fire of Rome

Hour one	Court politics	Troubles in Britain	The War over Armenia	Overview: preparing for the poster presentation
Hour two	Workshop: Petronius' <i>Satyricon</i>	Workshop: Was Boudica a real historical figure?	Workshop: Lucan's <i>Pharsalia</i>	Fire in the city of Rome
Hour three	Nero unleashed?	Roman Society and provincial corruption	Quiz 2 (assessment one)	Workshop: Nero on trial: was anyone responsible for the Great Fire?

WEEK 3

	Session 8 Monday	Session 9 Tuesday	Session 10 Thursday	Session 11 Friday
THEME	(Re)constructing Rome	Christian Tradition and Nero	Assessment three: Group Poster Presentation	Judaism in the first century AD
Hour one	The Golden House	Workshop: Grotesque art	Groups will present their poster presentations to other members of the class.	Workshop: Nero as the Antichrist
Hour two	Workshop: Nero's building programme	Human torches: early Christian persecutions		Troubles in Judaea: The Great Jewish Revolt
Hour three	Roman state finances and the stability of Nero's reign	Feed-forward session – chance to discuss your posters		Quiz 3 (assessment one)

WEEK 4

	Session 12 Monday	Session 13 Tuesday	Session 14 Thursday	Session 15 Friday
THEME	<i>Qualis artifex pereo</i>	Nero's afterlife	Nero in modern media	Assessment four: Take-Home exam

Hour one	Conspiracies and the Death of a Dynasty	Nero's Legacy	Nero in modern popular culture	Level 5 – take home exam (1,500 words) – 30%; Level 6 – take home exam (2,000 words) – 35%
Hour two	Debate – Why did Nero Fail?	Quiz 4 (assessment one)	Workshop: Nero in print, TV and Silver Screen	
Hour three			You will need to watch Quo Vadis (1951 MGM film) in advance of the session	

ASSESSMENT – Level 5

Part 1: Assessment: Simple answer and multiple-choice quizzes – 4 in total, top highest mark awarded – 20%

A series of short simple answer and multiple-choice quiz questions will be given (mostly based factual, textual and image-based identification questions) in 4 separate quizzes dispersed throughout the four weeks of the module. Each quiz will be released via Moodle and there will be a set timeframe in which to complete it (the quiz itself will last 20 minutes). In this time, you will be asked a series of 20 multiple choice question relating to themes we have so far covered in the module (the later the quiz the more themes this will potentially include). Out of the 4 quizzes taken, students will receive the marks from their top highest score (i.e., the mark for the quiz which a student did best in).

Part 2: Gobbet (image analysis) – 1,250 words – 25%

Students will be required to pick one of four images (in a document on Moodle) and write an essay of 1,250 words (this is worth 25% of your mark). Among the issues that students may wish to address in relation to their choice is its nature (what is the object/image), its original context or provenance (if known), and political, socio-cultural, or economic themes of importance (that are evoked by the image). It is potentially worthwhile to draw upon any relevant parallels from other evidence (material culture, epigraphic, textual, etc.) that can enhance our understanding of the image and our capacity to analyse it.

Part 3: Group poster presentation (15 minutes, with 10-15 minutes of questions from the whole class) – 25%

In a group, students will be required to produce a poster and then in class present on a topic (the choice will be arranged in consultation with the lecturer). Students in the group can use their own collective discretion to decide how to divvy up preparation (research), production and presentation of the poster material. However, students should try to ensure that there is a reasonably equal distribution of labour within the group.

Each group is not expected to be exhaustive in their posters – that is to say, it is important to be selective about what are the most relevant pieces of information or analysis to include. The group (or agreed members within it) will need to explain the content of their poster and highlight key arguments or points of analysis to the audience on the day of the presentation.

The posters themselves should consist of a mixture of pictorial imagery and written text (this can be in bullet-point form if it conveys the information more easily and aesthetically). It is important to include appropriate citations on the poster itself. The easiest way to create the poster will be to use the publisher programme in word. More information about this will be provided during the second week of teaching. Members of the group will then need to save this in PDF format and upload it to the turn-it in folder by the specified date.

Part 4: Take-Home exam – 1,500 words – 30%

Students will be able to access the exam paper on the morning of the 8th of October, 10am, via Moodle. They will be required to submit the piece on Moodle by 4pm that afternoon (via the turn-it-in submission link). A choice of four essay question will be provided, the students will be required to select one. The essay questions will be related to content covered in the module.

ASSESSMENT – Level 6

Part 1: Assessment: Simple answer and multiple-choice quizzes – 4 in total, top highest mark awarded – 20%

A series of short simple answer and multiple-choice quiz questions will be given (mostly based factual, textual and image-based identification questions) in 4 separate quizzes dispersed throughout the four weeks of the module. Each quiz will be released via Moodle and there will be a set timeframe in which to complete it (the quiz itself will last 15 minutes). In this time, you will be asked a series of 20 multiple choice question relating to themes we have so far covered in the module (the later the quiz the more themes this will potentially include). Out of the 4 quizzes taken, students will receive the marks from their top highest score (i.e., the mark for the quiz which a student did best in).

Part 2: Gobbet (image analysis) – 1,250 words – 25%

Students will be required to pick one of following images and write an essay of 1,250 words (this is worth 25% of your mark). Among the issues that students may wish to address in relation to their chosen image is its nature and imagery (what is the object/image), its original context or provenance (if known), and political, socio-cultural, or economic themes of importance (that are evoked by the image). It is potentially worthwhile to draw upon any relevant parallels from other evidence (material culture, epigraphic, textual, etc.) that can enhance our understanding of the image and our capacity to analyse it.

Part 3: Group poster presentation (15 minutes, with 10-15 minutes of questions from the whole class) – 20%

In a group, students will be required to produce a poster and then in class present on a topic (the choice will be arranged in consultation with the lecturer). Students in the group can use their own collective discretion to decide how to divvy up preparation (research), production and presentation of the poster material. However, students should try to ensure that there is a reasonably equal distribution of labour within the group.

Each group is not expected to be exhaustive in their posters – that is to say, it is important to be selective about what are the most relevant pieces of information or analysis to include. The group (or agreed members within it) will need to explain the content of their poster and highlight key arguments or points of analysis to the audience on the day of the presentation.

The posters themselves should consist of a mixture of pictorial imagery and written text (this can be in bullet-point form if it conveys the information more easily and aesthetically). It is important to include appropriate citations on the poster itself. The easiest way to create the poster will be to use the publisher programme in word. More information about this will be provided during the second week of teaching. Members of the group will then need to save this in PDF format and upload it to the turn-it in folder by the specified date.

Part 4: Take-Home exam – 2,000 words – 35%

Students will be able to access the exam paper on the morning of the 8th of October, 10am, via Moodle. They will be required to submit the piece on Moodle by 4pm that afternoon (via the turn-it-in submission link). A choice of four essay question will be provided, the students will be required to select one. The essay questions will be related to content covered in the module.

General assessment information: coursework

Coursework submission for this module will be through Moodle, or in the case of the quizzes, oral review and presentations in the lectures. Please follow the instructions on the module's Moodle page for how to submit your work.

Word count

Please note the following with regards to the word count:

If the specified word limit for an assessment has been exceeded, the following penalties apply: The penalty cannot take the work into the fail category.

- a. Up to 10% above the word limit – No deduction off final mark
- b. Between 10% and 25% above the word limit – Deduction of 5 marks off final mark (or reduce the mark to the capped mark, whichever is greater)
- c. Between 25% and 50% above the word limit – Deduction of 10 marks off final mark (or reduce the mark to the capped mark, whichever is greater)
- d. 50% or more over length – Maximum mark of capped mark

Likewise, a failure to meet the maximum word limit may result in lower marks based on the quality of the work because they may not have included the necessary information required for the assessment and met the stated learning outcomes.

The feedback on the assessment should explicitly mention any mark deduction and the reason for it.

Welsh First language

If your first language is Welsh and you would like to submit any assessed coursework in Welsh, please see the School Office as soon as possible to make arrangements for this.

Special needs / requirements

If you have any special needs (e.g. dyslexia, visual impairment) that need to be taken into account for the teaching of this module please make sure that student services and the

module lecturer is made aware of this so that we can make sure that we fully support you in your studies.

Returning of work

Your coursework feedback will be returned electronically through Moodle.

Some extra assignment/essay guidelines

Help for the writing of coursework is available in the Referencing Guidance produced by the library. You are advised to read the relevant sections carefully.

Marks will be deducted if your piece of coursework is not presented properly (e.g. double-spacing, font 12 is needed). Note that all coursework needs to be word-processed; hand-written work will not be accepted. Assessment criteria can be found in the Programme of Study Handbook and at the back of this Module Syllabus.

***** You need to watch plagiarism whenever you use secondary literature (ALL suspect coursework will be assessed by turn-It-In analysis).** Please consult the Reference Guide for advice on how to reference secondary literature.

In case of problems....

Do come and see me during office hours if you have any problems with the writing or planning of your piece of coursework. You are also welcome to see your personal tutor for advice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ancient Sources

[Unknown author], *Octavia*

Columella, *De Re Rustica*

Dio Cassius, *Histories*

Lucan, *Pharsalia*

Persius, *Satires*

Petronius, *The Satyricon*

Seneca the Younger:

Apocolocyntosis

De Consolatione ad Helviam Matrem

Dialogues

Moral Letters

Natural Questions

Thyestes

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*

Tacitus, *The Annals*

Essential

Champlin, E. 2003: *Nero*. Cambridge.

Rudich, V. 1997: *Dissidence and Literature under Nero: The Price of Rhetoricization*. London: Routledge.

Recommended

Albertson, F. C. 2001: Zenodorus's "Colossus of Nero", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 46: 95-118.

Ball, L. F. 2003: *The Domus Aurea and the Roman Architectural Revolution*. Cambridge.

Champlin, E. 2003: *Nero, Apollo and the Poets*, *Phoenix* 57 (3/4): 276-283.

Courtney, E. 2001: *A Companion to Petronius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bergmann, M. 2013: Portraits of an Emperor – Nero, the Sun, and Roman Otium. In *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, Buckley, E. and Dinter, M. (eds.), Chichester: 332-362.

Drinkwater, J. F. 2019: *Nero: Emperor and Court*. Cambridge University Press.

Eden, P. T. 1979: The Manuscript Tradition of Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, *The Classical Quarterly* 29 (1): 149-161.

Eden, P. T. 1984: [Translation of] Seneca *Apocolocyntosis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Useful not only for its translation but it would be a good idea to read the introductory section).

Leach, E. W. 2008: The Implied Reader and the Political Argument in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and *De Clementia*. In *Seneca: Oxford Readings in Classical Studies* Fitch, J. G. (ed.), Oxford: 264-298.

Mratschck, S. 2013: Nero the Imperial Misfit: Philhellenism in a Rich Man's World. In *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, Buckley, E. and Dinter, M. (eds.), Chichester: 45-62.

Nauta, R. R. 1987: Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* as Saturnalian Literature, *Mnemosyne* 40 (1-2): 69-96.

Rudich, V. 1993: *Political Dissidence under Nero*, London.

Segala, E. and Sciortino, I. 1999: *DOMVS AVREA*. Milan.

Sullivan, J.P. 1985: *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nero*, London.

Whitton, C. L. 2013: Seneca, Apocolocyntosis. In *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, Buckley, E. and Dinter, M. (eds.), Chichester: 151-169.

Useful Introductory Background Reading

Edwards, C. 2002: *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge.

Griffin, M.T. 1987: *Nero: the End of a Dynasty*, London.

Shotter, D. 2008: *Nero Caesar Augustus: Emperor of Rome*, Edinburgh.

Modern Scholarship – General Works on Nero

Bradley, K.R. 1978: *Suetonius' Life of Nero: an Historical Commentary*, Brussels.

Champlin, E. 2003: *Nero*, Cambridge, MA.

Edwards, C. 2002: *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome*, Cambridge.

Griffin, M.T. 1987: *Nero: the End of a Dynasty*, London.

Holland, R. 2000: *Nero: The Man Behind the Myth*. Sutton.

Mellor, R. (ed.) 1990: *From Augustus to Nero: The First Dynasty of Imperial Rome*, Michigan State University Press.

Rudich, V. 1997: *Political Dissidence under Nero*, London.

Shotter, D. 2008: *Nero Caesar Augustus: Emperor of Rome*, Edinburgh.

Wiedemann, T.E. 1989: *The Julio-Claudian Emperors*, Bristol.

Building Programme

Thornton, M. K. and Thornton, R. L. 1989: *Julio-Claudian Building Programs: A Quantitative Study in Political Management*. Wauconda.

Segala, E. and Sciortino, I. 1999: *DOMVS AVREA*. Milan.

Ball, L. F. 2003: *The Domus Aurea and the Roman Architectural Revolution*. Cambridge.

Economy

Duncan-Jones, R. 1990: *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*. Cambridge.

Bowman, A. and Wilson, A. (eds.), 2009: *Quantifying the Roman Economy: Methods and Problems*.

Military

Sealey, P. R. 1997: *Boudican Revolt Against Rome*. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications.

Dudley, D. R. and Webster, G. 1962: *The Rebellion of Boudicca*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Carroll, K. K. 1979: The Date of Boudicca's Revolt, *Britannia* 10: 197-202.

Overbeck, J. C. 1969: Tacitus and Dio on Boudicca's Rebellion, *The American Journal of Philology* 90 (2): 129-145.

Roberts, M. 1988: The Revolt of Boudicca (Tacitus, Annals 14.29-39) and the Assertion of Libertas in Neronian Rome, *The American Journal of Philology* 109 (1): 118-132.

Keitel, E. 1978: *The Role of Parthia and Armenia in Tacitus Annals 11 and 12*, *The American Journal of Philology* 99 (4): 462-473.

Gilmartin, K. 1973: Corbulo's Campaign in the East: An Analysis of Tacitus' Account, *Historia* 22 (4): 583-626.