



27th Latin Summer School

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Class 3 a i

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Murders from Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*

Welcome to the Sydney Latin Summer School 2021. For this class I have selected three memorable sections from across Suetonius' twelve Caesars that show some of the eccentricities but also the humanity of the emperors: the famous scene of the assassination of Julius Caesar, the death (murder?) of Claudius, the murder of Agrippina the Younger. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. 69 CE – 130?) was a writer on many subjects, but most of his works are lost except for the *Lives of the Caesars*. He was in a unique position to write on this topic, as he worked in the palace and had access to the imperial archives in the early second century CE. Suetonius' work is more often 'used' than read—historians find him difficult to use, and the Latin is not the elegant Latin of Livy and Tacitus. Sometimes it is criticised for being so condensed as to be illegible! I hope you will find it is worthwhile to read, for the rounded picture we get of these emperors as human beings as well as the tales of fantastic decadence and gory murders. Suetonius' work has been very influential, especially as a model for later biographers, and has been a favourite book of readers for centuries. You will find that Suetonius' Latin is unusual, and he tends to use technical vocabulary. With this in mind I have supplied more vocabulary than usual. You will only need this supplied material and a lexicon to take part in this class. If you are interested in going further, some of these texts have notes in Josiah Osgood, *A Suetonius Reader* (but it is by no means required that you should have looked at this before the class) and individual commentaries are available for each *Life*. I recommend that you read a translation of Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*, such as the Penguin edition, if possible. If you enjoy Suetonius, you might like to try the Loeb Classical Library bilingual edition, translated by J.C. Rolfe. I have allocated a different section for each day. I hope you will have time to prepare at least the vocabulary before the class, and if possible get an idea of what is going on in each passage before you come. Of course I know you will not always be able to do so, and I hope we have enough time to get through each passage anyway. In addition to the usual grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, I hope to be able to discuss some of the issues that surround Suetonius' text, such as political invective, historical reliability, and why he includes some of the more personal details like eating and daily habits that other authors don't like to use.

Monday/Tuesday

Claudius 43–44

The emperor Claudius has been the dupe of his wives (his wife now is Agrippina) and freedmen his whole reign. He is thought to be a bit stupid. Agrippina's son is Nero, and Claudius' son is Britannicus. These are the rumours of how Claudius died and Nero became emperor.

[43] Sub exitu vitae signa quaedam nec obscura paenitentis de matrimonio Agrippinae deque Neronis adoptione dederat, siquidem commemorantibus libertis ac laudantibus cognitionem qua pridie quandam adulterii ream condemnarat, sibi quoque in fatis esse iactavit omnia impudica sed non impunita matrimonia. et subinde obvium sibi Britannicum artius complexus hortatus est ut cresceret rationemque a se omnium factorum acciperet, Graeca insuper voce prosecutus, ὁ τρώσας ἰάσεται, cumque impubi teneroque adhuc, quando statura permitteret, togam dare destinasset, adiecit, 'ut tandem populus R. verum Caesarem habeat.'

[44] Non multo post testamentum etiam conscripsit ac signis omnium magistratuum obsignavit. prius igitur quam ultra progredere praeventus est ab Agrippina, quam praeter haec conscientia quoque nec minus delatores multorum criminum urgebant. et veneno quidem occisum convenit, ubi autem et per quem dato discrepat. quidam tradunt epulanti in arce cum sacerdotibus per Halotum spadonem praegustatorem, alii domestico convivio per ipsam Agrippinam, quae boletum medicatum avidissimo ciborum talium optulerat. etiam de subsequentibus diversa fama est. multi statim hausto veneno obmutuisse aiunt excruciatumque doloribus nocte tota defecisse prope lucem. nonnulli inter initia consopitum, deinde cibo affluente evomuisse omnia repetitumque toxico, incertum pultine addito cum velut exhaustum refici cibo oporteret, an immisso per clysterem, ut quasi abundantia laboranti etiam hoc genere egestionis subveniretur.

Dramatis personae

Claudius, the emperor; **Britannicus**, his son; **Agrippina**, Claudius' wife

Nero, her son from another marriage, whom Claudius has adopted

Halotus, Claudius' praegustator, personal food taster

<i>exitus, us</i> , ending, death (here, read with <i>sub</i> and <i>vitae</i> : just before the end of this life)	<i>impudicus-a-um</i> shameless	<i>impubi teneroque</i> (describes Britannicus) still young and pre- pubescent
<i>quaedam</i> (use <i>qui-qua-</i> <i>quod + dam</i> to mean) 'certain...' Take with <i>signa</i> and <i>nec obscura</i> as neuter plural	<i>impunitus-a-um</i> unpunished	<i>populus R.</i> means <i>populus</i> <i>Romanus</i>
<i>paenitens, -entis</i> repenting, regretting <i>siquidem</i> 'for example'	<i>subinde</i> often, repeatedly	<i>Caesar</i> = emperor
<i>libertus</i> freedman	<i>obuius-a-um</i> 'in/on the way' i.e. he runs into Britannicus	<i>testamentum</i> a will
<i>commemoro</i> I congratulate	<i>artius complexus</i> 'in a close embrace' (<i>artius</i> is comparative adverb of <i>arte</i> , closely, tightly, <i>complexus</i> is past of <i>complector</i> , I embrace, deponent)	<i>obsigno</i> I seal
<i>cognitio</i> (f) a trial, a case at law	<i>Graeca voce</i> 'a Greek saying' or a saying in Greek (<i>prosecutus</i> 'he added' + ablative)	<i>prius + quam</i> 'before'
<i>reus</i> (<i>rea</i> in feminine) the defendant in the court case, 'the accused'	ὁ τρώσας ἰάσεται 'the one who dealt the wound will heal it' a proverb	<i>ultra</i> any further
<i>iacto</i> I say, I throw around (i.e. in casual conversation)		<i>praeventus est</i> 'he was prevented' 'he was anticipated' by...
		<i>urgueo</i> I press down on, I confine, I accuse + accusative (for the person) + genitive (for what they are being accused of)

delator informer, one who brings a charge against someone else (this became very common in the next century or so)

convenit 'there is general agreement that'

uenenum poison

discrepat it changes, there is a discrepancy

epulans, antis (what case is this?) (while) feasting (from *epulor*, I feast)

quidam tradunt 'some say' (*quidam* is again *qui-quae-quod + dam* to mean 'certain...') + *trado* I pass down, I write, I tell the story...

in arce on the summit (spec. of the Capitoline hill)

spado, onis (m) a eunuch

praegustator taster

alii 'others' (others who? Go back to *quidam*

tradunt... and try reading *alii tradunt*)

convivium dinner party

boletus a mushroom

optulerat (from *offero*) she offered (to him)

avidissimus most enthusiastically

qui + talis the sort of thing, as follows

Multi ... aiunt (and *nonnulli*, see above on *quidam tradunt, alii tradunt*)

obmutesco, -ui, become silent

deficio be exhausted, fail, die

consopio I lull to sleep

euomo I vomit up

puls, pultis a kind of porridgy mush

immitto I introduce, I put in

clysterem syringe

egestio, -onis 'evacuation'

subvenio I need

(Claudius cont'd) [45] Mors eius celata est, donec circa successorem omnia ordinarentur. Itaque et quasi pro aegro adhuc vota suscepta sunt et inducti per simulationem comoedi, qui velut desiderantem oblectarent. Excessit III. Id. Octob. Asinio Marcello Acilio Auiola coss. sexagesimo quarto aetatis, imperii quarto decimo anno, funeratusque est sollemni principum pompa et in numerum deorum relatus; quem honorem a Nerone destitutum abolitumque recepit mox per Vespasianum.

ordino I arrange

comoedi actors

oblecto I entertain, I

amuse

aeger-gra-grum sick

Wednesday

The assassination of Julius Caesar, *Iul.* 81.4-82

Julius Caesar decides whether to go to the Senate today, in spite of the warnings of omens and Spurinna's prediction that he should beware the Ides of March. He goes out at almost the fifth hour, but he cannot get good omens, and tells Spurinna he was wrong about the Ides of March. But it turns out Spurinna was right: the Ides have come, but they have not yet gone.

Ob haec simul et ob infirmam ualitudinem diu cunctatus an se contineret et quae apud senatum proposuerat agere differret, tandem Decimo Bruto adhortante ne frequentis ac iam dudum opperientis destitueret, quinta fere hora progressus est libellumque insidiarum indicem ab obvio quodam porrectum libellis ceteris quos sinistra manu tenebat quasi mox lecturus commiscuit. dein pluribus hostiis caesis, cum litare non posset, introiit curiam spreta religione Spurinnamque irridens et ut falsum arguens quod sine ulla sua noxa Idus Martiae adessent, quamquam is venisse quidem eas diceret sed non praeterisse.

[82] Assidentem conspirati specie officii circumsteterunt, ilicoque Cimber Tillius, qui primas partes susceperat, quasi aliquid rogaturus propius accessit renuentique et gestu in aliud tempus differenti ab utroque umero togam adprehendit, deinde clamantem, "ista quidem vis est!", alter e Cascis auersum vulnerat paulum infra iugulum. Caesar Cascae brachium adreptum graphio traiecit conatusque prosilire alio vulnere tardatus est, utque animaduertit undique se strictis pugionibus peti, toga caput obvoluit, simul sinistra manu sinum ad ima crura deduxit quo honestius caderet etiam inferiore corporis parte velata. atque ita tribus et viginti plagis confossus est, uno modo ad primum ictum gemitu sine voce edito, etsi tradiderunt quidam Marco Bruto irruenti dixisse, "καὶ σὺ τέκνον?". exanimis diffugientibus cunctis aliquamdiu iacuit, donec lecticae impositum dependente brachio tres servoli domum rettulerunt. Nec in tot vulneribus, ut Antistius medicus existimabat, letale ullum repertum est, nisi quod secundo loco in pectore acceperat.

Dramatis Personae

Julius Caesar

Casca two of the conspirators have this name

Decimus Brutus and Marcus Brutus two of the conspirators

Cimber Tillius another conspirator

Spurinna the person who predicted the Ides of March would be the dangerous day

Antistius the doctor who examined the corpse

<i>contineō, -tinuī, -tentus, -ēre</i> stay home	<i>sinister-tra-trum</i> left <i>commisceō, -miscuī, -mīxtus, -ēre</i> mix together	<i>praetereō, iī, itus, īre</i> pass by
<i>cunctor</i> I delay	<i>lecturus</i> = fut. Ppl of <i>lego</i> , I read	<i>assidō, ēdi, ---, -ēre</i> , to take a seat, sit
<i>an</i> - whether ...	<i>hostia, -ae</i> (f) sacrificial animal	<i>cōnspīrātus-a-um</i> conspiring
<i>differō</i> - to postpone, defer	<i>caedo</i> I kill	<i>officium, -ī</i> (n) service, business, duty
<i>frequentis</i> many (people)	<i>litō, -āvī, -ātus, -āre</i> obtain favourable omens	<i>circumstō, -stetī, ---, -āre</i> stand around, surround,
<i>dūdum</i> (in the phrase <i>iam dūdum</i>) for a long time	<i>curia, -ae</i> (f) the senate house	<i>ilicō</i> in that very spot, instantly, directly
<i>opperior, pertus, ī, dep.</i> wait, attend	<i>sperno, sprēvi, sprētus, -ere</i> despise, reject, spurn, scorn	<i>propius</i> ‘more closely, nearer’ (compar. adv.)
<i>dēstituō, -uī, -ūtus, -ere</i> disappoint	<i>religiō, -ōnis</i> (f) devoutness, fear of the gods, sense of duty	<i>renuō, uī, ---, -ere</i> reject, refuse, deny
<i>quinta hora</i> ‘the fifth hour’ (counting from dawn)	<i>Falsum</i> ‘a false prophet’	* <i>renuenti</i> and <i>differenti</i> are datives of reference – this clause is independent of the rest of the sentence. Reference to Caesar
<i>ferē</i> (adv) almost	<i>irrīdeō, rīsī, rīsus, ēre</i> laugh at	<i>gestus, -ūs</i> (m) carriage, bearing, gesture
<i>insidiae, -ārum</i> (f) trap, ambush	<i>noxā, ae</i> (f) harm, injury	<i>adprehendō, dī, sus, ere</i> seize, take hold of,
<i>index, -icis</i> (m/f) one who points out, a sign, an informer	<i>Idus Martiae</i> – the Ides of March (15 th) (n.b. <i>Idus</i> is plural) ‘ <i>eas</i> ’ also refers to the Ides	<i>uis, --</i> (f) strength, force, violence, hostility
<i>obvius-a-um</i> on the way	<i>is</i> (refers to <i>Spurinna</i> , subject of <i>diceret</i>)	
<i>porrigō, -rēxī, -rēctus, -ere</i> hold out, offer		
<i>dein</i> (=deinde) then, next		

<i>paulum infrā</i> a little below	<i>īmus-a-um</i> lowest, deepest, last	καὶ σὺ τέκνον; you, too, (my) child?
<i>iugulum, ī</i> (m) throat, neck	<i>crūs, -ūris</i> (n) leg	<i>exanimis, e</i> dead, lifeless
<i>brachium, ī</i> (n) arm	<i>sinus</i> - the fold of the toga	<i>cunctus-a-um</i> all
<i>adripiō, -ipuī, -eptus, -ere</i> snatch, seize, grasp	‘ <i>quo honestius caderet</i> ’ quo + comparative + subjunctive expressing purpose	<i>diffugiō, fūgī, ---, -ere</i> disperse, scatter, fly off in different directions
<i>trāiciō</i> I pierce	<i>vēlō, āui, ātus, āre</i> cover up, veil	<i>iaceō</i> I lie (down)
<i>graphium, ī</i> (n) stylus for writing	<i>plāga, ae</i> (f) blow, stroke, wound	<i>lectīca, -ae</i> (f) litter, sedan, portable sofa
<i>prōsiliō, -uī, --, -īre</i> leap forward, spring forth, rush, hasten	<i>cōnfōdiō, -fōdī, -fossus, -ere</i> to dig up, transfix, stab, pierce	<i>servolus, -ī</i> (m) dim. of servus, a young slave
<i>tardō</i> I prevent	<i>ictus, -ūs</i> (m) wound, stab, cut	<i>referō</i> I bring back
<i>animadverto</i> I realise	<i>gemitus, -ūs</i> (m) sigh, groan	<i>medicus, ī</i> (m) a medical man, physician
<i>pugiō, -ōnis</i> (m) a short dagger	<i>trādō</i> I pass down, I say, I tell (the story)...	<i>existimo</i> I think
<i>strictis</i> (from stringo) drawn	<i>irruō, -ruī, ---, -ere</i> rush on, attack, seize	<i>lētālīs, e</i> deadly, fatal, lethal
<i>peti</i> –pass. Infin. ‘peto’ I attack	<i>dixisse</i> (supply ‘se’) that he said	<i>reperiō, repperī, repertus, -īre</i> to find, find out, discover, get, obtain
<i>obvoluō, -vī, -ūtus, ēre</i> cover, enfold, wrap around		

Thursday/Friday

Nero 33-34

Nero tries to kill Agrippina (and everyone else in his family)
and then tries to get his mother back from the dead

XXXIII. Parricidia et caedes a Claudio exorsus est, cuius necis etsi non auctor, at conscius fuit, neque dissimulanter, ut qui boletos, in quo cibi genere venenum is acceperat, quasi deorum cibum posthac proverbio Graeco conlaudare sit solitus. Certe omnibus rerum verborumque contumeliis mortuum insectatus est, modo stultitiae, modo saevitiae arguens; nam et morari eum desisse inter homines producta prima syllaba iocabatur multaue decreta et constituta, ut insipientis atque deliri, pro irritis habuit; denique bustum eius consaepiri nisi humili levique maceria neglexit. Britannicum non minus aemulatione vocis, quae illi iucundior suppetebat, quam metu ne quandoque apud hominum gratiam paterna memoria praevaleret, veneno adgressus est. Quod acceptum a quadam Lucusta, venenariorum indice, cum opinione tardius cederet ventre modo Britannici moto, accersitam mulierem sua manu verberavit arguens pro veneno remedium dedisse, excusantique minus datum ad occultandam facinoris invidiam: "Sane" inquit, "legem Iuliam timeo," coegitque se coram in cubiculo quam posset velocissimum ac praesentaneum coquere. Deinde in haedo expertus, postquam is quinque horas protraxit, iterum ac saepius recoctum porcello obiecit; quo statim exanimato inferri in triclinium darique cenanti secum Britannico imperavit. Et cum ille ad primum gustum concidisset, comitali morbo ex consuetudine correptum apud convivas ementitus postero die raptim inter maximos imbres tralaticio extulit funere. Lucustae pro navata opera impunitatem praediaque ampla, sed et discipulos dedit.

Dramatis personae

Claudius, Britannicus, Nero, Agrippina, Lucusta, a master-poisoner, Agermus (libertus Agrippinae)

Places: Rhodes, Baiae, Bauli

<i>contumelia</i> insult	<i>accersitus-a-um</i> (from <i>arcesso</i>) I summon, send for	<i>exanimatus-a-um</i> completely dead
<i>insector</i> attack		<i>ceno</i> I eat dinner
<i>morari</i> 'to linger' (but with long o it is 'to play the fool')	<i>verbero</i> I assault, I beat up	<i>gustum</i> taste
<i>desisse</i> → <i>desino</i> , I cease, I end	<i>arguo</i> I accuse	<i>concidō, cidī</i> , fall down dead
<i>insipiens</i> (<i>in</i> + <i>sapiens</i>)	<i>remedium</i> a cure	<i>comitialis morbus</i> a seizure, epileptic fit (fairly common in the Julio-Claudian family but considered to be very bad luck)
<i>delirus-a-um</i> mad, crazy	<i>excuso</i> I make an excuse, I explain	
<i>irritus</i> invalid, worthless	<i>oculto</i> I hide, I conceal	<i>ex consuetudine</i> as usual, as was normal with him
<i>bustum</i> place of burial	<i>facinus, -oris</i> (n) crime	<i>corripio</i> I carry away
<i>consaepiri</i> to fence in, to surround	<i>invidia</i> hatred, odium, unpopularity	<i>ementior</i> I lie, I speak falsely
<i>maceria</i> wall	<i>Sane</i> 'sure' (sarcastically)	<i>postero die</i> the next day
<i>aemulatio</i> envy	<i>lex Iulia</i> the law against poisoning	<i>raptim</i> hastily
<i>iucundus-a-um</i> sweet, pleasant	<i>coram</i> in his presence, face to face, openly	<i>imber, -bris</i> rain
<i>suppeto</i> I am equal to	<i>velox</i> quick	<i>tralaticius-a-um</i> usual, customary
<i>praevalleo</i> I am more powerful, I am stronger	<i>praesentaneus-a-um</i> working immediately	<i>navo</i> I accomplish
<i>venenariorum indice</i> a poisoner of some note	<i>haedus</i> a young goat	
	<i>porcellus</i> a piglet	

(Nero cont'd) XXXIV. Matrem facta dictaque sua exquirentem acerbius et corrigentem hactenus primo gravabatur, ut invidia identidem oneraret quasi cessurus imperio Rhodumque abiturus, mox et honore omni et potestate privavit abductaque militum et Germanorum statione contubernio quoque ac Palatio expulit; neque in divexanda quicquam pensi habuit, summissis qui et Romae morantem litibus et in secessu quiescentem per convicia et iocos terra marique praetervehentes inquietarent. Verum minis eius ac violentia territus perdere statuit; et cum ter veneno temptasset sentiretque antidotis praemunitam, lacunaria, quae noctu super dormientem laxata machina deciderent, paravit. Hoc consilio per conscios parum celato solutilem navem, cuius vel naufragio vel camarae ruina periret, commentus est atque ita reconciliatione simulata iucundissimis litteris Baias evocavit ad sollemnia Quinquatrum simul celebranda; datoque negotio trierarchis, qui liburnicam qua advecta erat velut fortuito concursu confringerent, protraxit convivium repetentique Baulos in locum corrupti navigii machinosum illud optulit, hilare prosecutus atque in digressu papillas quoque exosculatus. Reliquum temporis cum magna trepidatione vigilavit opperiens coeptorum exitum. Sed ut diversa omnia nandoque evasisse eam comperit, inops consilii L. Agermum libertum eius salvam et incolumem cum gaudio nuntiantem, abiecto clam iuxta pugione ut percussorem sibi subornatum arripi constringique iussit, matrem occidi, quasi deprehensum crimen voluntaria morte vitasset. Adduntur his atrociora nec incertis auctoribus: ad visendum interfectae cadaver accurrisse, contrectasse membra, alia vituperasse, alia laudasse, sitique interim oborta bibisse. Neque tamen conscientiam sceleris, quamquam et militum et senatus populique gratulationibus confirmaretur, aut statim aut umquam postea ferre potuit, saepe confessus exagitari se materna specie verberibusque Furiarum ac taedis ardentibus. Quin et facto per Magos sacro evocare Manes et exorare temptavit. Peregrinatione quidem Graeciae et Eleusinis sacris, quorum initiatione impii et scelerati voce praeconis summoventur, interesse non ausus est.

<i>exquiro</i> I ask, I enquire	<i>tempto</i> I try	<i>in digressu</i> ‘as she was
<i>acerbus</i> bitter, harsh,	<i>praemunitus-a-um</i>	leaving’
severe	prepared	<i>papilla</i> breast
<i>corrigo</i> I correct	<i>lacunaria</i> the panels in	<i>exosculator</i> I kiss
<i>hactenus</i> ‘up till now’	the ceiling (acc.)	<i>vigilo</i> I stay awake, I keep
<i>gravo</i> I bother, I annoy (+	<i>laxatus-a-um</i> ‘having	watching
accusative for who	been released’	<i>opperior</i> I await, I wait
he was annoyed	<i>solutilis</i> ‘easily broken	for
by)	up’	<i>coeptus</i> (always plural)
<i>onero</i> I burden	<i>naufragium</i> shipwreck	the beginning
<i>identidem</i> again and again	<i>commentus est</i> →	<i>nando</i> swimming (from
(idem + et+ idem)	<i>commentor</i> I come	<i>no, nare)</i>
<i>mox</i> soon	up with, I think	<i>inops</i> helpless, not
<i>privo</i> I deprive, I take	hard about, I	knowing what to
away from	invent	do <i>inops consilii</i>
<i>contubernium</i> here,	<i>sollemnia Quinquatruum</i>	‘without a plan’
bodyguard	festival of	<i>incolumis</i> unharmed
<i>divexo</i> I annoy	Minerva	<i>clam</i> in secret
<i>pensum, -i</i> ‘habere [+	<i>trierarchus</i> ‘treirarch’	<i>iuxta</i> next to him, nearby
negative] pensi’ to	captain of a	<i>pugio</i> a dagger
have no self-	trireme	<i>percussor</i> (<i>percutio</i> I
control’ or ‘put no	<i>liburnica</i> a kind of fast	strike) assassin
limit on’	ship ‘a Liburnian	<i>suborno</i> I employ as a
<i>submitto</i> I send privately,	galley’	secret agent
I despatch secretly	<i>conkursus</i> collision	<i>arripio</i> I seize
<i>moror, I</i> delay, I remain	<i>confringo</i> I shatter, I	<i>constringo</i> I tie up
<i>lis, litis</i> (f) lawsuit,	break up in pieces	<i>deprehendo</i> I catch, I
disagreement	<i>protraho</i> drag out, take a	detect
<i>convicium</i> abuse, insult	long time to do	<i>vito</i> I avoid
<i>praetervehor</i> I ride	<i>navigium</i> ship	<i>cadaver</i> dead body
by/past	<i>machinosus-a-um</i> ‘having	<i>contrecto</i> I handle, I pick
<i>inquieta</i> I disturb	a mechanism’ (a	up and examine
<i>minae</i> threats	rare word)	<i>membrum</i> limb (of the
	<i>hilare</i> cheerfully	body)

vitupero I criticise

laudo I praise

sitis thirst

oborior, I arise, I appear

(his 'thirst arises' i.e. he
becomes thirsty)

bibo I drink

exagito I torment, I harass

verber, *-eris* whip,

scourge

Furiae the Furies

taeda a torch

ardens burning

quin 'in fact' 'even'

Magus, a learned man,
magician

Manes the spirits of the
dead

exoro (ex + oro)

Eleusinis sacris the

Eleusinian mysteries, a
religious rite in Greece

praeco the person who
makes announcements,
the herald

summoveo I ban, I
disqualify