

CLAS 201: Greece and Rome

Conference 3: Cicero's *Philippic 2*: Invective and Fractured Bonds in Rome Tuesday, NOV 18, 2025

Prompt for Short Paper 4

This week, you read the famous “speech” of Cicero, his *Philippic 2*, a public invective delivered against the Roman politician Marcus Antonius in late 44 BCE.

We examine this speech to consider how personal hostility, when publicly expressed, can contribute to fracturing community bonds. For this paper, we explore how the personal is political.

This exercise continues our discussion of how Rome, as a community, responded when under threat, as we saw in Livy's narrative account of the Gallic Sack of Rome. The Gallic Sack surely posed tremendous challenges in Rome, augmented by the conflict between the patrician class (of which Camillus was a part) and the plebian tribunes, which led to Camillus' exile from Rome to Ardea. Livy uses Camillus' example to express important Roman values about care for the gods, religious practice, and the needs of a community. You might consider how Camillus and Aeneas (of Vergil) manifest similar positive qualities, such as piety, *virtus* (“manly virtue”), and a commitment to Rome as a community project.

However, the Civil Wars of the Roman Late Republic definitively broke Roman society, and from it a new order emerged. Cicero's conflict with Marcus Antonius was a continuation of the conflict between republicanism and populism that began with Caesar and Pompey in 49 BCE. Even with the assassination of Cicero in 43 BCE, the conflict persisted, this time between Marcus Antonius and the adoptive son of Julius Caesar, Octavian (the future Augustus). Cicero's words in the *Philippic 2*, therefore, hold a dualism: to defend Cicero's own reputation and honor, which he sees as extending to the very preservation of the Roman republic. *Cicero, therefore, had a lot at stake in this conflict, in launching his own particular perspective.*

QUESTION FOR PAPER:

How does Cicero characterize Antonius not only as his enemy, but also as the enemy of the Roman community? Choose **one personal failing** and **one political failing** of Antonius identified by Cicero, being aware of the tone Cicero uses to express or exaggerate it. (1) In your own interpretative voice, explain whether each failing is disqualifying for Antonius as a leader in Rome. (2) If so, why was it harmful to Roman society? (3) If not, how did Cicero use such rhetoric to his political advantage? Your conclusion should be *cumulative*, i.e., linking the two ideas in your final statement.

Tips: For this paper, you should be clear about what Roman values Cicero has underlined as particularly important to assess whether Antonius works against them. You can reinforce your interpretation and understanding of these values by bringing in evidence from Vergil's *Aeneid* or Livy's *History of Rome (Ab urbe condita)*, to strengthen or argue against Cicero's own words. Strong papers will speak confidently by deploying a clear sense of the values and explaining how we know.

To prepare for the conference:

Please complete the reading in advance. Be sure to attend the lecture on Thursday, Nov 13, and to review the lecture from Nov 13 if you missed it (recording available and PPTs also in the content tabs). You might find that the lecture on Roman women is helpful, as Cicero challenges Antonius'

sexual behavior and masculinity. I have posted two explainer sheets with guided questions under the Week 12 tab: one provides an introduction to Cicero's career, and the other addresses *Philippic 2*. For those who prefer to listen to this content, I'll post a brief 15-minute introduction to Cicero and the speech, with a close reading of some passages from the first half, by Friday evening.

Please bring to the conference a print-out of those excerpts of the speech that you find most relevant, on which you can include brief annotations for your reference. Extended notes, long sentences, or paragraphs on this aid will not be allowed.

Please also bring paper to write on and a writing utensil (a pen or pencil). You will write for about 40 minutes. This is not a test, and you can ask questions and seek advice from the instructor or your small-group work partner. This must be within reason: all work should be your own, and you are not permitted to write collaboratively.

Accommodations: If you have accommodations with SAA to limit distractions or are related to the production of written work, please discuss them with me in advance.