The *Pseudolus* is Plautus’s most well-regarded play. Originally performed in 191 BCE at the Megalensian Games, Cicero attests that the work was still being produced over two centuries later. Despite its popular reception, we should keep in mind that a play’s success, even when written by a master playwright like Plautus, was no given. Terence’s *Hecyra* famously failed as a production twice due the distractions caused by other spectacles in the city. As we read the *Pseudolus* we will approach the play as a production and analyze it as a cultural and historical moment taking place within the ancient city along with other events. We will consider the space in which the play was performed, as well as its interaction with other spaces and events involved in the Megalensian Games. When we read the play, we will ask what made it successful both as a performance within the vibrant ancient city and as a piece of literature in its afterlife.

**About Latin 301**

We will be reading the *Pseudolus* in Latin by covering an assigned number of lines in each class period. Students should be prepared to provide translations in class of the assigned lines. You may bring vocabulary lists to class, but no translations. In addition to the Latin text, we will read secondary scholarship to gain a better understanding of certain issues surrounding the plays. Most important of these is performance. While Latin plays were read in the years after their initial productions, comedy was always considered to be primarily a performed genre. When you read the assigned Latin, I encourage you to imagine how specific moments in the play might have been staged. We will consider ancient evidence external to the text to help us answer this question.


A good Latin dictionary of your choosing. I recommend *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* by Lewis (any version will do), but there are several other good options as well.

**Final Grade:**

- In Class Reading and Discussion: 30%
- Play Presentation/Performance: 10%
- Response Papers: 20%
- Tests: 40%

**In Class Reading and Discussion (30%)**: The foundation of this course is our in-class readings. You must come to class having read the assigned lines and prepared to translate. You translations do not have to be perfect, but learning and advancement is not possible if you have not read and thought about the assigned lines. In addition, I will assign some (short) secondary readings intermittently. I choose scholarship intended to enlighten issues surrounding our primary text and enhance your reading experience. On
days when a secondary reading is assigned, you should come to class having read it and prepared to discuss.

**Play Presentations (10%)**: You will be responsible for introducing your fellow students to one Roman comedy. After you choose a play of either Terence or Plautus from a provided list, you will read it in English and do a fifteen-minute presentation on it in class. Your presentation (which must include a handout) should provide basic information about the play, including its date, the original occasion of production, plot summary, and major themes. In addition, you should pick one scene to perform for your fellow students in class. The performance can take anywhere between 3-10 minutes. You can choose either a monologue or dialogue and you are more than welcome to enlist the help of your colleagues to perform your scene with you (you can read from a translation during your performance). How you choose to perform your scene is totally up to you. You could attempt a performance that resembles the original ancient production or put your own creative spin on your scene. Most importantly, **HAVE FUN WITH IT**. Be prepared to answer questions about both your play and your specific performance.

**Response Papers (20%)**: In addition to improving your Latin reading skills, one of the major goals of this class is to get you thinking about our texts as pieces of literature, performances, and cultural artifacts. Thus every few weeks you will write a 1-2 page response paper based on a question I provide. You are welcome to do research if you think it will help you, but no research is required for this assignment beyond the *Pseudolus*. What I’m looking for is analysis beyond translation.

**Tests (40%)**: Tests (a midterm and final) will feature passages from the Latin we have covered in class. You will be responsible for translating the passage into English and answering grammatical questions about the passages. Any material covered on the midterm will not be covered on the final.

Midterm: TBD.
Final: TBD.

**Grading scale**:
A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 63-66%; D- = 60-62%; F = 0-59%.

**Disclaimer**: This syllabus may change during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class.