Dear Alumni College Students,

I hope this note finds you well and that your summer is off to a good start. I am delighted that you will be coming to Middlebury at the end of August for what I am sure will be an exciting and intellectually stimulating few days.

I have taught in the Classics department here for nine years, and my teaching and research focus on the end of the Roman Republic and the start of the age of Emperors, roughly the years 200 BCE – 100 CE, to put things in round numbers. “The Ides of March” will be based on my own research, as well as material from two classes I teach, “The Rise and Fall of the Roman Republic,” and a first-year seminar, “Ancient Rome on Stage and Screen.”

The goals of our class are two-fold. We shall try to understand the historical and political circumstances at Rome that led to Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March in 44 BCE, and why the conspirators were unable to restore the Republic. We shall also investigate how the assassination of Julius Caesar has continually been reinterpreted for more than two millennia. Thus, we will consider primary sources from the ancient world, most of which were written several centuries after the event, as well as more recent artistic and scholarly engagements with Caesar.

Our central text for navigating the history and reception of the Ides of March will be William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. We will also consider closely three of the main ancient sources for the play and our knowledge of Caesar’s life and death, the “Life of Brutus” by Plutarch and the lives of Julius Caesar as written by Suetonius and Plutarch.

The recommended editions are:

**Ancient Sources on Julius Caesar:**


**And Brutus:**

For our purposes, any edition of Shakespeare and translation of Suetonius and Plutarch will be fine. Here are links to older translations of the ancient biographies:

Suetonius:

Plutarch’s Caesar:

Plutarch’s Brutus:
Another book you might consider reading is by Barry Strauss, a historian at Cornell, entitled *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History’s Most Famous Assassination*. It was published by Simon and Schuster this past March, proof of how this event continues to hold our imagination.

We will also look at portrayals of Caesar in modern films, such as a version of Shakespeare’s play from 1953, with Marlon Brando as Mark Antony, James Mason as Brutus, John Gielgud as Cassius, and Louis Calhern as Julius Caesar, and HBO’s *Rome* (2005-2007). If there are other clips you would like to watch, please let me know.

I have a few small assignments to get our discussion rolling when we first meet. Please think about the following:

- Why does Julius Caesar, the dictator, and possibly would-be-king, continue to be so popular, even more popular than his freedom-loving assassin Brutus?
- Do you know of any quotes attributed to Julius Caesar, either in Latin or English?
- Try to read and interpret this Roman coin. [Click here to view image.](#)
- And finally, make a list of things you encounter in your daily life that reference or can be traced back to Caesar.

I look forward to meeting you in August (named after Caesar’s nephew, adopted son and heir). Until then, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

Christopher

Christopher Star
Associate Professor of Classics