

Identity Play: Constructing The Self in the Ancient Mediterranean

The graduate students of the Department of Classics at the CUNY Graduate Center are happy to share the **call for papers** for our 15th annual Graduate Student Conference (Spring 2023).

The conference will be held via Zoom on **Friday, April 28, 2023**.

This year's Keynote Speaker is Prof. Cinzia Arruzza (The New School, NYC).

Our sense of identity is fundamental to our sense of self. Our identities are constructed as we negotiate our relationships within familial, ethnic, political and religious groups; friction between the self and any one of these groups may demand a corresponding shift in the identity of the person or group.

In this conference, we wish to examine the constructs of identity in the ancient Mediterranean: in particular, instances where identity is concealed or manipulated as an expression of agency or, conversely, disempowerment. What are the implications of this play of identity upon the self and its society? How is identity constructed in response to— and how does it seek to modify— prevailing categories of gender, sexuality and race? To what extent are identity, self, and persona coextensive?

Queen Hatshepsut depicted herself as a male pharaoh, emulating the imagery of her male predecessors, to legitimize her reign. Medea expresses both masculine and feminine traits: when she behaves in archetypically masculine ways, she is ostracized. Are her actions an expression of her empowerment or disempowerment? Moving from human to national identity: Rome forges an identity around Republican ideals and a thirst for conquest. After the civil wars, Octavian/Augustus manipulates the Roman power structure to create the Empire of Rome; he empowers himself while disempowering Rome's former elite. Yet the Empire continues to maintain a cohesive identity as it exerts its power and extends its reach.

We seek diverse methodologies: a philologist might, for example, notice how language shifts as entities assume different identities. A historian may examine the change in narrative created by an associated change in self, while a philosopher can review identity play at the cost of the self. A scholar of reception studies might consider how the cultural milieu or the mediums of transmission affect interpretations of ancient personae.

Accordingly, the graduate students at the GC CUNY Department of Classics invite papers from a variety of disciplines, including from departments other than Classics, such as Comparative Literature, History, Philosophy, Art History, Political Science, and Gender Studies. We approach the ancient Mediterranean world broadly, from the 2nd millennium BCE to the fall of the Roman Empire at the end of the 3rd c. CE. We welcome and encourage submissions from individuals of all underrepresented backgrounds.

Please send abstracts of up to 300 words for a 20-minute presentation to identityplay2023@gmail.com in .pdf format, no later than **03/01/2023**. Decisions will be made anonymously; please send personal details, such as full name and affiliation, in the body text of your email. Notifications to all applicants will be given by mid-March, 2023. Questions may be sent to the co-organizers, Victoria Hsu, Patricia Hatcher, and Keren Freidenreich at the same email address.

