

CLASSICS AND ITS THIRD RAILS

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SOME MORAL ISSUES WE FACE WHEN TEACHING CLASSICS:

1. *Works with Immoral Content*

- a. Serious Offense: Does the work contain content that is so gross, indecent, or immoral that it is an affront to our deeper moral sensibilities?

Ar. Vesp. 1345-7: ὁρᾷς ἐγὼ σ' ὡς δεξιῶς ὑφειλόμην μέλλουσας ἤδη λεσβιάς τοὺς
ξυμπότας: ὧν οὐνεκ' ἀπόδος τῷ πέει τῶδι χάριν. (Philocleon to flute-girl)

Catull. 16.1: Pēdicābo ego vōs et irrumābō

- b. Moral Harm: Does the work harm the interests of an individual or group by, for example, unjustly silencing, degrading, inciting, or retraumatizing?

Th. 2.48-54: descriptions of the plague of Athens

Ov. Am. 1.9 (et passim): depictions of predatory and violent male behavior

2. *Immoral Authors*

- a. Condoning Wrongs: Does reading the work of an author valorize their immoral behavior or beliefs?

Sexism in Aristotle (Pol. I.13)

Management of slaves by Xenophon (Oec. 13-15)

Genocide by Caesar (BGall.)

Anti-semitism in Juvenal (Hist. 5.2-8)

3. *Teacher Complicity*

- a. Testimonial Injustice: By failing to teach certain works or subject matter, are we unjustly (even if unintentionally) deflating the epistemic credibility of an individual or group?
- b. Hermeneutic Injustice: Are we failing to teach works, or to teach them in particular ways, that would provide students with epistemic resources they need to make sense of their lived experiences?

Queer studies: “tap into the classical past in order to open new possibilities for erotic and social relations and subjectivities” (Sebastian Matzner)

Vinnie Gonzalez’s *Oedipus: A Gospel Myth*, inspired by Lee Breuer’s *Gospel at Colonus* (Patrice Rankine)