HON 185 Ancient Warfare Gaming Workshop:
Roman Civil Wars (ca. 133–30 BCE)

"It is worth the expense of youthful days and costly hours"
— Thoreau, *Walden*

Term: Fall 2015
Instructor: John C. Franklin
Time/Place: Thursdays, 4:35-7:35, University Heights North 034F

Office Hours: MW 1:30–4:00 or by appointment. 481 Main Street, Rm. 304 (top floor).
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Course Description. The AWGW enhances the traditional approach of studying ancient history through primary texts by adding sophisticated simulation boardgames. Games offer unique advantages for understanding complex systems. Essential factors are identified and abstracted, and then 'put into play' in an infinitely variable, interactive environment. Social and historical processes can be modeled very effectively, allowing students to reach a more intimate understanding of historical events, progressing from 'what' and 'when', to 'why' and 'what if'. A game's flaws are equally instructive. Boardgames are preferable to computer simulations because they are more social, and so promote discussion and analysis.

This 'edition' of AWGW focuses on a transformative period of ancient history, the so-called Roman Revolution, that is, the series of civil wars—Marius vs. Sulla, Pompey vs. Caesar, Antony and Octavian vs. Brutus and Cassius, and finally Antony vs. Octavian—which led to the downfall of Roman republican government and the establishment of the Empire under Octavian (who was then renamed Augustus). A continuous narrative of this period by Appian (ca. 95–160 CE) will provide a framework for more detailed accounts of specific events by other ancient authors. These will include Julius Caesar (for the Gallic Wars [58–50 BCE] and the Civil War against Pompey [49–45]), Cicero (orations against Catiline and Mark Antony), Lucan (epic poem on the Civil War), Plutarch (biographies of Marius, Sulla, Cicero, Pompey, Caesar, Antony), and Suetonius (biography of Octavian/Augustus).

The first third of each session is spent in reading-quizzes and discussion, the remainder on simulation gaming, normally in groups of 4.

Warning: some of these games are pretty complex! If you do not like strategy games, you may not enjoy this class. But then again you may find them surprisingly helpful and enjoyable.

The course fills the following distribution/college requirements: CAS Humanities • BSAD Elective credit only • CALS Social Science • CEMS HSS credit. If your college is not listed, contact your advisor.

Required Books

Appian, *The Civil Wars*. Penguin Books, Limited. ISBN-10: 0-14-044509-9. ISBN-13: 978-0-14-044509-1.
Julius Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul* (also published as *The Gallic War*). Penguin Books, Limited. ISBN 10: 0140444335 ISBN 13: 9780140444339.
Julius Caesar, *The Civil War*. Penguin Books, Limited. ISBN-10: 0-14-044187-5. ISBN-13: 978-0-14-044187-1.
Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic*. Penguin Books, Limited. ISBN-10: 0140440844. ISBN-13: 978-0140440843
Lucan, *Pharsalia*, Dramatic Episodes of the Civil Wars. Penguin Books Limited. No ISBN (too old).

Alternative edition, also by Penguin: Lucan, Civil War. ISBN 10: 0143106236 ISBN 13: 9780143106234.

The Reading Schedule is on Blackboard in the 'Syllabus' folder.
Electronic readings referred to on the Reading Schedule are in the 'Course Materials' folder.

ASSESSMENT:

70%: Participation/Preparation. Includes attendance, participation in **discussion**; attitude to **game-playing**; pop reading **quizzes**. For each day's reading, each student must:

Make up **one** multiple choice question for **each** separate reading due that day (if more than one: some days have two). Your question should not be too abstruse, but get at some large issue. At the same time, it should not be a give-away: the quality of the questions will set the bar for how close the class reads—and closer is better for everybody. • Write your question and the possible answers clearly on one side of an index card so that other students will able to read it when projected in front of the class. On the other side of the card, write your name in the upper left, the answer, and the date. These cards will be used to generate reading quizzes and track attendance.

30% Final Paper: 10 page, **single**-spaced, 12-point font. Please submit electronically as a PDF via EMAIL). Between Thanksgiving break and last day of classes being on a Wednesday, and the final being scheduled for Dec. 15, you effectively have a **minimum** of 3 weeks to develop this paper. At this time I will make myself steadily available for individual consultation, to help make this as substantial a research/writing project as possible. It can be on any relevant topic, letting you go beyond games and military strategy/tactics to more general areas of social and cultural history (UVM has an outstanding library collection for ancient studies). But three ready-to-go topics (which could be combined in various ways):

I. Critique of one or more of the gaming systems we used. This should involve detailed comparisons with historical / patterns from readings. In what ways do the games clarify the ancient texts/events? What do they succeed in modeling? Do the readings reveal shortcomings in the games? How do the games fall short? What improvements can be suggested? How well do specific *Commands and Colors* scenarios represent the evidence for troop deployment in the texts? How well does *Caesar's Gallic War* model tribal networks of ancient Gaul and Caesar's response to them? What adjustments were made for gameability, and if so why do you think the designers felt this was necessary? How *should* one strike the best balance between playability and realism?

II. Analysis of Roman military organization. Here you would study each type of formation used by the Romans: the function of each, and their synergy in the overall workings of the army both on the battlefield (tactics) and in campaigning generally (strategy). You do this by looking at all the passages in the ancient texts which mention each formation, and piece together the clues. It is a great exercise in historical methodology using a body/corpus of primary texts.

III. Compare ancient accounts of specific conflicts, both sources we read and further ones we did not (part of the project would be to track these down). The idea would be to come to a more exact understanding of certain events—or possibly a less exact understanding, since you will see that the sources are often contradictory. You would then venture into the process of source-criticism: understanding how historical information about this period has come down to us, through what channels, and subject to what distortions and biases. One ready topic here would be to compare Caesar's obviously biased account of the Civil War (or specific episodes of it) to the hostile version of Lucan, and the perhaps more balanced narrative of Appian (and others).