Spring 2010  
Classics 233, W 2-5pm: Julius Caesar and the Roman People. Prof. Morstein-Marx

Julius Caesar has typically been seen as a man somehow rising above Rome's ancient republican political culture, coolly taking the measure of the Republic as it was rather than how some imagined it to be, and ruthlessly sweeping away its ancient institutions as mere anachronisms to make way for a new, Roman-style monarchy. But new ways of understanding the character of the Republic as a popular political system whose character should not be defined for us by the elite perspective of Cicero (or Cato) offer an opening for a new approach to Caesar: as one not opposed to the Republic but rather incorporating its popular essence to a high (perhaps ultimately untenable?) degree. This seminar will first review highlights of the historiographical tradition on Caesar, then examine a series of topics tracing his evolving relationship to the populus Romanus, up to and including the Ides of March. The seminar will be fundamentally historical rather than literary, but Caesar's self-presentation in his Commentarii will certainly form part of our investigation. Students should recognize that -- for good or for ill! -- this seminar will be a "test run" for Prof. Morstein-Marx's next book-project.

No single book will be assigned in its entirety, but students will certainly benefit by reading one of the recent biographies of Caesar: Particularly interesting from a historian's point of view is Christian Meier's _Caesar_ (Engl. trans. 1982), but recent important biographies range from the very long _Caesar: Life of a Colossus_ (2006) by Adrian Goldsworthy to the concise _Always I am Caesar_ (2008) by W. Jeffrey Tatum and now Richard Billows' middle-length _Julius Caesar: The Colossus of Rome_ (2009). If the new Blackwell _Companion to Julius Caesar_ (2009) edited by Miriam Griffin did not cost $200 I would certainly recommend that you purchase it; as it is, please do not recall it from the library since we need it for this class!!!