

CRITICAL

**AUGUST—  
NOV 2023**

ANTIQUITIES

WORKSHOP

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NETWORK



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY



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The seminars will be held online on Zoom or in a hybrid format. All are welcome. For more information on the Critical Antiquities Network please email [fass.can@sydney.edu.au](mailto:fass.can@sydney.edu.au). To register, please **sign up** for the Critical Antiquities Network mailing list and you will receive CAN announcements and Zoom links.

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August  
30/31

## Hobbes, the Papal Monarchy and Islam

Patricia Springborg (University of Sydney)

Wed, August 30: 19:30–21:00 (New York)

Thurs, August 31: 09:30–11:00 (Sydney)

*Note: this event will be in a hybrid format broadcast from the School of Humanities Common Room (Rm 822 Brennan-MacCallum Building, University of Sydney)*

Hobbes, as an Oxford student, was a beneficiary of the Aristotle commentary tradition which had migrated from Athens to Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople, under the Hellenistic Empire, and which survived in the West due to the Greek into Arabic and Arabic into Latin translation movements. It is my thesis that Leviathan, the scaly monster of the *Book of Job*, was a decoy to deflect attention from Hobbes's heavy reliance on scholasticism, now associated with the Papal Monarchy, and quite literally a burning issue!

September  
17/18

## Double Book Launch

Christopher Watkin (Monash University)

*Biblical Critical Theory*

Kevin W. Hector (University of Chicago)

*Christianity as a Way of Life*

*Discussants:*

Eric Gregory (Princeton University)

Alex Lefebvre (University of Sydney)

Sun, September 17: 18:30–20:30 (Chicago)

Mon, September 18: 09:30–11:30 (Sydney)

In *Biblical Critical Theory*, Christopher Watkin shows how the Bible and its unfolding story help us make sense of modern life and culture. Critical theories exist to critique what we think we know about reality and the social, political, and cultural structures in which we live. In doing so, they make visible the values and beliefs of a culture in order to scrutinize and change them. *Biblical Critical Theory* exposes and evaluates the often-hidden assumptions and concepts that shape late-modern society, examining them through the lens of the biblical story

running from Genesis to Revelation. Informed by the biblical-theological structure of Saint Augustine's magisterial work *The City of God*, *Biblical Critical Theory* shows how the patterns of the Bible's storyline can provide incisive, fresh, and nuanced ways of intervening in today's debates on everything from science, the arts, and politics to dignity, multiculturalism, and equality. It is not enough for Christians to explain the Bible to the culture or cultures in which we live. They must also explain the culture in which we live within the framework and categories of the Bible, revealing how the whole of the Bible sheds light on the whole of life. If Christians want to speak with a fresh, engaging, and dynamic voice in the marketplace of ideas today, they need to mine the unique treasures of the distinctive biblical storyline.

In *Christianity as a Way of Life*, Kevin W Hector argues that we can understand Christianity as a set of practices designed to transform one's way of perceiving and being in the world. Hector examines practices that reorient us to God (imitation, corporate singing, eating together, friendship, and likemindedness), that transform our way of being in the world (prayer, wonder, laughter, lament, and vocation), and that reshape our way of being with others (benevolence, looking for the image of God in others, forgiveness, and activism). Taken together, the aim of these practices is to transform one's way of perceiving and acting in the face of success and failure, risk and loss, guilt and shame, love, and loss of control. These transformations can add up to a transformation of one's very self. To make sense of Christianity as a way of life, in turn, these practices must be understood within the context of Christian beliefs about sin, Jesus, redemption, and eternal life. Understanding them thus requires a systematic theology, which Hector offers in this clear-eyed, ambitious, and elegant interpretation of the Christian tradition.

October  
11/12

## The *Iliad* and the Critique of the Subject: Epic and/as Critical Theory. An interview with Charles Stocking

Interviewer:

Ben Brown (University of Sydney)

Wed, October 11: 18:30-20:00 (Austin TX)

Thurs, October 12: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

Does Homeric poetry problematise its world? If it does, what is its mode of critique? Does epic foreshadow Attic tragedy's self-reflexivity in relation to the dominant forms of society and thought with which it is engaging? How should these aspects of Homer's poetry be framed or historicised? In this workshop Ben Brown interviews Charles Stocking on the themes of his new book (*Homer's Iliad and the Problem of Force*, Oxford 2023) and the larger questions about early Greek epic poetry that lie behind it. The interview will explore the nature of Homeric poetry's critical dimension, the place of the *Iliad* in the history of the human subject and the tensions in epic poetry's relationship with the historical context of its performance—and ask finally: if epic had a critical dimension then what social-historical end did the *Iliad*'s critique serve?

November  
15/16

## “The nomadic alternative”: Classics in Motion

Marco Formisano (Ghent University)

Wed, November 15: 17:30-19:00 (New York)

Thurs, November 16: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

**Note: this event will be in a hybrid format broadcast from the School of Humanities Common Room (Rm 822 Brennan-MacCallum Building, University of Sydney)**

Nothing seems to be so alien to scholarly activity than nomadic life, i.e. a non-sedentary existence, in constant motion and with an unstable identity, an identity that is not strictly connected to a specific place. Moreover, nomadic culture almost sounds like an oxymoron from a certain perspective: culture is always connected with fixed places and their possible transformations through the ages. But what if classicists adopt a nomadic perspective in order to read ancient Greek and Latin texts? Is there a textuality that can be defined as nomadic? Philosopher Rosi Braidotti discussed and identified a “nomadic theory” that resists dominant neo-liberal concepts of culture by emphasizing alterity, post-human otherness and the relevance of the environment. In this talk, bearing the title of a book that British writer Bruce Chatwin wanted to write but was not able to accomplish, I launch the hypothesis of a nomadic approach to ancient texts, with the purpose of offering a new perspective on

current debates proliferating around the discipline of Classics, its role in contemporary culture, and its uncertain future.

November  
29/30

## Sexual Difference in Question: The Justice of the “First Wave” in Plato's *Republic*

Cinzia Arruzza

(The New School for Social Research)

Wed, November 29: 17:30-19:00 (New York)

Thurs, November 30: 09:30-11:00 (Sydney)

In the so-called first wave of *Republic* 5, Socrates argues that men and women in the guardian class will share everything in common. As I will show, the argument contains two distinct and equally necessary steps. If guardian men and women ought to share every activity in common, this requires that 1. there are no activities that are the purview of women qua women and from which men ought to be excluded and 2. there are no activities that are the purview of men qua men and from which women ought to be excluded. Socrates' claim at 455c5-d2 demonstrates the first half of the thesis by appealing to experience: in all activities pertaining the polis we have empirical proof that men as a sex excel over women, hence there are no activities that are the exclusive purview of women. The interaction between Socrates and Glaucon demonstrates the second half of the claim, once again based on induction: in many fields – which ought to include the management of the city – many individual women are better than many men: this shows that, in principle, women's nature qua women is not an obstacle to their acquiring the same virtues and taking up the same activities as men, hence there is no activity that is the purview of men qua men. Furthermore, I will argue that the first wave's argument comprises the following set of claims: i. As far as the administration of the city is concerned, natural vocations are judged first and foremost based on features that pertain to the soul; ii. The soul has no sex, hence at the level of the soul it makes no sense to speak of male or female superiority; iii. The soul, however, is embodied; iv. Bodies are differentiated by sex and women's bodies are weaker and more prone to disease; v. Bodies are the tools of *dianoia* and weaker bodies are, therefore, weaker tools and can even become a hindrance; vi. This determines the inferiority of the female sex, insofar as its members are embodied souls. On this reading, female bodies would not be an intractable hindrance, but they would still represent a comparative disadvantage. This comparative disadvantage of the female sex as a whole, however, does not rule out that on an individual level women qualify among the top positions.