

CRITICAL

**AUGUST—  
DEC 2024**

ANTIQUITIES

WORKSHOP

CRITICAL  
ANTIQUITIES  
NETWORK



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

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.

August  
6

**Book Launch:**  
**Melissa Lane (Princeton)**  
*Of Rule and Office*  
*Plato's Ideas of the Political*

(Princeton University Press 2023)

Discussants:

Anthony Hooper (University of Wollongong)

Demetra Kasimis (Cambridge University)

Tuesday, August 6: 0900-1130 (New York)

Tuesday, August 6: 1600-1730 (Athens)

Tuesday, August 6/7: 2300-0030 (Sydney)

Plato famously defends the rule of knowledge. Knowledge, for him, is of the good. But what is rule? In this study, Melissa Lane reveals how political office and rule were woven together in Greek vocabulary and practices that both connected and distinguished between rule in general and office as a constitutionally limited kind of rule in particular. In doing so, Lane shows Plato to have been deeply concerned with the roles and relationships between rulers and ruled. Adopting a longstanding Greek expectation that a ruler should serve the good of the ruled, Plato's major political dialogues—the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and *Laws*—explore how different kinds of rule might best serve that good. With this book, Lane offers the first account of the clearly marked vocabulary of offices at the heart of all three of these dialogues, explaining how such offices fit within the broader organization and theorizing of rule. Lane argues that taking Plato's interest in rule and office seriously reveals tyranny as ultimately a kind of anarchy, lacking the order as well as the purpose of rule. When we think of tyranny in this way, we see how Plato invokes rule and office as underpinning freedom and friendship as political values, and how Greek slavery shaped Plato's account of freedom. Reading Plato both in the Greek context and in dialogue with contemporary thinkers, Lane argues that rule and office belong at the center of Platonic, Greek, and contemporary political thought.

September  
4/5

**Book Launch:**  
**Niobes: Antiquity, Modernity,**  
**Critical Theory**

(Ohio State University Press 2024)

Mario Telò (University of California, Berkeley)

Andrew Benjamin (Monash/Melbourne)

Jacques Lezra (University of California, Riverside)

Andres Matlock (University of Georgia)

Discussants:

Greta Hawes (Macquarie University)

James Collins II (University of Sydney)

Wed, September 4: 1930-2100 (New York)

Thurs, September 5: 0930-1100 (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)**

A marginalized but persistent figure of Greek tragedy, Niobe, whose many children were killed by Apollo and Artemis, embodies yet problematizes the philosophically charged dialectics between life and death, mourning and melancholy, animation and inanimation, silence and logos. The essays in *Niobes* present her as a set of complex figurations, an elusive mythical character but also an overdetermined figure who has long exerted a profound influence on various modes of modern thought, especially in the domains of aesthetics, ethics, psychoanalysis, and politics. As a symbol of both exclusion and resistance, Niobe calls for critical attention at a time of global crisis. Reconstructing the dialogues of Phillis Wheatley, G. W. F. Hegel, Walter Benjamin, Aby Warburg, and others with Niobe as she appears in Aeschylus, Sophocles, Ovid, and the visual arts, a collective of major thinkers—classicists, art historians, and critical theorists—reflect on the space that she can occupy in the humanities today. Inspiring new ways of connecting the classical tradition and ancient tragic discourse with crises and political questions relating to gender, race, and social justice, Niobe insists on living on.

October  
9/10**TBC**

Jodi Edwards (University of Wollongong)

Wed, October 9: 1830-2000 (New York)

Thurs, October 10: 0930-1100 (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)**

[Abstract to come]

November  
6/7

## Living in Peace with Animals: Pythagoras' Speech in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Andrew Benjamin (Monash/Melbourne)

Wed, November 6: 1730-1900 (New York)

Thurs, November 7: 0930-1100 (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)**

In the final book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pythagoras is provided with a speech that can be read as both the defence of and argument for vegetarianism. There are, however, a number of important delimitations built into the speech that add to its significance. For Pythagoras, eating animals is 'impious' (*nefas*). The position is unequivocal: 'Refrain from polluting your bodies with such an impious feast' (*Parcite, mortales, dapibus temerare nefandis/corpora!*) The inclusive use of the second person plural imperative *parcite* ('refrain from') reinforcing both the coverage as well the urgency of the claim. While the act of killing may be justified if animals menace human life—Ovid even argues that such killings occur without 'impiety'—it remains the case that animals 'should not be eaten' (*non epulanda fuerunt*). For Ovid, and the claim is a specific one, they should not be killed to be eaten. In order to justify his position he refers to 'former time' (*vetus ... aetas*) in which it was possible to live in 'peace' with animals. To the extent that this argument can be sustained, rights-based arguments no longer pertain since human/animal relations can be redescribed in terms of war and therefore the Ovidian legacy is the question of the possibility of living in peace with animals. The aim of the talk therefore is to investigate the extent to which Ovid's *Metamorphoses* can be used to develop an argument for a relationship with animals structured in terms of peace rather than in terms of rights. While it falls beyond the remit of the talk, what this does is connect the question of the animal to more general philosophical concerns with peace, as for example occurs in Kant's *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795).

December  
4/5

## The Natural History of Human Social Life

Ron Planer (University of Wollongong)

Wed, December 4: 1730-1900 (New York)

Thurs, December 5: 0930-1100 (Sydney)

What has the social, political, and economic organization of human groups been like over the last 5–7 million years (i.e., the amount of time since we last shared a common ancestor with our closet great-ape relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos)? In this talk, I explain the types of evidence that are standardly brought to bear in attempting to answer these questions, and give my take on what our current state of knowledge is. I also explain why the answers we provide to these questions are of such fundamental importance to the project of understanding the broader evolution of our species (e.g., our cognitive uniqueness). In particular, I will pay special attention to: (i) the evolution of forager egalitarianism (which contrasts strongly with the dominance hierarchies that govern the lifeways of other primates); and (ii) the evolution of "open" societies amongst forager peoples, that is, groups with (somewhat) fluid social boundaries (which, again, makes for another super salient contrast with lifeways of other primates). Finally, I will explain how these developments transformed the face of human cooperation and cultural evolution.