Catullus' poetry about his relationship with his girlfriend Lesbia depicts in vivid, emotional detail every aspect of their relationship. From his rapture at their early kisses to his stinking heights of jealously whenever he sees her husband (oh right, she's married), to his wild sobs once she dumps him for another man, Catullus never fails to embarrass himself, humiliate himself, and make himself look foolish. Catullus' self-presentation of his own failures as a man, his incompetence, and his deviations from Roman norms of masculinity not only provide a powerful window into dating in the 1st century BC but provide a model for future generations of Roman poets. We will consider how Ovid uses his girlfriend Corinna, Sulpicia her boyfriend Cerinthus, and Martial his (secret) boyfriend to imitate and rival Catullus' model of the poet as awful boyfriend/girlfriend.

This class will investigate how Greeks and Romans constructed masculinities and femininities via the use of mythology, history, fiction, and art. Our discussions will range from the construction of ideal democratic masculinity in Athens, to ideal formulations of Roman imperial femininity, alongside many other intersections of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class. We will see how Greeks and Romans performed, discussed, and attacked various constructions of gender and sexuality, and how these formulations were affected by politics, especially the move from republic to autocracy.

The readings are in English: no prior knowledge of classical literatures or languages is expected.

Spring 2021
T/Th: 2:30-3:45

This course fulfills Humanities—Western Heritage; it fulfills K-State 8 Global Issues and Historical Perspectives; it is an approved course of the Primary Text Certificate, the Classical Studies Minor, and the GWSS major/minor. This class may be taken with an Honors Contract for Honors Credit.