

NOMINATION COVER SHEET
2011 Virginia Outstanding Faculty Awards

1. NAME	
Full (Legal): Rebecca Ruth Benefiel	Preferred First Name: Rebecca
2. INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION	3. PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION
Institution: Washington and Lee University	Academic Discipline: Classical Studies
Rank/Position Title: Assistant Professor	Specialization/Field: Roman Archaeology, Latin Literature
Year Rank/Title Attained: 2005	Type of Terminal Degree: Ph.D.
Years at Institution: 5	Year Awarded: 2005
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Please check only one box:

- RESEARCH/DOCTORAL INSTITUTION NOMINEE:
 MASTERS/COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTION NOMINEE:
 BACCALAUREATE INSTITUTION NOMINEE:
 TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION NOMINEE:
 TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY NOMINEE:
 RISING STAR NOMINEE:

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Signature (President or Chief Academic Officer) _____

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Mission Statement

Washington and Lee University provides a liberal arts education that develops students' capacity to think freely, critically, and humanely and to conduct themselves with honor, integrity, and civility. Graduates will be prepared for life-long learning, personal achievement, responsible leadership, service to others, and engaged citizenship in a global and diverse society.

<http://www.wlu.edu/x35.xml>

Summary of Accomplishments

When *USA Today* wanted to interview someone about daily life in ancient Pompeii, they turned to Rebecca Benefiel of Washington & Lee University (*USA Today*, July 16, 2009, "Digging deeper into Pompeii. Archaeologists race to discover daily life..."). In just a few years, Dr. Benefiel has quickly emerged as one of the leading younger scholars working in the field of classical archaeology and specifically the site of Pompeii. She has been invited to present at a staggering number of events, delivering lectures at specialist conferences from Stanford University to Pamplona, Spain, to the general public like the lecture she delivered to nearly 200 people at the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee – and at nearly twenty other venues in between. Her scholarship has attracted the attention of the media, with her recent articles garnering coverage in *Science News* and *Smithsonian* magazines. Newspapers in Germany, Italy, and Spain have even covered her work abroad, while an article distributed through Asian News International circulated her research through the media outlets of Asia. She continues to receive feedback stemming from her interview on National Public Radio, now archived at wmra.org, and she will appear in two different documentary programs airing on the History Channel next year. This would be an enormous output for any scholar; it is all the more extraordinary since Professor Benefiel received her Ph.D. only five years ago.

The interest her work generates is due partly to the vast range of topics in which Dr. Benefiel is versed. She has been called in as an expert in fields as varied as Roman law, early Christianity, and ancient advertising. Her work with ancient wall-inscriptions, also called graffiti, a dynamic form of communication that became extremely popular in the first century AD, has made her the point person. "Ancient graffiti are the voice of the people," says Benefiel. "Especially in Pompeii where writing literally covered the town, it seems everybody wanted to have a say. These messages bring you right to the thoughts of people who would otherwise be completely lost to history." Benefiel's strong grasp of this complicated field, paired with her ability to apply detailed evidence to the larger developments in ancient society, has made her a favorite speaker on an international stage. After delivering a paper in England two years ago, she was invited to speak at conferences in Spain and Mexico, and is now herself organizing the first conference on ancient graffiti to be held in North America. Her prominence has also made her the expert whom archaeological projects consult when new discoveries occur. As a result, Dr. Benefiel is currently working on publishing recent finds of ancient graffiti for archaeological projects in Italy and the eastern Mediterranean. Yet Prof. Benefiel considers it equally important to serve her local community. She has delivered lectures across the Commonwealth both at the university level (at UVA, William & Mary, Virginia Tech, Hollins University, and Randolph College) and to pre-collegiate audiences, from the Virginia Governor's Latin Academy to the keynote address for "Hampton Roads Latin Day" in southeastern Virginia. She has also been an instructor for the Va. Dept of Education's immersion weekend for high school Latin teachers.

Both for *the international impact she has made in her field* and for the characteristics that make Professor Benefiel an *outstanding model of the Teacher-Scholar* – her careful and innovative scholarship, her strong dedication to teaching, and her service and outreach to a broad spectrum of audiences – the nominating committee has selected Rebecca Benefiel to be Washington & Lee University's nominee in the category of "Rising Star."

Teaching

"Dear Prof. B, I thought you might enjoy this article... I thought of you because your research doesn't seem to come at the expense of your teaching! Bravo!" (An email this summer from a recent graduate.) Professor Benefiel's performance in the classroom can be assessed by any number of measures: over four years, and in a department of four faculty, no fewer than twenty-three Classics majors have chosen her for their adviser; her courses quickly fill to

capacity and regularly exceed it, as she lets in as many students as possible from the waitlists; and the students who have written senior honors theses with her have been admitted to top Ph.D. programs at Stanford University and the University of Texas. But it is notes like the one above that reveal how Benefiel's impact continues beyond the classroom, as former students come across an article, see a TV program on the ancient world, or even a couple years after graduation write to say how her teaching has affected them or helped them in their career.

Prof. Benefiel teaches Roman archaeology and the full spectrum of Latin courses from beginning language to advanced literature courses, and so far has designed eight different advanced courses from scratch. She brings to her courses an energy that inspires students, and fuses an enthusiasm for the ancient world with practical applications to the modern world. "The goal of my courses is to teach my students critical thinking," explains Dr. Benefiel. "In many of my courses, this develops into critical thinking set within a broader view of the world and our place in it." She designs active assignments so that, through studying the ancient world, students learn to evaluate the world around them as well. Her teaching embodies the primary mission of W&L: "to develop students' capacity to think freely, critically, and humanely." Her course on Pompeii, for instance, includes an early assignment in which students pick an ancient personality and, with detailed archaeological maps that articulate every room in every building in the entire city, chart their movements for a "day in the life." This familiarizes them with the major monuments and public needs of a town, actively using the knowledge they have acquired. But the task does not end there. "Since students most often pick a member of the upper class, I then assign a *different* personality – a slave, a child, a vineyard worker – and they consider where and how that person would have spent the same day," says Benefiel. "This spurs them on to look at space, time, and life from another perspective." Each student gets a better idea of the whole population and the reality of life in the ancient city. The primary benefit is that the student then takes that broader view with him or her through the rest of the course.

Professor Benefiel also uses modern examples to get students thinking about ways to evaluate the ancient world. Pompeii preserves acres upon acres of domestic architecture, but how to approach an overwhelming 90 city-blocks of houses? Using floor plans from *Southern Living*, Dr. Benefiel asks where the class sees changes in the design of American houses. They point to shifts in the layout of kitchens or the use of garages, then move on to identify more subtle changes. The question follows, why have these changes occurred and what does this suggest about developments in modern society? From there it is easier for students to analyze changes in the use of space in the ancient world, from the increasing complexity of gardens within houses to the ostentatious displays of status necessary for a patron who receives his clients at home. She explains, "The key is to show students that they have the skills for analysis. Their own analysis then helps them recognize that human society is not static but is constantly undergoing change and transformation. Why and how are the big questions."

"One of the most important foundations of my teaching style is building a sense of camaraderie in the classroom," explains Dr. Benefiel. "I want my students to know that we're all on the same team, working through this together." In beginning Latin classes, students begin class with tag-team grammar reviews. This gets them actively thinking, but it also builds a positive class dynamic. So do other projects, like compositions at the end of class. The group votes on the theme and then composes in Latin: poems, pirate-related sentences, favorite movie quotes. "I will supply any vocabulary word necessary, as the class composes ever-more outlandish texts," she says. One beginning Latin student took his composition skills to the world stage and, after only four months of Latin, authored the Wikipedia entry, in Latin, for his favorite sitcom, "The Office." Advanced courses conclude with a class symposium where the students function as a panel of experts and engaged audience members. Again the team dynamic comes into play. If the student audience does not have questions for the presenter, it falls to the Prof to

ask a follow-up question. After one presenter exclaimed, “Oh no, not a Benefiel question,” the other students in the class quickly raised their hands to offer their own questions first.

High expectations are the rule in Dr. Benefiel’s classes. Student evaluations consistently rate her courses “more difficult than others” but also say they would recommend the course to others, adding comments like, “You learn a lot and have a great professor who motivates you to work hard.” Course evaluations also give her high marks. Her courses have received rankings of 4.6 and higher (out of 5.0); nearly three-quarters of the courses she has taught (usually 15-30 students) have yielded evaluations that rank quality of instruction overall in the range of 4.8-5.0.

Discovery

At an international conference in Germany last summer, Dr. Benefiel was introduced to a professor from Italy who asked, “*The Rebecca Benefiel? ...who wrote the Praetorian article?*” The article in question was Benefiel’s first publication, a study of a newly discovered dedication to the emperor and of the Praetorian Guard, the elite corps of the Roman army who had made the dedication. Little had appeared on the Praetorian Guard since 1939, when what has been considered the definitive study appeared in print. Nevertheless, Benefiel was able to identify three historical moments that fundamentally changed the composition of the guard. The article has become an important resource for any study on the Roman army and has been cited in numerous articles. Already present in this first publication were the hallmarks of Benefiel’s scholarly work: close attention to detail and situating evidence in context.

In addition to the Roman army, she has published on women’s virtue in Greek literature, the competition among cities for honors from the emperor, and now on the popular phenomenon of writing messages on the walls in ancient Pompeii. She sees so much potential in the field of Pompeian wall-inscriptions that during her sabbatical she collected research for more than ten articles, in addition to the four articles on the subject she has recently published, and three book chapters that have been commissioned. The field, she explains, has suffered from being both ignored and misunderstood. Case in point:

“Methe, the slave of Cominia, from the city of Atella, loves Chrestus. May Pompeian Venus be propitious to both of them and may they always live harmoniously.”

A few years ago, Benefiel presented this inscription to a small group of scholars, explaining its value as evidence for regional prayers directed toward Pompeian Venus. These scholars responded, “Yes, but the prayer was not written by a woman.” Despite the fact that Methé (a female name) was the subject of the message, and that she was identified with three elements (name, owner, hometown), these classicists balked. The message must have been written by a man, they agreed; a woman would not have been able to write. That idea seemed to completely disregard the evidence at hand. So Benefiel searched for and ended up finding more than two hundred other graffiti whose authors purported to be women. Her subsequent study (in the article “Dialogues of Graffiti in the House of the Four Styles”) of a series of graffiti expressing individual greetings to a number of women – women who would need to know how to read for the messages to be effective – has begun to change peoples’ minds. The editors of the volume in which the study appears point out that, while as recently as ten years ago it was accepted that “in ancient society, reading was an elitist phenomenon,” Benefiel’s chapter illustrates that “graffiti problematise this model of reading” and allow us “to reconstruct different kinds of reading communities.” On the basis of her study they call into question the idea that reading was fundamentally elitist, one of the main points of the volume’s introduction.

Further research has convinced Dr. Benefiel that two major revisions are in order: 1) the first century AD saw an explosion of interest in writing, with literacy reaching much higher levels than has been recognized; 2) this interest in writing involved people of all social levels from slaves to wealthy town leaders; indeed the most luxurious houses have some of the highest

quantities of graffiti inside. Benefiel spent much of 2008-09 on the ground in Pompeii studying the spaces that featured ancient graffiti, supported by a fellowship from the Archaeological Institute of America. Since most wall-inscriptions were recorded in the nineteenth century, there are no photographs; most were left in the open air and have now vanished. Even when traces are preserved, the handwriting provides a challenge, but Benefiel's careful and methodical research through the site yielded some remarkable results.

The article that resulted from that research appeared in the *American Journal of Archaeology*. The new approach Benefiel proposes, that, far more than text, ancient graffiti are cultural artifacts that can point to shifts in Roman society, immediately met with positive feedback. The editor of the journal accepted her submission outright and fast-tracked the article. When it appeared in print, Benefiel received numerous queries for additional information, from the Dutch science magazine *Quest* to a large international project based at the University of Helsinki. And professional colleagues sent their own comments, e.g., "I just read your new graffiti article in *AJA*. Awesome - I've been thinking about why people don't do more sociologically sensitive 'readings' of this stuff, and then... there you are! Brava." An eminent Australian scholar wrote, "Well done on your Castricius piece in *AJA*. Great to see the dialogic dimensions of Pompeian graffiti, incl. the importance of spatial context and the relationship between text and image, explored so critically in a major article. Most satisfying to see in print."

Dr. Benefiel is now in high demand. She has been asked to publish newly discovered graffiti from the rescue excavations of ancient Zeugma that took place before a newly constructed dam submerged this ancient city in modern Syria. She is also publishing the graffiti of an opulent villa outside Pompeii that may have belonged to the emperor Nero's second wife. Fewer than ten graffiti from the villa had been documented, but after two brief seasons Dr. Benefiel has discovered more than seventy examples in both Latin and Greek. When invited to speak on panels or at conferences, she is routinely the youngest participant. At a conference at Stanford University, she was one of only two Americans; the other was a prominent professor who had designed the U.S. Epigraphy Project, which catalogued all Latin inscriptions in this country. Dr. Benefiel was also formally invited to speak at the Society of Biblical Literature conference as a VIP, an honor rarely bestowed upon assistant professors. Her renown comes from the work she produces. The reviewer of a volume to which she contributed characterized her chapter as "a fine example of the penetrating scholarship that can be done using Pompeian graffiti" and judged it "one of the two best essays in the volume."

In addition to the articles and commissioned book chapters she is writing, her first book, focusing on the presence and nature of graffiti in some of the largest residences in Pompeii, will be appearing in the series for Pompeian studies, the monograph series overseen by the Archaeological Superintendency of Pompeii. A second book on the popularity of regional travel and social interaction during the early Roman Empire (*Pompeii and her Neighbors*) is in progress. Her research has been supported by grants from the Whiting Foundation, the Virginia Foundation of Independent Colleges, the Archaeological Institute of America, and the American Philosophical Society, which features her project on its development website.

Knowledge Integration

"I have found that if you share the process of discovery with your students, they become energized and are more likely to take courageous intellectual leaps themselves," explains Dr. Benefiel. Since she works with material that has received little scholarly attention, she tells her students that no one has worked on this before. That frees the class from trying to figure out what the "right" answer is, and allows them to work through their own original analysis. In one class, she distributed 200 messages found within "The House of the Gladiators" at Pompeii and asked what the class could determine about the space and who lived there. Within five minutes,

someone had pointed out that these gladiators were macho, someone else that they belonged to many different owners, another that they had not fought many matches. This turned into a lively discussion considering whether these careers were short because Pompeii was getting less experienced athletes, or simply because the career of a gladiator was dangerous and therefore often brief. The class also noted how many of these gladiators (who were slaves) had the ability to write, and tried to figure out why they preferred to write on curved columns rather than flat walls. The students were deservedly proud of themselves upon hearing that no one had yet made these observations. Working with primary material and engaging in this type of active thinking, Benefiel's students gain a much better understanding of the subject. They also gain confidence in their own abilities and pursue their own original interests for further research projects in the course; she has not yet read two research papers on the same topic.

Dr. Benefiel consciously attempts to include a number of different approaches to the material she teaches. This is partly due to a desire to reach out to as many learning styles as possible, and partly due to the wide range of her own scholarly interests. To give just an example of the spectrum of her research, current projects include articles on personal prayers (religion), the system of farmers' markets (economy), the popularity of the emperor (politics), the development of the law courts (law), the use of advertising by the sex industry (business), and the artistic talents of gladiators (art).

This variety of interests, coupled with an interdisciplinary style of teaching, enables Dr. Benefiel to create bridges with other departments. She invited a colleague in the religion department to co-teach a study abroad course in Italy on the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity. Theirs was the most popular study abroad program that year, with more than twice the number of students applying for it than any of the other fifteen programs. It also concluded with one of the highest rates of student satisfaction (9.0 out of 10). The two professors led the group around the Bay of Naples and across the city of Rome, and the students played an active role in the 10-hour days of the program. Before leaving campus, they researched and designed reports to give on-site; the handouts they created functioned as a guidebook for the group. The students furthermore became keen observers of the world around them as temporary residents of Rome. They were amazed, for example, that Italians knew so much about the U.S. political system and wanted to discuss it. One student wrote afterwards that the experience made him "more mature," while another wrote that she took away from the course, "a great understanding of ancient and modern Rome, and a sense of independence." The overwhelming sentiment, however, was amazement at how much they learned in a short time. Students summed up the experience with, "*We milked Italy for all its worth!*" "I have never learned as much in a 6 week period," and "Unforgettable. It was all that I thought it would be and more."

Prof. Benefiel is also a contributing member of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies program and a member of the Women's and Gender Studies Advisory Board. She offered the first Classics course to be cross-listed with the Women's Studies department, and is an affiliate faculty member in the program. The wide range of her teaching means that her various courses fulfill literature, social science, or fine arts distribution requirements.

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Benefiel has overseen individual undergraduate research through senior theses and W&L's Robert E. Lee Scholar program, and has helped prepare W&L students to present at undergraduate conferences. One summer Dr. Benefiel coordinated her research trip to Pompeii to coincide with that of a W&L undergraduate collecting research for an honors thesis. She was thereby able to orient the student to the unique challenges of working on-site in Pompeii. Not long after Prof. Benefiel had explained the way to cast a raking light in order to "read" the wall, the student excitedly called out. She had found a drawing that she characterized as a dancing man, which turned out to be an unpublished graffito. The drawing probably depicts a figure from the amphitheater; it is a great find.

Service

Dr. Benefiel offers an exemplary model of the “responsible leadership, service to others, and engaged citizenship” for which W&L seeks to prepare its graduates. She leads by serving at the department and institutional levels, and offers her active service in the community and to the profession. Dr. Benefiel’s arrival at Washington and Lee initiated curricular offerings in classical archaeology, but she also immediately sought to create co-curricular opportunities as well. She has been instrumental in obtaining funding for visiting lectures and in four years has organized the visits of seven leading scholars. She has three times been responsible for organizing the annual Hoyt Lecture in Classics, an extended visit of a preeminent scholar. Last year’s Hoyt Lecture drew more than 150 people and was standing room only.

Until 2009, W&L did not have a chapter of Eta Sigma Phi, the national honorary society for students of Latin and Greek. Dr. Benefiel helped members of the W&L Classics Club draft a petition to the national committee. A few months later, Washington & Lee was granted a charter and opened the 214th chapter of the organization – an accomplishment that allows the department to recognize outstanding academic achievement in the major and now makes W&L students eligible to compete for scholarships.

Dr. Benefiel has also devoted her energies to creating opportunities for some of the best and the brightest students in the college at large. In her first year here, she helped W&L become eligible to nominate candidates for the Beinecke Memorial Scholarship, which fully funds two years of graduate study. As a former Beinecke Fellow herself, she has been a point of reference, regularly providing advice to applicants. She also serves on the faculty panels that interview incoming students applying to the university’s honor scholarship program, and is a member of the standing committees of the Faculty Executive Committee, Graduate Fellowships Committee, and Women’s Studies Committee.

Her service goes far beyond committee work, though, and reaches the community at large. “I am very lucky to be a product of Virginia public education. I had excellent teachers who cared and made learning the joy that it is,” she explains. She strives to give back and makes it a point to support high school Latin teachers. She has delivered lectures to a range of audiences, from the local elementary and high schools to the Virginia Governor’s Latin Academy, a summer immersion program for the brightest of Virginia’s high school Latin students, which she herself once attended. Dr. Benefiel has also delivered the keynote address for *Hampton Roads Latin Day*; been an instructor for a VDOE program for high school Latin teachers; presented to the Classical Association of Virginia; and judged the statewide contests of the Va. Classical League. During the Jamestown 400th anniversary celebrations, she led a public discussion about archaeology at Jamestown from the perspective of a classical archaeologist.

In the field of Classics, Dr. Benefiel has written book reviews for journals in Germany, Italy, and North America; she referees articles for two academic journals; she has reviewed the most recent book manuscripts on the subject of inscriptions for academic presses in the USA and Australia; and she provides guidance to graduate students in her field at other institutions. Her largest single project of service, however, may be making Pompeian wall-inscriptions available to a world audience. She was recently invited to participate in a major, international project to create an online database of all ancient inscriptions (EAGLE, The Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy). The project is centered at the universities of Heidelberg, Rome, and Bari. Dr. Benefiel is the only American participating in the project, and is responsible for the digitization of more than 13,000 wall-inscriptions from Pompeii and surrounding areas (approx. 3% of the project total). Work has already begun this fall - a great opportunity for talented W&L students to contribute to a project that will serve a global audience.

Personal Statement

It's not every professor whose students throw her a toga party at the end of the term, but I have some really amazing students. And I get to teach some amazing courses. That toga party was the perfect way to end a particularly special spring term course that began on campus and ended with three weeks in Italy. The final dinner – draped bed sheets and all – was a celebration of how hard we had worked, all that we had learned, and how far we had come. And that surprise, planned completely by the students, could not have meant more to me.

I can't take all my students to Italy, but I try to capture the vitality of the ancient world and bring something that has fascinated me to every course I teach. I begin the first day of class with each student introducing him or herself and answering the question, "What have the Romans ever done for us?" Around the fifteenth student, answering gets difficult. And that's where it gets fun. If a student cannot add an answer, I encourage him to take a guess. Then it's up to me to see if I can make a link with ancient Rome. When they see that they can offer anything and I'll work with it, they start taking some wild guesses. I've had to admit once, okay, nope, there is no connection with ancient Rome, give me a second guess; but it's remarkable to see how far we can take it. Thirty students is the limit so far. It's a fun exercise for them but it's also educational for me, as I gather clues about what might interest this group of students so that I can include a little something extra on, e.g., coins, rhetoric, or chariot races.

It was the multi-disciplinary nature of Classical Studies that first fascinated me. I began studying Latin in high school and found myself drawn into the history and culture bound up with the literature. In college, I added ancient Greek, and expanded my coursework to cover nearly every sector of Classics – from archaeology, history, and literature to ancient religion, philosophy, and Roman law. A professor of mine took notice of this healthy appetite for all things ancient and guided me to epigraphy, the study of inscriptions. Epigraphy, he suggested, would provide structure for my disparate and wide-ranging interests since, in order to understand the monuments of a society, one must first understand the politics, history, and culture of that society. I audited a graduate seminar and found his advice spot-on. Since epigraphy is offered sporadically in a handful of American Ph.D. programs, while it remains a standard requirement of European graduate degrees, I graduated with my B.A. and, thanks to a Rotary Ambassadorial Fellowship, headed to Italy to enroll in the Università di Roma, 'La Sapienza', for a year of advanced epigraphy coursework.

Study Classics, see the world. I had no idea that travel would become so woven into my life. Until the age of 19, save for one family vacation, I had never been outside the United States. Six years later I had been to three continents, studied in five countries, and become proficient in three foreign languages, with a bit of Arabic to boot (and not counting Latin or ancient Greek). A semester abroad in Rome was where it all began, literally opening my eyes to the world. I asked Italians my age why they seemed not to show any patriotism and discovered the resonances of WWII reached my generation there, with nationalism shunned as much by them as it seemed to be embraced in my own country. The history of the place had just as profound an effect on me as the present, as I stood at the very spot where Julius Caesar had been murdered, and marveled at temples dedicated twenty-three centuries earlier. I was ready for more and so my first archaeological excavation took me to Carthage, Tunisia. Three years later, my enrollment at 'La Sapienza' made me eligible to join the university's excavations in Pompeii, an opportunity I jumped at, and which solidified my fluency in Italian. And I was able to use my summers in graduate school strategically, improving my German at a Goethe Institut in Munich, studying Greek archaeology at the American School for Classical Studies in Athens, and participating in an international summer school in epigraphy at Oxford, all of which I was able to pursue thanks to an incredibly lucky streak in winning scholarships.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in expecting excellence of my students – while making clear to them that this is an absolutely reasonable expectation. I try to instill a team dynamic in my classes, so that everyone feels that we are all working together. In beginning and intermediate Latin courses, I design team drills for grammar and translation. In advanced classes, the teambuilding is more sophisticated. Creating this atmosphere, I believe, allows everyone to perform at their best. I set the bar high, and my students know it, but I also share strategies to help them learn to study effectively. I caution, for example, that learning vocabulary cannot be done all in one sitting, but is retained best when studied at multiple intervals but for shorter periods of time. To make the point, I often use the analogy of weight-lifting for tone – low weight but many repetitions. A freshman recently told me, “I’m taking calculus and physics but I think Latin is my hardest class.” But she said it with a smile.

Encouraging a positive class dynamic and offering daily office hours means that students often feel comfortable asking me for advice. From helping students struggling with academics to guiding them to counseling resources, I feel that I make a difference as a teacher and adviser. A student in my Latin course came to me one day, and said that his mother was having financial difficulties so he was dropping out of college to take care of her and his younger siblings. I listened, and then gently suggested that a better way for him to help was to hold onto his full scholarship, stay in school, and finish his degree. We talked most of the afternoon. He decided to stay in school, worked hard, and helped his mom with a part-time job. He also became a student leader, flourished, and delivered the class speech at graduation last spring.

When it comes to research, it is a profoundly satisfying time to be doing the work I do. After a long period when the discipline focused on literature, art, and politics taking place among the upper levels of ancient society, the light is now being cast on a much broader swath of the populace and their endeavors. Messages written on walls are one of the most recent frontiers, attracting a wave of scholarly interest over the past five years. Happily there is much work to do. Ancient graffiti tap into popular culture, offering a way to study the Roman Empire from the ground up. They reveal the texture of the everyday (current prices, greetings, what literary works were popular) but also shifts in society as they are taking place (including shifts in religion and in language). They relay the thoughts of a wide section of society who were finding their voice and a means to express it publicly. In a way, studying these messages gives me the same satisfaction as does the speaking tradition at Washington & Lee where you greet everyone you pass on campus with a hello. Everyone is acknowledged, everyone gets a voice.

At one point I considered another career path. Returning to college from a summer excavating in Tunisia, I added a major in international relations, and later won an internship at the U.S. State Department. Despite three great months of diplomatic work, serving as a liaison to ambassadors and concluding a treaty with Andorra, these achievements nevertheless brought home to me that I belonged among the ruins, in the library, and in the classroom. This was a valuable experience, one that I draw on when students come to me with questions about their future. I encourage them to use college as a testing ground, venturing into new disciplines, applying for scholarships, and pursuing summer internships as a way to test the waters of a potential career. *Carpe diem* (seize the day) is a motto that works for college and for life.

Mottos distill meaning. Married to someone in the Navy who has spent more of the last decade overseas than at home, I know that every day counts. In my teaching and scholarship, I explore the past, while connecting it with conditions or developments of the present. When I arrived at Washington & Lee, I found the university motto provided another sound perspective: *non incautus futuri*, “not unmindful of the future.” I appreciate the sentiment even more because it comes from a Latin poem, and have incorporated this idea into my aims. My personal goal as a professor and adviser is to guide my students with a philosophy of learning from the past, focusing on the present, and readying themselves for the future.

Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae
Rebecca R. Benefiel

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. in Classical Philology, Harvard University, 2005
Post-graduate study at L'Università di Roma, 'La Sapienza' (Rome, Italy), 1997-1998
B.A. in Classics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997
Conferred with Honors and Highest Distinction; Phi Beta Kappa

EMPLOYMENT:

Assistant Professor of Classics, Washington and Lee University	2005 - present
Affiliated Faculty, Program in Women's and Gender Studies	2007 - present

HONORS AND AWARDS:

Archaeological Institute of America, Olivia James Traveling Fellowship	2008-2009
American Philosophical Society, Franklin Research Grant	2007
Virginia Association of Independent Colleges, Mednick Fellowship	2006
Whiting Dissertation Completion Fellowship	2004-2005
Fellow of the American Academy of Rome, Rome Prize	2002-2003
British Epigraphy Society Fellowship	2001
American School of Classical Studies in Athens Lawler Scholarship	2000
Beinecke Brothers Memorial Foundation Scholarship (2 yrs graduate study)	1998-2000
Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship (for study at a foreign university)	1997-1998

SELECT PUBLICATIONS:

"Dialogues of Graffiti in the House of Maius Castricius in Pompeii," *American Journal of Archaeology* vol. 114.1 (2010), 59-101.
"Rome in Pompeii: Wall Inscriptions and GIS," in: *Latin on Stone. Epigraphic research and electronic archives*, (ed.) F. Feraudi-Gruénais, Rowman & Littlefield, (2010), 45-75.
"Dialogues of Graffiti in the House of the Four Styles at Pompeii," in: *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, (eds.) J.A. Baird and Claire Taylor, London: Routledge, (2010), 20-48.
"Amianth, a Ball-Game, and Making One's Mark," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* vol. 167 (2008), 193-200.
"Pompeii, Puteoli, and the status of a *colonia* in the mid-first century A.D.," in: *Pompeii, Capri e la Penisola Sorrentina*, (ed.) F. Senatore, Roma: Bardi Editori, (2004), 349-368.
"Teaching by example: Aetiology in Plutarch's *De Mulierum Virtutibus*," *Ploutarchos* n.s. vol. 1 (2003/2004), 11-20.
"A New Praetorian *Laterculus* from Rome," *Zeitschrift für Papyr. & Epig.* 134 (2001), 221-232.
"The Inscriptions of the Aqueducts of Ancient Rome," *The Waters of Rome* vol. 1 (2001), 1-10.
Plus, book reviews in German, Italian, and North American journals

Forthcoming:

The Presence of Writing in Elite Residences: Graffiti and Space in Ancient Pompeii, Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei Monografie, Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider.
"Twenty pairs of gladiators - and more! How to advertise gladiatorial spectacles," in: *Advertising in the Ancient World*, (eds.) P. Kruschwitz and A. Marzano, (2011), 22 pp. (co-authored with K. Coleman)
"The Graffiti," in: *Zeugma 2000: Rescue Excavations*, (ed.) W. Aylward, Los Altos, CA: Packard Humanities Institute (forthcoming, 2012), 14 pp.
"Regional interaction and economic networks," in: *The Blackwell Companion to Roman Italy*, (ed.) Alison Cooley, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers (forthcoming), 20pp.
"The Scope and Typology of Graffiti at Oplontis," in: *Villa A ("of Poppaea") at Oplontis*, (eds.) J. Clarke, S. De Caro, and M. Thomas, vol. II, American Council of Learned Societies.

INVITED LECTURES: (23 in the past six years, including:)

- “Women and Writing. Popular communication and functional literacy in the first-century AD,” *Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium*, Washington & Lee University, March 2010
- “Gladiators in their own words,” *Teaching Pompeii Workshop*, Wabash College, February 2010
- “Los grafitos en lugares domésticos en la antigua Pompeya,” *Primer Congreso Internacional Sobre Grafitos Históricos*, Univ. Michoacana S. Nicolás de Hidalgo, Mexico, Sept. 2009
- “Graffiti in Domestic Spaces in Ancient Pompeii,” *Seminario Internacional sobre Grafitos Históricos / International Workshop on Historical Graffiti*, Pamplona, Spain, June 2009
- “The Inscribed Nature of the Ancient City,” *Inscribed Lives: Roman Epigraphy in Context, an International Workshop*, Stanford University, May 2009
- “The Inscribed Nature of the Pompeian House,” Vanderbilt University, January 2009
- “The Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and Popular Culture in Pompeii,” Archaeological Institute of America Symposium Series, The Parthenon, Nashville, TN, January 2009
- “Decoding Graffiti from Ancient Pompeii,” Keynote Address for *Hampton Roads Latin Day*, Christopher Newport University, January 2009
- “Advertising in Ancient Pompeii,” *Society of Biblical Literature conference*, Boston, Nov. 2008
- “Popular Writing in the Ancient World,” Hollins University, Roanoke, VA, April 2008
- “A Space for Public Communication: Graffiti and the Basilica of Pompeii,” Conference on *The Spaces of Justice in the Roman World*, Columbia University, November 2007
- “*Pompeianis feliciter!* Graffiti in the first century AD,” Instructor for the Virginia Department of Education’s Latin Immersion Weekend, Richmond, VA, September 2007
- “*Urbs* and *urbes*: the idea and form of the Roman city,” Webcast to Colorado College, Millsaps College, Rhodes College, and Southwestern University, November 2006
- “Ephemeral Epigraphy? Text, Space, & Popular Communication,” Rutgers University, Oct. 2005

SELECT CONFERENCE PAPERS: (11 in the past six years, including:)

- “Pompeii and her Neighbors: Ancient Graffiti and Civic Identity,” *Fédération internationale des Associations d’études classiques* (FIEC), Berlin, Germany, August 2009
- “Dialogues of Graffiti in the Houses of Fabius Rufus and Maius Castricius,” *Ancient Graffiti in Context*, University of Leicester, England, November 2008
- “Graffiti in the Basilica of Pompeii: the longevity of spontaneous communication,” *13th International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy*, Oxford University, Sept. 2007
- “Isidorus: Sex-slave or candidate for aedile? The value of advertising at Pompeii,” Classical Association of the Midwest and South (CAMWS) Annual Meeting, Cincinnati, April 2007
- “*Nundinae* (Roman Market-days) and Regional Networks,” *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, Birkbeck College, University of London, England, March 2007
- “*Admiror, paries, te non cecidisse...* Graffiti in the Basilica of Pompeii,” Archaeological Institute of America Annual Meeting, San Diego, January 2007

DIGITAL MEDIA:

Television: Interviewed for *The Origins of Christianity* and *Christian Mysteries*, History Channel

Radio: One-hour live interview for the NPR program, *Virginia Insight*, on WMRA.org (Nov. 2009)

Newspapers and Magazines: Research featured in *USA Today*, *Science News*, *Il Sole 24 Ore* (Italian newspaper), *Diario de Navarra* (Spanish newspaper), *Smithsonian.com* and Online at: *Philippine Times*, *Thaindian News*, *Daily News & Analysis (India)*, *Sindh Today*, and *The Hindustan Times*; *Südwest Presse* and *Wissenschaft aktuell* (Germany); and others

SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY:

Faculty Executive Committee; Graduate Fellowships Committee; Women’s Studies Advisory Committee; Johnson Scholars Interview Panel; Faculty Advisor to Eta Sigma Phi

Letters of Support

It is difficult for me to think about Rebecca Benefiel as a "Rising Star." Shooting star would be more like it. In a very short time Rebecca has had remarkable accomplishments in the classroom and in her professional publications. At a university that takes some pride in the cultivation of teacher-scholars, Rebecca is the rare faculty member who has needed very little help, and very little time, in becoming an exemplar of the seamless integration of instruction and investigation. If I did not live and work in historic buildings, I would probably celebrate her success with some well-placed graffiti in praise of an ideal teacher-scholar.

Kenneth P. Ruscio, President, Washington and Lee University

Innovative Research

What has most struck me about this young scholar is the ease and engagement with which she makes her very meticulous and difficult research accessible to varied audiences. Discussion of and after her papers has on each occasion been open and extremely productive, because of Professor Benefiel's excellent command of her topic and because of her straightforward manner of engaging with interlocutors. I consider her work on graffiti in context to be extremely important, and a model of the kind of approach that needs to be taken with the valuable evidence from sites like Pompeii in order for us to gain a proper appreciation of the role that this kind of writing and drawing played in the Roman world. *Dr A. J. Clark, Tutor in Roman History and University Lecturer, Christ Church, Oxford University*

Rebecca contributed to a volume I edited with an exhaustive article about "Rome in Pompeii. Wall Inscriptions and GIS". Let alone the title shows her interest in going beyond the 'borders' of her main discipline and trying to use and to fruitfully incorporate new questions and technologies in her studies. When I met her on the occasion of the 13th International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy at Oxford, I met a vital scholar with visionary ideas but at the same time with her 'two feet on earth'. *Dr. Francisca Feraudi-Gruénais, University of Heidelberg (Germany), Research Center of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences*

Two years ago I planned a one-day international conference, "Inscribed Lives: Roman epigraphy in context", which took place at Stanford in May 2009. We had an audience of 50-60 people from both the Berkeley and Stanford campuses. Among the six speakers were four world experts from Germany, Australia, Canada and the US. My departmental chair, who worked with me in organizing the event, originally expressed some concern about scheduling Rebecca, an emerging scholar, next to all the international luminaries - leaders in the field. But after the event, the first thing my chair said to me was how impressed he was with Rebecca's paper. Two senior colleagues said, privately and spontaneously, that they thought hers was the best contribution. I mention this to indicate, in one very concrete instance, how Rebecca can hold her own in one of the most exacting settings I have taken part in for a long time. As organizer, I was delighted not just with the quality of her formal paper but the good grace of its delivery, as well as Rebecca's engaged debate with others on the day. This event merely underlined for me that Rebecca is a model classicist, and true rising star: prepared with a solidity that perhaps only Harvard in the US can give grads, she does not let her learning stand in the way of interesting questions and evolving debate. A dazzling future awaits her.

Grant Parker, Associate Professor, Department of Classics, Stanford University

Even at this early stage in her career, Rebecca already knows Pompeian graffiti better than almost any other living scholar. She is a trained Classical philologist--thoroughly comfortable with Latin and Greek, fluent in Italian, and capable of reading all the other research languages of her discipline. Her method is greatly enriched by her understanding of archaeology, gained through fieldwork at Carthage, Pompeii, and Stabiae. Her reading of graffiti is an archaeological process, involving careful and rigorous analysis of the inscription itself as well as intelligent

interpretation of its often complex interactions with images, objects, people, activities, and other graffiti within sight or sound of it. Her current project (*Pompeii and her Neighbors*) could hardly be more relevant to the needs of other historians and archaeologists working in the region. I have been following Rebecca's recent research with great interest, even urgency, because they are opening up new directions in my own thinking. This study will probably become the standard teaching text on Pompeian graffiti that many of us have wished for.

Dr. Rabun Taylor, Professor of Classics, University of Texas

Of all the people working on Pompeii, Rebecca Benefiel's research is BY FAR the most frequently cited on blogs and Twitter. What she's doing clearly resonates with popular interest - which incidentally helps to raise the profile of research at Pompeii more generally, meaning that we all benefit! *Dr. Joanne Berry, Swansea University (UK); Founder of Blogging Pompeii*

I first wrote to Rebecca Benefiel because of her article on the Praetorian Guard, which I found very useful for my scholarly project on pseudo-tribes. In that article, published in the highly regarded journal *ZPE*, she not only publishes and studies a newly discovered epigraphic monument on the praetorians in Rome, but also tries to establish an accurate scheme of dating various *laterculi praetorianorum*. Her studies of Roman military onomastics allowed her to succeed in this. I'd like to note that these inscriptions had been studied for the last one hundred years and no such scheme had ever been achieved despite the various attempts of scholars. For my articles she has been a very helpful resource providing epigraphic advice [as] she is a good scholar not only in the field of pure epigraphy, but also in historical interpretation, in finding what is behind the inscription. *Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivo Topalilov, University of Shumen (Bulgaria)*

Unpretentious, enthusiastic, and passionate about her work, Rebecca is one of the most brilliant young historians of ancient Italy. Her research on the social networks of Campania requires superb skills in epigraphy, knowledge of the idiosyncratic visual language of graffiti, of Latin prose, and also of ancient topography and archaeological method... This is a highly gifted scholar who is already changing the field of ancient studies. I cannot think of a more promising young colleague. *Bettina Bergmann, Helene Herzig Professor of Art, Mount Holyoke College*

As a scholar of Italy in Roman times, Rebecca is remarkable for the depth and breadth of her training and expertise. She possesses an enviable command of inscriptional, archaeological, and literary material and a keen sense of how these skills work in combination, and her remarkable skills as a communicator enable her to bring her vision of the Roman past vividly to life for students and for a broader public... [Recently] she has devoted most of her scholarly energies to studying the graffiti from Pompeii, and has in a few short years emerged as a leading figure in this newly active area. As her reputation has spread, she has been invited to speak at several international conferences, had a major article accepted by the leading American journal in the field, the *American Journal of Archaeology*, and has been entrusted by the Italian authorities with publishing the graffiti from Oplontis, a town in the vicinity of Pompeii. These are altogether extraordinary achievements for a scholar only a few years away from the dissertation, and they offer a foretaste of the bright future that surely awaits her.

Richard Tarrant, Pope Professor of the Latin Language and Literature, Harvard University

A Model of the Teacher-Scholar

Anyone who knows her will attest: Rebecca has enormous energy, both intellectual and physical, and a hugely generous nature. She pours herself into her work (which is itself extremely demanding on-site archaeological and linguistic labor) and then seems to have equal energy to share it with her students (and colleagues) in the classroom, on-site in the archaeological excavations she knows so well, around the dinner table in her own home or at

countless gatherings she organizes just to share the joy of this work as researcher, teacher, mentor. It is no accident, of course, that Rebecca's Pompeii inscription work is in the public eye now, receiving the attention it deserves. But what the newspaper clippings do not say is that this brilliant classical archaeologist is also an exceptionally gifted teacher, whether in the classroom interpreting computer-generated site maps or guiding students to read and interpret Latin inscriptions, or standing on site in the Roman Forum, drawing students into the world of Roman antiquity. I have never experienced *such complete engagement of students in learning*, nor engagement so collaborative and so full of the sheer joy of discovery as in Rebecca's Pompeii and Rome course abroad in Italy. I was very lucky to be along!

Dr. Alexandra Brown, Jessie Ball DuPont Professor of Religion, Washington & Lee University

Her innovative research on Pompeii and ancient Campania, focusing on material that most archaeologists and ancient historians have overlooked, has helped, and will in the decades to come, further our understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of Roman society in the region. In addition to being a strong researcher, Dr Benefiel's enthusiasm for the ancient world, her desire to share with others the breath of her knowledge, coupled with complete dedication to students, make her an excellent university teacher. Her teaching style is engaging and captivating, and she constantly strives to find better and more stimulating ways to explain difficult topics to the classroom.

*Dr Annalisa Marzano, Lecturer in Ancient History,
Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes, University of Reading (UK)*

It's not just that she's smart (she is), or hard-working (she is), or dedicated (she is)—Rebecca combines intellectual passion and enthusiasm with down-to-earth common sense, and so makes a dream teacher of undergraduates (though I suspect she'd do brilliantly with graduate students, too). I relish our periodic encounters, most often at conferences but occasionally in Rome, the city she and I both love above all others—Rebecca always has a new discovery to share or a new bit of research to talk about, and she does so both generously and learnedly. Rebecca Benefiel can't help but do Washington and Lee—and the state of Virginia—proud.

Barbara Weiden Boyd, Professor of Classics, Bowdoin College

I had the pleasure of touring Pompeii with Ms. Benefiel. I contacted her about a History Channel program on the possibility of early Christians in Pompeii. Rebecca was at ease in front of the camera but also stood her ground when our host tried to push her too far. She opened our eyes to a world we never would have had access to. Her passion for learning is obvious to anyone who encounters her. She has a way of contextualizing the past that makes it snap into focus. Working with Ms. Benefiel was an honor and made the shoot a total success. I only wish I could be a student in one of her lectures!

*Vanessa Hill, Documentary Film Producer,
Associated Producers, Toronto*

I have to comment on Rebecca's hidden toughness. While faculty periodically complain about challenges facing them, Rebecca, in the tradition of the Roman stoics, said nothing for three years while her husband was getting shot at landing planes in Afghanistan as a U.S. Navy flier. During the entire time, she maintained a positive outlook on life. She is incandescently brilliant and a Harvard-trained classicist without a trace of arrogance or pretension, and is a Pied Piper in the Classics Department – causing legions of students to double major in the subject who ordinarily might use it to satisfy a foreign language requirement and escape. Rebecca is the kind of person who immediately impresses you, and then blows you away on further acquaintance. *She has had an entire career in her five years at W&L* – we are blessed to have her with us; she is truly extraordinary.

*Dr. Erich Uffelman, SCHEV OFA 2009;
Professor of Chemistry, Washington & Lee*

Additional Documentation: Comments from Former Students

Dr. Benefiel's qualities as a professor extend far beyond the attention she provides to her students. Her research in ancient graffiti has been recognized nationally; it is cutting-edge in many ways, combining two disciplines: archaeology and philology. She has truly made unbelievable advances in this field... Prof. Benefiel has also been an invaluable mentor to many students. Professor Benefiel has been extremely influential in my life - is an understatement. I am not sure where my life would be today had I not met her. She introduced me to and excited me in the subject that I will spend the rest of my life devoted to. Beyond that, her advice and friendship was a positive aspect of my college experience that I will be forever grateful for. I cannot think of any professor more deserving to be recognized for her commitment to academic excellence and students than Professor Benefiel. *Jackie DiBiasie, PhD Candidate in Classics, University of Texas at Austin, W&L '09*

Her selflessness as a teacher, her earnestness as a friend, and her genuine and continued interest in the success of her students both inside and outside the classroom mark Rebecca Benefiel as one of the finest and most influential professors I have studied under. And as I begin my own Ph.D. work in the field of Classics, Rebecca Benefiel is one person on whom I would like to model my own teaching style, achieving that rare balance between professional and personal interest that is the hallmark of the true liberal arts professor. *Matthew Loar, W&L '07, PhD Candidate in Classics, Stanford University; CIC American Graduate Fellowship*

Professor Rebecca Benefiel is not only an innovative teacher and supportive mentor, but she is one of those rare individuals that you are honored to have known in your life, and will go on telling stories about your time with them long after you've parted ways. Because of her I became a Classics major, and I have seen the wonders of Pompeii and Rome with her expert guidance. Her work in Pompeii is nothing short of groundbreaking and her enthusiasm for her field is matched only by her knowledge of it. She could make any subject a thrill to take. Her value as a faculty member at W&L is invaluable. *Sean Hurdiss, Biology and Classics major, W&L '10*

Professor Benefiel made every class engaging. I am not exaggerating when I say that every student wanted to participate and contribute to class discussions... Professor Benefiel taught me subjects totally unrelated to my major and I still think she is the best teacher at W&L. *Anthony Oley, Accounting major, W&L '10*

Passionate. If I had to describe Professor Benefiel in one word, it would be passionate. Her passion for Classics as a subject matter is extraordinary. However, her innate desire to facilitate her students' success is what truly sets her apart. In this respect, she is unparalleled. *Andrew Gulotta, W&L '07*

Professor Benefiel's commitment not only to her subject, which is profound, but also to her goal of educating her students truly shines in the classroom. Furthermore, her depth of knowledge of the classical world is astounding. From our experience abroad, I can say that no other professor is as engaged and interested in the well-being and success of their students in and outside of the classroom as Professor Benefiel. I am thankful, now that I am among the ranks of alumni, to call her a mentor and friend. I cannot imagine an individual more deserving of this award. *Samuel Wilmoth, W&L '09*

She is a true asset to W&L. Prof. Benefiel possesses talent, enthusiasm, and communication skills, sharing her knowledge with students. Over my four years at W&L, she served as a professor, mentor, friend, and inspiration to me. As a freshman, I had no intent of becoming a Classics major, but her energy, excitement, and instruction converted me. She soon became my advisor and best resource at W&L... Prof B is a figure at Washington & Lee that echoes Lee's commitment to the school, education, and its students. *Liz Cresswell, W&L '09*

Additional Documentation: Student comments from course evaluations

From Latin courses:

Select comments: **the best professor I've had yet at W&L... I learned more in this class than any other....**what all professors should be like**... I have had multiple courses with Prof. Benefiel and I have enjoyed all of them. Her courses are demanding, but they are rewarding.

As this was my first upper-level Latin course, my ability (or desire) to construct more sophisticated insights has begun to bloom. This was most evident in the term paper...

This is exactly how a college education should be.

The instructor knows her stuff – to the point of being able to appear on Jeopardy for Latin grammar/history. She's always available for office hours (but she's so popular you sometimes have to wait awhile). This is a fantastic course.

Although I had extensive Latin poetry background from high school, Professor Benefiel actually interested me in verse for the first time and taught me more in 12 weeks than I learned in 4 years... I've never had a teacher who shows more concern. GREAT PROFESSOR.

Professor Benefiel is very good at helping us plebeians understand the how and why of Latin... she requires participation but in a way that makes all students feel welcome even if they aren't sure what the answer is. I enjoyed the community feel of all the class working together.

Prof. B is truly incredible. Her vast knowledge of Latin culture and language is clearly evident each day she comes to class prepared and very excited to teach us. She is always available to her students and wants us to succeed academically.

Would you recommend this course to a fellow student?

- Yes. - Prof. B is kind and fair and makes this class one I want to come to.
- Yes, everyone should a) have a class w/Dr. Benefiel, and b) read some Latin

From Archaeology courses:

Encyclopedic knowledge. Prof. Benefiel knew everything about Pompeii and did a great job teaching us. She made a large class feel more like a discussion-based seminar. Great teacher.

I loved this class. I have gotten so much from this course, from close readings of secondary sources to researching the presentation and then the final paper; I was surprised at how much I learned. Good class discussions. Strong teaching ability of Prof. Benefiel.

It is challenging to have a class with classics majors and non-classics majors, but I think Prof. Benefiel did it very well... Prof. Benefiel knows so much about all this stuff and she loves it all. You can tell.

Basically Professor Benefiel is my hero. She's a young, hip woman who knows tons about the ancient world and Latin. I want to be her.

Very interesting and engaging and much more interesting than a normal sociology class; Since the subject was so fascinating, **I found myself putting forth much more effort than I would in other classes**. Fantastic course and instructor, definitely one of the best here at W&L so far.

I feel like we have a good, broad understanding (and detailed in many cases) of all aspects of Pompeii. I learned how to critically approach scholars' viewpoints... not always believing what you read. Energetic class. Great course, outstanding instructor.

Select comments: Best teacher I have had at Washington and Lee. She is passionate and inspiring... very knowledgeable, very excited about teaching Pompeii which got me excited about learning about it. A+!!... Thank you. Perfect spring term course.

Additional Documentation: Selected Media Coverage

USA Today, July 15, 2009, pages D1-2

“Digging deeper: Archaeologists race to show Pompeii daily life”

By Dan Vergano

...Archaeologists are still making discoveries about the real lives of the lost inhabitants. The Blogging Pompeii website run by archaeologists lists 19 projects in the region, for example. Scholars such as Rebecca Benefiel of Washington and Lee University continue to steadily document houses there.

"So far, more than 11,000 wall inscriptions have been recorded," Benefiel says. She recently analyzed graffiti scrawled on the Basilica law courts of Pompeii that celebrated trigon, a Roman game. (Three players form a triangle and pass a ball. Each drop was a point for the other players.) "Pompeii is great for what it gives us. You can't get that level of detail anywhere else," she says...

Science News, January 30, 2010, page 14

“Graffiti on the walls in Pompeii”

By Bruce Bower

Well-off homeowners living in the Roman city of Pompeii more than 2,000 years ago could read the writing on the their own walls, and apparently didn't mind the spontaneous scrawling. Citizens of Pompeii scratched out graffiti on the walls of private residences to share creative greetings, welcomes and salutations to friends, Rebecca Benefiel of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., reported on January 8.

Many elite swellings bear dozens of graffiti messages on their walls, Benefiel notes. She studied 41 examples of written graffiti spread across two stories of one such house...

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Graffiti in Pompeji

Wandkritzeleien und Wandzeichnungen - so genannte Graffiti - waren vor 1900 Jahren eine völlig alltägliche Erscheinung und zogen offenbar auch keinerlei strafrechtliche Verfolgung nach sich. Davon zeugen zahllose Graffiti im einst verschütteten Pompeji




Jeder tat es in Pompeji vor rund 1900 Jahren und jeder tat es überall: in Häusern, an Häusern, an Mauern, in Bädern und auf der Straße. Die Rede ist vom Anbringen beliebiger Graffiti, also Wandzeichnungen und -kritzeleien, für die heutige Sprayer von Gesetzes wegen verfolgt werden. Zumindest in Pompeji konnte jeder seine Ansichten und Sichtweisen von der Welt bedenkenlos an die Wände des öffentlichen Raums malen. Eine amerikanische Wissenschaftlerin hat sich jetzt dieser antiken Pop-Art angenommen und untersucht sie genauer.

Graffiti gelten heutzutage eher als Sachbeschädigung. Wer dabei erwischt wird, muss mit Strafverfolgung rechnen. Kaum jemand denkt heute daran, dass Graffiti auch Zeitzeugnisse sind. Die Graffiti auf dieser Wand in Paris, noch 2008 zu sehen, sind mittlerweile übertüncht worden.
© Doris Marszk


“Diese Wände waren riesige Flächen für Botschaften aller Art”, erklärt Rebecca Benefiel von der Washington and Lee University. “Es ist wirklich interessant, wie interaktiv die Graffiti waren. Es ist faszinierend, weil sie zeigen, wie engagiert die Menschen beim Schreiben waren. Man las die Botschaften anderer und schrieb Antworten dazu.” Mehr als 11.000 Exemplare hat die Forscherin in den letzten drei Jahren untersucht.

Im Bilde




Wanderer unter den Wellen

Magazin




Von Hammer, Messer und Brettchen - Werkzeuge im Wandel der Zeit

Im O-Ton




Das menschliche Streben nach Glück = Gift für die Umwelt?

Im Ernst



Energieagentur: Zuhause auf Wüstenboden

Im Druck



Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert

Cartoon

HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

Reading the Writing on Pompeii's Walls

To better understand the ancient Roman world, one archaeologist looks at the graffiti, love notes and poetry alike, left behind by Pompeians

By Kristin Ohlson
Smithsonian.com, July 27, 2010



From the very beginning, archaeologists noticed copious amounts of graffiti on the outsides of buildings throughout the ancient Roman world, including Pompeii.

The Art Archive / Alamy

More from Smithsonian.com

- Roman Splendor in Pompeii
- Home Away From Rome
- Via Aurelia: The Roman Empire's Lost Highway

Rebecca Benefiel stepped into the tiny dark room on the first floor of the House of Maius Castricius. Mosquitoes whined. Huge moths flapped around her head. And—much higher on the ick meter—her flashlight revealed a desiccated corpse that looked as if it was

struggling to rise from the floor. Nonetheless, she moved closer to the walls and searched for aberrations in the stucco. She soon found what she was looking for: a string of names and a cluster of numbers, part of the vibrant graffiti chitchat carried on by the citizens of Pompeii before Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79 and buried their city in a light pumice stone called lapilli.

"There are a few hazards to this work," laughs Benefiel, a 35-year-old classicist from Washington and Lee University who has spent part of the past six summers in Pompeii. "Sometimes the guards forget to let me out of the buildings at the end of the day!"

Regardless, she's always eager to return.

Vesuvius dumped ashes and lapilli on Pompeii for 36 hours, sealing the entire city up to an average height of 20 feet. Since the 18th century, archaeologists have excavated about two-thirds, including some 109 acres of public buildings, stores and homes. The city's well-preserved first level has given archaeologists, historians and classicists an unparalleled view of the ancient world, brought to a halt in the middle of an ordinary day.

From the very beginning, archaeologists noticed copious amounts of graffiti on the outsides of buildings. In the late 1800s, scholars began making careful copies of Latin inscriptions throughout the ancient Roman world, including Pompeii, and cataloging them. This effort is a boon to scholars like Benefiel, since more than 90 percent of Pompeii's recorded graffiti have since been erased by exposure to the elements.

In the ancient Roman world, graffiti was a respected form of writing—often interactive—not the kind of defacement we now see on rocky cliffs and bathroom stalls. Inside elite dwellings like that of Maius Castricius—a four-story home with panoramic windows overlooking the Bay of Naples that was excavated in the 1960s—she's examined 85 graffiti. Some were greetings from friends, carefully incised around the edges of frescoes in the home's finest room. In a stairwell, people took turns quoting popular poems and adding their own clever twists. In other places, the graffiti include drawings: a boat, a peacock, a leaping deer.

The 19th century effort to document ancient graffiti notwithstanding, scholars have historically ignored the phenomenon. The prevailing attitude was expressed by August Mau in 1899, who wrote, "The people with whom we should most eagerly desire to come into contact, the cultivated men and women of the ancient city, were not accustomed to scratch their names upon stucco or to confide their reflections and experiences to the surface of a wall." But Benefiel's observations show the opposite. "Everyone was doing it," she says.

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