*The Philosophies of Rome: or, the Pleasures of Wisdom*

Dr. Ryan J. Johnson

**The Great Hellenic Debate**

During the first weeks of our course, we will look at the Hellenistic period. This marks the displacement of the philosophical center of the ancient western world from Athens to Rome. This does not mean that the philosophical center shifted from one city to another, but instead that philosophy was decentered, and thereby disseminated into various cities in the Roman world. Several cities – Rome, Herculaneum, Syria, Rhodes, Alexandria, etc. – now housed vibrant collections of philosophical schools. Our first task this semester will be to recreate these vibrant communities by hosting a lively debate in which we will divide into our three schools of philosophy and engage in intense philosophical exchanges. We will together set the terms and topics of the debate. If we like, we can hold this debate in a public forum so that others may come and pose questions to us. Your grade for this will depend on your performance and the writing of a corresponding 2-3 page summary of the main points that you plan to offer in your debate.