This class meets with another section of CLAS-C 308.

CLAS C308 Roman Law investigates how effectively Roman law encouraged “good” behavior and discouraged “bad” behavior. More broadly, the class examines how the Romans’ legal system was informed by their ideas about “good” and “bad” behavior in ethical, emotional, and economic terms. How well did law integrate the sometimes conflicting priorities that are summed up in the contrast between good and bad? In this class, students learn about Roman law and practice legal reasoning by studying theft and delict (wrongful damage to private property—roughly equivalent to the modern law of torts). These areas of law offer wide scope for both “good” and “bad” behavior because they involve personal responsibility, social morality, and economic interest. The course is taught by case book method, oral and written analysis of legal cases from the Roman world. Through studying these legal cases, students investigate how Roman law defined “good” and “bad” behavior as well as problems or contradictions in the legal rules. For example, it can’t be good when my neighbor demolishes part of my house, and yet in some circumstances Roman law allowed or even endorsed this “bad” behavior. Or when a doctor makes a mistake in surgery, the law might not consider this “bad” though of course the patient could feel otherwise. Or when several people steal something together, they might not all get the same penalty. Cases like these are studied using the case book method, in-depth oral and written analysis, along with an overview of Roman law. Written work includes quizzes, short essays, and a long paper.

Professor Bannon’s interests include Roman law, history, and rhetoric. In recent years, she has taught courses that build on her research, including Roman historical writing, Cicero, and Roman Law.