

# LATN 200-02—Directed Readings: Lucan's *Civil War*

.25 Course

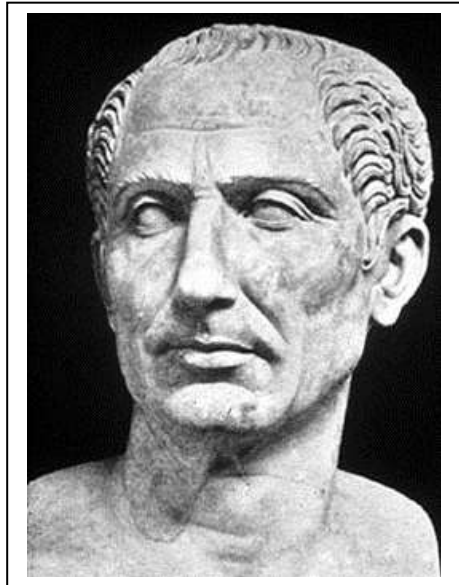
Spring Semester

Monday 4:00-4:50 PM (tentative time—can be adjusted if necessary)

Instructor: Dr. Bob Simmons

When a nation is fighting against itself, can *anyone* actually win?

That is the question at the heart of Lucan's fictionalized account of the Roman Civil War between Caesar and Pompey, from a century before Lucan's time. War and victory are deglamorized; the emphasis is on the personal toll of war, both to the victors and to the defeated. There are numerous depictions of brutal wounds in battle, and there is a vivid depiction of a witch forcefully reviving an unwilling corpse to



learn the future from him for the benefit of one of the combatants. The only ones who “win” when countrymen are fighting one another are those who manage to detach themselves from the conflict and do not debase themselves by taking up arms against those they should support.

Lucan's inspiration for this fictionalized history comes from his own times: living under the reign of Nero, he well understood actions from powerful figures that selfishly worked against the nation's best interests.

His *Civil War* is a daring critique of Nero's oppression of his own people, in which, as in the civil war of a century before, the loser was Rome.

