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Featured Piece

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Featured Piece

Abstract

This year's feature piece was written by Professor Kathryn Whitcomb who is new to Gettysburg College's Department of Classics. In addition to Classics courses, she has taught courses that have been cross-listed with the History Department and thus adds to the diversity that make the historical field so great and broadens the horizons of historical scholarship to her students.

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Professor Kathryn Whitcomb

When I was a child my life's ambition was to be a super-hero. There was something infinitely appealing about the prospect of helping vulnerable people threatened in dark alleys by vicious predators. By the time I was in high school my dream of helping people in need took on the more realistic goal of becoming a psychologist. I entered college, enrolled in Psych 101 and, on a whim, signed up for Latin. After one semester of Latin, I was hooked on the Classical world; its history, the languages, the facets of the culture that will remain forever somewhat mysterious due to the passage of time and loss of evidence. While being a history professor is a far cry from a caped crusader, I do believe that the study and teaching of history makes a valuable contribution to society. The exploration and better understanding of other peoples and cultures, particularly the treatment and experience of marginalized groups within those cultures, guides us not only towards a better understanding of ourselves and the ways that we interact with each other, but also to a

sense of shared humanity. Many of the problems faced by peoples in the ancient world are ones that we still grapple with today: How do I reconcile love of country with criticism of the government? What qualities does a “good” person possess? What role does religion play in my relationships with individuals and the broader community? Will I ever recover from the heartache I feel now over the loss of a lover? The beauty of studying ancient history, in my opinion, is that it provides us with a distance that allows for a more critical approach, while at the same time demonstrating just how common some problems are to all humans, even humans as far removed from us in space and time as the ancient Romans and Greeks.