Classics 360H: Disasters and Disaster Narratives in Classical Antiquity

Fall 2017
TuTh 11:30-12:45
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This course will examine the ways in which the Greeks and Romans conceived of, coped with, recovered from and described disasters. We will begin with Walter Lord’s classic account of the Titanic, A Night to Remember. We will focus on three kinds of disasters- the sack of one’s city with concomitant loss of life, home, and freedom; plague; and civil war. Finally, we will study the best-documented disaster of classical antiquity, the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE. The reading will be primary sources and will be drawn from epic, tragedy, history, philosophy, letters, and inscriptions. We will also study the archaeological evidence from Pompeii and Herculaneum. There will be a midterm, a final, short in-class writing assignments, and a final paper. Some background in Classics is recommended but not required.

*Image Credit to:*

Title: Eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, 1776

Artist/creator: "Fabris, Peter (Peter Fabris)", Naples, 1776

Credit/Source: The British Library Board, Tab.435.a.15.(1). 4th plate from end