

It is a notorious fact that the vast majority of literary sources that recount the history of early or mid-republican Rome are themselves highly opinionated products of the first century BCE, which has meant that those who teach Roman history at the college and university level have increasingly had to address the use of the material evidence provided by archaeology in their courses. For while there can be only modest hopes for the recovery of new relevant literature or inscriptions, the towns and countryside of modern Italy, despite the slowing pace of development, continue to produce new archaeological materials almost routinely. The problem is how to make use of these disparate sources for the benefit of students. The historian, following the ancient texts, must to a considerable extent be event-oriented, while the new developments in archaeological theory and practice in recent years have made that phrase practically a focus for criticism.

In this presentation I propose to take a different tack. There is too much useful information from archaeology to ignore in the study of earlier Roman history, but there are equally problems and pitfalls to avoid in handling it. I will discuss a few examples of issues prominent in the relevant texts bearing on the history of Rome from the sixth to third centuries to which archaeology can contribute. These will include the innumerable numbers of Volscians threatening Rome and Latium for which the excavations of Satricum will be in play; questions of class relations in the fifth and fourth centuries for which the twelve tables and the archaeology of burial will be reviewed; and finally archaeological evidence bearing on Roman treaties with Carthage and commercial exchange in the fourth and third centuries, contentious items in the sources, will be presented. These and other examples that might be instanced are intended to give students with no previous exposure to ancient history a better sense of the variety of relevant materials that are available for such study. But this exercise, which will require projection facilities, will not go beyond the limits of the *utile*. Thus, the archaeological investigation of Satricum has produced evidence for its fall to the Volscians, the cemeteries of Latium have been studied in connection with sumptuary restrictions associated with the early Roman legal codes, and evidence relating to maritime trade may be used to gauge Romano-Carthaginian treaties of understanding in the western Mediterranean.