



Seminar

**DAVID KONSTAN**

Professor of Classics, New York University

*When Rulers Become Gods:  
Art and the Construction of the Imperial Self*

Thursday, 15 May, 4:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
[www.swedishcollegium.se](http://www.swedishcollegium.se)

The seminar is open to all interested scholars.

The seminar is part of the Bernhard Karlgren Programme workshop "The Arts of Imperial Portraiture and the Cultural Construal of the Self" which is held on 15 May. Those scholars who would like to attend the whole workshop should please contact [Maria.Odengrund@swedishcollegium.se](mailto:Maria.Odengrund@swedishcollegium.se) for further information.

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## ABOUT DAVID KONSTAN

David Konstan's research focuses on ancient Greek and Latin literature, especially comedy and the novel, and classical philosophy. In recent years, he has investigated the emotions and value concepts of classical Greece and Rome, and has written books on friendship, pity, the emotions, and forgiveness. He has also written on ancient physics and atomic theory, and on literary theory. Among his recent publications are *Before Forgiveness: The Origins of a Moral Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Konstan's B.A. was in mathematics. In his senior year of college, he began ancient Greek and Latin. In 1967, he obtained his Ph.D in Classics from Columbia University. He taught at Wesleyan University from 1967 to 1987, and at Brown University from 1987 to 2010. In 2010 he joined the faculty at New York University.

Konstan has held visiting appointments in New Zealand, Scotland, Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, Australia, and Egypt, among other places. He serves on the editorial boards of numerous journals around the world. He has been President of the American Philological Association, and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has been awarded NEH, ACLS, and Guggenheim fellowships, among others.

## ABSTRACT

How did images, such as statues, and verbal representations of emperors influence the self-conception of emperors in classical Greece and Rome, and more particular the idea that they were in some sense divine? Using a few case studies, I discuss Augustus came to think of an insult against his majesty as a crime, how poets imagined the Greek rulers in Egypt as both human beings and gods (and how this tradition might have been transported to Rome), and, finally, how artists and writers sought to temper the omnipotence of emperors with a doctrine of clemency – and why this strategy might prove to be double-edged.