



THE EIGHTH ANNUAL
JAMES M. MAY
LECTURE IN CLASSICS
ST. OLAF COLLEGE



JAMES M. MAY

Jim May retired in 2017 after teaching at St. Olaf for 40 years. He was Provost and Dean of the College (2002-11) and Kenneth O. Bjork Distinguished Professor (2014-17).

May graduated from Kent State University with a B.S. in Latin Education and English; he went on to earn a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the author of many articles on classical rhetoric and Latin pedagogy, and of several books: *Trials of Character: The Eloquence of Ciceronian Ethos*, an annotated translation (co-authored with Jakob Wisse) of Cicero's *On the Ideal Orator*, *A Cicero Reader*, *38 Latin Stories*, and *46 Stories in Classical Greek* (the last two co-authored with Anne Groton). In addition, he edited *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric* (2002). His most recent book, *How to Win an Argument: An Ancient Guide to the Art of Persuasion* (Princeton University Press, 2016), has been translated into ten different languages!

Former President of the Classical Association of the Middle West and South and the Classical Association of Minnesota, May held two NEH Fellowships and directed two NEH Summer Seminars for School Teachers. He has served the American Philological Association (now the Society for Classical Studies) in a number of capacities, including on the Board of Directors, as Vice President for Education, and as Vice President for Professional Matters. He won the APA's Award for Excellence in the Teaching of the Classics in 1986 and the Sears-Roebuck Foundation Teaching Excellence and Campus Leadership Award in 1991; he was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from Eta Sigma Phi, the national Classics honor society, in 2019.

May has visited Greece 40 times and rowed on the crew of the trireme *Olympias*. He restores antique trucks, cars, and tractors, competes in handball, and grows grapes to make his own wine. He has constructed houses, harpsichords, lyres, a bouzouki, and a violin. He enjoys performing Gregorian chant, singing in the Renaissance chamber choir that his wife Donna directs, and entertaining their five grandchildren.

JON SOLOMON

The Eighth Annual James M. May Lecture in Classics, "*Ben-Hur: Avatar of American Popular Consumer Culture*," will be delivered on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in Viking Theater (Buntrock Commons) by Dr. Jon Solomon, Robert D. Novak Chair and Professor of Classics, Medieval Studies, and Media and Cinema Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Solomon received his B.A. (Classics) from the University of Chicago and his M.A. (Greek) and Ph.D. (Classics) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he played handball with fellow graduate student Jim May. In 2005, after teaching at the University of Colorado, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Arizona, he moved to the University of Illinois and has taught there ever since. He has won many an accolade for his teaching, including the APA's Award for Excellence in the Teaching of the Classics (1983).

Solomon's scholarly interests are wide-ranging. He has written books and articles on everything from Ptolemy's *Harmonics* and ancient Greek musical theory (he enlisted Jim May to build him a replica of a tortoise-shell lyre) to ancient Roman sauces and pastry (for the details, consult his cookbook, *Ancient Roman Feasts and Recipes Adapted for the Modern Kitchen* [E.A. Seemann, 1977]); from the poetry of Homer, Hesiod, and Sophocles to the classical tradition in opera; from ancient Greek medicine (he helped identify "The Thucydides Syndrome" for the Center for Disease Control) to cinema studies, a subfield that he helped create with his pioneering book *The Ancient World in the Cinema* (Yale University Press, revised edition, 2001). He co-edited *Ancient Worlds in Film and Television: Gender and Politics* (Brill, 2013).

Other popular works by Solomon include *The Complete Three Stooges* (C3 Entertainment, 2001) and—most relevant for this lecture—one of Jim May's favorites, *Ben-Hur: The Original Blockbuster* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016). Solomon is currently completing his three-volume edition and translation of Boccaccio's *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* for the I Tatti Renaissance Library (Harvard University Press).