

Opponent's Assessment on Bachelor Degree Thesis
Of the study program Liberal Arts and Humanities (FHS UK)

Uriel Kantor:

The *Populares* and Clodius Publius Pulcher of the Late Roman Republic in the Context of Modern Populism

This thesis is both solid and innovative. It takes an exciting subject and approaches it systematically. It is well written and brings new observations.

After the introduction describing the aims, methodology and sources, the first chapter problematizes the modern notion of populism. The student performs here a balanced critical evaluation of existing theories and concludes with defining nine characteristics of populism. The second chapter is an overview of the history of *populares* in ancient Rome, which the third chapter focuses on the life of the selected hero, Publius Clodius Pulcher. The student relies mostly on secondary sources, with occasional quotes from the primary sources (but I suspect he is taking those over from the secondary ones). The most innovative is the fourth chapter, in which the nine characteristics of populism are applied to Clodius's life. The student here performs a sound critical analysis and comes up with new results – which is rare (and not compulsory) in a B.A. thesis. In the end, he sums up his observations in a well-arranged table and adds a sound conclusion.

The student managed to find a truly exciting theme and succeeded in treating it thoroughly. This is a rare occurrence and I am truly impressed by his achievement. My only substantial criticism concerns referencing: there is an established system of referring to classical sources that include book, section and line, and that should definitely be followed. When referring to secondary sources, the student very frequently uses only a chapter number, not page number, even when using direct quotations. That is a mistake.

More importantly, a more detailed critical assessment of the sources used would be in place, especially the primary ones. All that the student tells on this matter is:

“Of the primary sources, Cicero is the most common source, yet not the most reliable, due to his contemporary personal enmity with Clodius himself. In his letters, primarily to his friend Atticus, we find that Cicero divulges his opinions of his enemy's deeds, through which we learn much of the information we now know about Clodius. Thus, to create a faithful narrative, one must take what Cicero says with a grain of salt. To further build upon the story of Clodius, Cassius Dio, Plutarch, Sallust, and Appian are referred to. These historians belong to a different era; thus, there is less reason to think that they would have been too biased in their presentation of the facts.”

Every author is certainly biased in some way and it would be in place to discuss their individual biases in more detail rather than simply saying that the fact they lived in a different era makes them view the events more objectively.

During the defense, I suggest the student performs the source assessment. I also suggest he explains his conclusions in more detail, especially the implications of the fact that in two of the criteria, modern populism turned out inapplicable to Clodius. What can be made out of that finding?

This thesis is an excellent example of a well-defined and well-managed theme. It was a pleasure for me to read it and I congratulate the student to this achievement. I recommend this thesis to the defense and suggest to evaluate it as **excellent**.

In Brno, August 9, 2022

Lucie Doležalová