President Trump's election, the nature of his appeals to the public and some of his behavior have prompted some discussions of "Caesarism": the term used by Antonio Gramsci for nations turning to a "strong leader" who offers a return to national glory and escape from the disorders of a failing political system. It's a nice term to symbolize the gravest worries about the consequences of current political trends. But what might we learn if we take the allusion seriously, and think about the classical examples?

We might, first, think that President Trump is very different from Julius Caesar – who was, after all, an established political leader with a long record of service (and a literary stylist in more than 140 characters). We might carefully compare the political contexts of Caesars' and Trump's rises, including the failures of existing elites in each system and the tensions within republics that have already begun, in some ways, to act like empires. Considering Roman emperors might also encourage thinking about courts (or White Houses) - the rivalries within them and questions of loyalty and competence. And we might pay close attention to the challenges and cleavages that offer opportunities for takeovers by strong leaders – such as of Athens by Peisistratos.

So there is lots to think about, and we can do so with Tim Wutrich, a specialist in ancient Rome, with comments by Rachel Sternberg, whose work focuses on ancient Greece.

The Friday Public Affairs Discussion Lunch is an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, emeriti and other members of our communities to learn and question each other about public policy issues at the international, national, and local levels. Faculty and other speakers share their research and experience to get beyond the headlines and repetition in the mass media, and the wild rumors of the internet. Lunch is brown bag, but cookies and some beverages are provided by the Center for Policy Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences. http://fridaylunch.case.edu/