

# **Bodily Pathology and Unhealthy Politics in Alcaeus**

Presented by the Workshop in Ancient Mediterranean  
Studies



Ippokratis Kantzios, Ph.D.,  
Peter and Sophia Kourmolis Associate  
Professor of Greek Language and  
Literature,  
University of South Florida

Thursday, October 18, 2018  
3:00pm in Curtin Hall, room 866

Attic red-figure vase showing  
Sappho and Alcaeus, c. 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE

Alcaeus' attacks on Pittacus are not limited to his actions alone, but also extend to his appearance, generating a discourse in which a flawed body and a flawed regime are tightly intertwined. The poet on the one hand exploits the body of his opponent to discredit him and gain political advantage; on the other, he expresses the deep crisis within his own camp that prompts him to project its anxieties and impotence onto the other side through images of disease and deformity. This projection must have been a survival mechanism, an apotropaic gesture to ward off somber perceptions of the future of the *hetaireia*, while placing Pittacus' prospects in an unfavorable light.

WAMS is supported by the departments of Anthropology, Art History, and the program in Classics within the department of Foreign Languages and Literature at UWM, and the History Department at Marquette University.