

# Byzantium: The First Christian Empire

**HIS 380**

**Fall 2017**

## **Topics in the Near and Middle East**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:15, CURRY 312

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:30pm, by appointment

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## **Description:**

What is Late Antiquity? When does it begin? How similar or different was the Byzantine Empire from its Roman predecessor? This course will introduce students to the periods of Late Antiquity and Byzantium (337-850 C.E.) as a crucial period of history that witnessed large changes on every level of society in the transition from the classical to medieval worlds. The course will start with the Emperor Constantine and continue until the after the Age of Iconoclasm. The class will address larger topics in classical and early medieval history and question traditional views on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the Dark Ages, and Byzantium's relations with Islamic and 'barbarian' lands. The approach will be interdisciplinary, studying Byzantine political, socio-economic, and religious history. We will study topics in early Christianity, pilgrimage, and monasticism, urbanism, agriculture, and trade using a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, with equal emphasis on art, archaeology, and texts from the Byzantine Empire. There is no prerequisite for this course.

## **Student Learning Objectives:**

Students will develop a broad understanding of the first five centuries of the Byzantine Empire and its transformations from the fourth to ninth centuries by focusing on its internal systems, relationship with foreign powers, religious and political developments, and cultural production including art and archaeology.

Students will also express understanding and be able to critically challenge historical assumptions of key concepts and theories that contributed to ideas of the fall of the Roman empire, the Dark Ages, and relations with Islamic lands.

Students will broaden their methodological basis for learning history through interdisciplinary approaches and global studies and implement it in writing.

**Requirements:**

There will be two 75 minute classes per week. Each class will consist of lecture and discussion of readings. Please read the assigned materials during the week assigned and come to classes prepared with questions and observations. Attendance is required, as lectures will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible for on exams.

No prerequisite is required to take this course.

**Readings:**

Readings for each week are given on the attached syllabus. Readings listed under the lecture mean you will have read those *in advance* for that lecture day. Weekly assignments consist of readings from selected works drawn from your texts and additional articles on e-reserve. ***Please come prepared and able to comment on the readings in class.*** In addition to the assigned readings, supplemental readings have been placed on reserve and will be useful for those wishing to explore subjects (particularly for papers) in detail.

Required text: (used and new copies available from bookstore)

Averil Cameron, *Later Roman Empire* [LRE]

Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity* [MW]

Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* [WLA]

Glenn Bowersock, et al. *Interpreting Late Antiquity* [ILA]

*\*you can also search for these books used online, if you wish*

Highly Recommended text:

*Cambridge Ancient History*, Vols. 13 and 14. [CAH]

Study aids, though not a requirement for the course, might be useful in understanding historical backgrounds to the course, preparing for exams, researching the final paper, and providing useful basic reference information for Islamic history and civilization. They include:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20021213220105/http://www.acs.ohio-state.edu/history/isthmia/teg/hist60701/chron.htm>

**Requirements:**

Class Participation: The course will be survey Byzantine history and archaeology and look at a variety of primary sources which we will discuss in detail. The classes then are not only lectures but also discussions and will only work well, naturally, with your class participation which will be graded.

Summaries: For almost every week (twelve weeks), you will write a one sided, single spaced, summary of *each* reading for that day. Be sure to include the author and title of the work, what the author is arguing, a *brief* synopsis of the evidence used, and your own opinion of how the work relates to what we have learned in class or whether you agree/disagree with the author. One week you will be responsible to present your readings (Week 7 on Cities)

Examinations: There will be two examinations for the course. These will consist of a number of brief slide identifications, short answer, and essay questions. Images will be places in a power point file on Blackboard at several points throughout the semester. Note that not all images seen in class and not all the same images viewed in class may appear on Blackboard due to copyright issues.

Short Paper Assignment: You will write two short summary/reaction papers (4-6 pages). The first is about a chapter from *Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 13, the second is about a chapter from *Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 14. Papers will summarize the selected chapter and draw on your own ideas. **You should consider information from lectures and readings and incorporate outside sources.** These two papers are in lieu of a mid-term and final exam.

Final Project Assignment: The final project takes the place of a final research paper and final exam. You will design an exhibition of Byzantine art on any topic of your choice within the periods covered by this course. More details will come later in the semester. You will propose a topic by Week 12 and submit it to me and present it to the class. The topic should have the title, theme, outline, and at least 4 works of art/architecture. The purpose of the assignment is for you to: 1) work with material culture as primary sources and incorporate secondary scholarship, 2) implement research skills and access resources, and 3) to develop your ability to communicate in written forms. The exhibit will include three written components and must contain at least three non-Internet references.

Grading will be as follows:

Attendance and class participation (10%)

Summaries (10%)

Short paper 1 (25%)

Short Paper 2 (25%)

Final project proposal (5%)

Final project assignment (25%).

Attendance is mandatory and I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. You may miss three classes during the semester, after which your class participation grade will be docked 3 points for each absence. If you miss more than six classes I will drop your final grade by three points and /or reserve the right to drop you from the course. All assignments must be turned in on time; those turned in late will not receive credit. If you must miss an exam you must let me know in writing *before* the date and there will be a make-up exam, otherwise you will receive a zero.

**Class Rules:**

Please do not come late to class as it disrupts the class for both your fellow classmates and for me. Cellular phones *must* be silenced or turned off in the classroom. If you disrupt class by talking on the phone or text messaging, you will be asked to leave. Laptops may *not* be used in the classroom. Please note that plagiarism (this includes copying internet text for papers), cheating, and other violations of academic integrity are serious offences and will not be tolerated in the class or anywhere else in the University.

The best way to contact me is by email. Please note that I will only check and respond to emails Monday through Friday during the work day; i.e. don't expect me to respond to an email at 2 am on a Saturday.

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

Enrollment in this course and submission of each written assignment constitute students' acceptance of UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy. Make sure you read and understand the policy, which is available at: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>

*If you have any questions about any aspect of this policy, including what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the professor.*

UNCG's Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "representing the words of another, as one's own in any academic exercise" (<http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>). Plagiarism includes both 1) failure to cite sources for ideas and words you use; and 2) submitting all or parts of someone else's work as your own. Be sure to cite fully all material you use, whether you are paraphrasing or using a direct quote.

**Lecture and Reading Schedule:****Part 1: A Christianized Roman Empire? (The Fourth and Fifth Centuries)****Week 1: Introductions and Frameworks**

Aug. 15. Introduction. What is Late Antiquity? What is Byzantine? Concepts, Scope, Interpretations, and Geography

Aug. 17. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire - A Rupture or a Process of Transformation?

*Secondary Sources:*

- Brown, WLA, pp. 7-22
- Cameron, LRE, pp. 1-12, 30-46
- Cameron, MW, 1-11
- Cameron, "Remaking the Past," ILA 1-20

**Week 2: The Age of Constantine**

Aug. 22. The House of Constantine I

*Primary Sources:*

Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 10.96-97  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pliny1.asp>

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, Chapters XXI-XXXII, LXI-LXIV  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vita-constantine.asp>

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, LRE, pp. 47-65

Cameron, MW, 12-15

S. Lieu, "From history to legend and legend to history: The medieval and Byzantine transformation of Constantine's Vita" in S. Lieu et al, *Constantine: History, Historiography, and Legend* (2002), pp. 136-176. [avail. as e-book via UNCG Library Catalog Worldcat]

**[summary 1 due]**

Aug. 24. The Later Constantinians and their Religious Crises

*Primary Sources*

Ammianus Marcellinus, *Later Roman Empire*, Bks. 20.4-Book 23.1, 25.4, pp. 186-256, 295-298, Penguin Classics.

<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Ammian/home.html>

Julian, *Against the Galilaeans*, Book 1

[http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian\\_apostate.galileans\\_1\\_text.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/julian_apostate.galileans_1_text.htm)

Julian, *Misopogon* [viewed partially in class]

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/julian-mispogon.asp>

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, LRE, 85-98

Cameron, MW, 15-16

**Week 3: The Heirs of Constantine**

Aug. 29. Religious Trends, Receding Paganism and The Triumph of New Religious Sensitivities

*Primary Source:*

First Council of Nicaea, documents and Synodal letter

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3801.htm>

*Secondary Sources:*

Brown, World, pp. 48-95

Cameron, LRE, pp. 66-84

Cameron, MW, pp. 29-38

R. Lim, "Christian Triumph and Controversy," in *ILA*, pp. 196-218.

Aug. 31. Religious Trends in Artistic traditions

*Primary Sources:* [art and monuments viewed in class]

*Secondary Sources:*

R. Cormack, "Chapter 1: Rome with a Christian Face? Early Byzantine Art 330-527." In *Byzantine Art* (2000), pp. 1-37.

C. Mango, "Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder," *DOP* 17 (1963), pp. 53-75

H. Saradi-Mendelovici, "Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries," *DOP* 44 (1990), pp. 47-61.

[summary 2 due]

#### **Week 4: Contrasting Ages in The Late 4th Century**

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Sept. 5. Valens and Theodosius I: Contrasting Ages

#### **[Age of Empires, part 1]**

*Primary Source:*

Ammianus Marcellinus, *LRE*, Books 26.6, 28.1-2, 31.1, 31.12-31.16

<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Ammian/home.html>

*Codex Theodosianus: On Religion* [various]

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/codex-theod1.asp>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/theodcodeXVI.html>

*Secondary Source:*

Cameron, *LRE*, 99-112

Cameron, *MW*, 16-19

Sept. 7: Theodosian Art

*Primary Source:* [art and monuments viewed in class]

*Secondary Source:*

Cameron, *LRE*, pp. 151-169

[summary 3 due]

#### **Week 5: Political Instability and Cultural Efflorescence in the Fifth Century**

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Sept. 12. Politics and Society in the Fifth Century

*Primary Source:*

*Codex Theodosianus (On Religion)* [various]

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/codex-theod1.asp>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/theodcodeXVI.html>

*Secondary Sources:*

Kaegi, "Conclusions," in *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome*, pp. 224-255  
Cameron, MW, 20-38, 39-57

Goffart, "An Empire Unmade: Rome, A.D. 300-600" in *Rome's Fall and After*, pp. 33-44

Brown, MWA, 115-126, 137-148

Cameron, 1-19, 20-30, 39-57

**[Age of Empires part 2]**

**[summary 4 due]**

Sept. 14. Art of the Fifth Century

*Primary Sources:* [art and monuments viewed in class]

*Secondary Sources:*

H. Maguire, "The Cycle of Images in the Church 122-151

**[Short Paper 1 due]**

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**Part II: The Heights of Empire (The Sixth Century)**

**Week 6: The Age of Justinian**

Sept. 19. The Age of Justinian, Internal and External Problems

*Primary Sources:*

Procopius, *Secret History*, chapters 6, 8, 9, 11-19.

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/procop-anec.asp>

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, MWA, pp. 104-127

Brown, WLA, pp. 126-135, 150-159

A. Brown, "Justinian, Procopius, and Deception: Literary ties, imperial politics, and the archaeology of sixth-century Greece, 355-369

A. Cameron, *Circus Factions*, TBA, from 74-192

Sept. 21. Justinianic Art

*Primary Sources* [art and monuments viewed in class]

Procopius, *Buildings* [on Hagia Sophia]

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/procop-deaed1.asp>

*Secondary Sources*

R. Cormack, "Chapter 2: In the Shadow of St. Sophia," *Byzantine Art*, pp. 37-74. E.

R. Ousterhout, "The Holy Space: Architecture Serves the Liturgy" in *Heaven on Earth* (1998), pp. 81-120

[summary 5 due]

### **Week 7: Society and the Other**

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Sept. 26. Social Conditions, Trends, Challenges

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, MW, 58-83, 128-145

Brown, MWA, 22-48

S. Tougher, "Byzantine Eunuchs: An Overview, with Special Reference to Their Creation and Origin," *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, 168-184.

R. MacMullen, "Late Roman Slavery," in *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 36, H. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1987), pp. 359-382

[summary 6 due]

Sept. 28. The Others, Frontiers, Ethnic Identity, and Barbarians, Byzantine Fortifications

*Primary Sources:*

Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire*, Book 31.2-31.9, pp. 410-427, Penguin Classics, <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Ammian/home.html>

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, LRE, 133-150

Geary, "Barbarians and Ethnicity," in *ILA*, pp. 107-129

Goffart, "The Theme of 'The Barbarian Invasions,'" in *Late Antique and Modern Historiography in Goffart, Rome's Fall and After*, 11-33

### **Week 8: The Religious Landscape: Pilgrimage and Monasticism**

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Oct. 3: Saints, Monks, and Pilgrims

Guest Lecturer with Dr. Derek Krueger, Religious Studies



*Primary Source:*

St. Daniel the Stylite, *Life* (c. 409-493), Sections 1-30.  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/dan-stylite.asp>

Apa Abraham, *Typika*, Seventh Century, pp. 55-58.  
<http://www.doaks.org/resources/publications/doaks-online-publications/byzantine-monastic-foundation-documents/typ007.pdf/view>

*Secondary Sources:*

Brown, WLA, 96-112

Brown, *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity*, pp. 103-152

B. Caseau, "Sacred Landscapes" in *ILA*, pp. 21-59

A. M. Talbot, *Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries*, 113-127.

S. Coleman and J. Elsner, "The Pilgrim's Progress: Art, architecture and ritual Movement in Sinai, 73-89

[summary 7 due]

Oct. 5. **NO CLASS – Instructor at Conference**

**Week 9: The Empire in 600**

Oct. 10. **NO CLASS-FALL BREAK**

Oct. 12. The Deteriorating Situation in the Late Sixth Century and East-West Differences

*Primary Sources:*

The History of Theophylact Simocatta, trans. by M. and M. Whitby

The History of Menander the Guardsman, trans. by R. C Blockley

Evagrius Scholastikos

*Secondary Sources:*

Brown, WLA, pp. 160-188

Liebeschuetz, "The Historians' Post-Mortem," *Barbarians and Bishops*, 236-52

W. Goffart, "An Empire Unmade," in W. Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* 33-?

Kaegi, *Byzantine Military Unrest*, 64-119, esp. 89-119.

[summary 8 due]

**Week 10: Cities and Urban Experiences**

Oct. 17. Constantinople

*Primary Sources:* [arts and monuments viewed in class and TBA]

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, MW, 146-167.  
Cameron, LRE, pp. 170-186  
Brown, WLA, pp. 137-149  
Kelly, "Empire Building," in ILA, pp. 170-195

Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, 1-11, 400-416.  
Debate btw. Liebeschuetz, in L. Lavan, *Recent Research on Late Antique Urbanism* vol. 42 (2001) JRA SS.  
S. Bassett, "The Antiquities in the Hippodrome of Constantinople" 87-96  
S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, Chapter 1  
J. Crow, "The Infrastructures of a Great City: Earth, walls, and water in *Late Antique Constantinople*, 251-285.

Oct. 19: Late Antique Cities in Transition

Individual Readings (pick one) and Short Presentation

Chapters from L. Zavagno, *Cities in Transition*

Chapters from *Cities of Late Antiquity in Asia Minor*

W. Liebeschuetz, *The End of the Ancient City*, 1-48  
C. Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine, and Turkish City*, 46-95  
S. Provost, *City Walls in Late Antique Macedonia: The Case of Phillippi*, 123-136  
J. Crow, *Fortifications and Urbanism in Late Antiquity* pp. 89-106  
W. Bowden and J. Mitchell, *The Palace at Butrint*, pp. 455-76.  
L. Lavan, *Recent Research in Late Antique Urbanism*, 9-26.

[summary 9 due]

[Short Paper 2 due]

\*LECTURE: Dr. Betsy Bolman, "The Nursing Virgin, Mary in Early Byzantine Art."

This lecture is required and takes the place of the canceled class on Oct. 5. Please make arrangements to attend as soon as possible. If you cannot, please speak to me well enough ahead of time. A 3-5 page paper of 1) summary of the lecture, 2), the discussion following, and 3) your own thoughts as it relates to what we have studied in class and in readings will count as EXTRA CREDIT.

**Week 11: Trade and the Countryside**

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Oct. 24. Economy, trade, markets, merchants

*Primary Sources:* [viewed in class]

Procopius [*on the silk industry*]  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/550byzsilk.asp>

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, LRE, pp. 113-132  
Cameron, MW, 84-103  
M. Mango, "Byzantine trade: local, regional, interregional, and international, 3-14  
B. Pitarakis, "Daily Life at the Marketplace in Late Antiquity and Byzantium, 399-426  
D. Jacoby, Silk Economics and Cross Cultural Artistic Interaction, Byzantium, the  
Muslim World, and the Christian World

Oct. 26. The Transformation of the Late Antique to Medieval Rural Landscape

Henry Maguire, "The Good Life," in ILA, pp. 238-257  
Yizhar Hirschfeld, Habitat, in ILA, pp. 258-272  
G. Tate, The Syrian Countryside during the Roman Era, pp. 55-71

[summary 10 due]

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### **Part III: From Late Antiquity to Byzantine (Seventh-Ninth Centuries)**

#### **Week 12: The End of Antiquity? Iconoclasm and Apologetics**

Oct. 31. Seventh-Century Conceptual Shocks and Apocalypticism. Apologies and Polemics

*Primary Sources:*

Hoyland, R. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*. Excerpts on Apocalypse and Apologetics.

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, MW, pp. 168-190

**[Final Project Proposal due including: title, theme, outline, at least 4 works of art/architecture due; 5 Minute Presentations of proposals to class]**

Nov 2. Constantine VII and Iconoclasm

*Primary Sources:*

Iconoclast Council of Constantinople, 754  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/icono-cncl754.asp>

John of Damascus, *On Holy Images*, c. 730  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/johndam-icons.asp>

*Secondary Sources:*

R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and its Icons*, Chapter 3  
L. Brubaker, *Icons and Iconomachy*, 323-337  
A. Kartsonis, *The Responding Icon*, 58-80

Schick, R.

[summary 11 due]

### **Week 13: Byzantium and Islam**

Nov. 7. Islamic Conquests in the Seventh and the Frontier to Ninth Centuries

*Primary Sources:*

Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle. R. Hoyland, trans., Section 2

*Secondary Sources:*

Cameron, MW, pp. 191-207

Kennedy, Islam, in ILA, pp. 219-237

Brown, WLA, pp. 189-203

Nov. 9. Muslim Impressions of Byzantium

*Secondary Sources:*

N. Abu el Cheikh, Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs, Chapter 2.

G. Fowden, "Varieties of Religious Communities," in ILA, pp. 82-106

[summary 12 due]

### **Week 14: Individual Meetings**

Nov. 14. Individual Meetings for Final Projects

Nov. 16. **NO CLASS: Instructor at Conference**

### **Week 15: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**

### **Week 16: PRESENTATIONS**

Nov. 28. Presentations of Final Projects [normal class time]

Nov. 30. Reading Day – \*CLASS HELD ONLY IF NEED MORE TIME FOR  
PRESENTATIONS

[Final Projects due]