The End of the Roman Empire

Why did the Roman Empire fall? The best answer is that it didn’t, at least not until the 15th century when the continuous line of Roman emperors came to an end. But the Roman Empire did undergo changes in so many ways in the 4th and 5th centuries that the perception of failure and fall is understandable. What were these changes? What was responsible for them? Why was the Roman world receptive or vulnerable to change? What kind of new society did all the changes produce? To answer these questions, this course investigates the establishment of Christianity and the end of paganism in the Roman Empire, the impact of the foundation of Constantinople as an eastern capital, the settlement within the Roman Empire of many Germanic peoples and the resulting transformations of Roman government, society, and culture, and the military and economic reforms that sought to deal with new conditions.

We will spend weeks 1-7 surveying the history of the Later Roman Empire, examining particular political, social, economic, cultural developments in detail, and gaining familiarity with available primary sources and major secondary works. During this time students will identify research topics and begin research work. During weeks 8-14 we will continue to examine particular aspects of the Late Roman world, but students will have specific, graded research and writing assignments for each of these weeks, culminating in a revised final version of their research papers.

It is expected that students will attend all classes. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in student being dropped from the class.

Required Books

Michael Maas, *Readings in Late Antiquity: A Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. 2010

(available through Jackson Library as an e-book, but since we will be reading the entire text, it is more convenient to have a personal copy)

All other assigned readings are from works available as e-books through Jackson Library

Class Schedule

Reading assignments are to be completed by the time of the class they appear under, with the exception of those assigned for the first class.
8/20  Introduction: The Big Story, Critical Issues, Current Perspectives and Sources

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, Chapters 38 and 71, e-book
Bowersock, “The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome,” Bulletin of the Academy of Arts and Sciences 49.8 (1996) 29-43
Mitchell, *LRE*, Chapt. 1 (pp. 1-14)

8/27  Signposts of Change/4th century

Whitby, *Rome at War AD 293-696*, pp. 7-44
Mitchell, *LRE* pp. 15-107


Pay particular attention to the careers of Diocletian, Constantine, Julian, Valentinian I, and Theodosius. Note also the stages of Christianization in the 4th century and the appearance of various Germanic groups

9/3  5th-6th century

Whitby, *Rome at War*, pp. 44-91


9/10  Government

Mitchell, *LRE*, pp. 165-205
*Readings*, pp. 1-19

9/17  Economy and Society

Mitchell, *LRE*, pp. 325-354

*Readings*, pp. 20-47
9/24 Christianity

Mitchell, LRE, pp. 242-324
Lim, “Christianization, Secularization, and the Transformation of Public Life,” in Phillip Rousseau, A Companion to Late Antiquity, pp. 497-51; Daniel Caner, “‘Not of This World:’ The Invention of Monasticism,” in Rousseau, A Companion to Late Antiquity, pp. 488- 600 ebook Readings, 110-171, 186-192

10/1 Outsiders and Insiders

Mitchell, LRE, pp. 206-241
Vanderpool, “From Empire to Kingdoms in the Late Antique West,” in Rousseau Companion to Late Antiquity, pp. 426-440, e-book

After 10/1, class meetings will deal with topics and sources particularly relevant to the various research topics students have chosen. This is a way that all students can engage in the issues individual students are working on. Since the specific topics are “to be determined” (TBD), they do not appear in the syllabus.

10/8 TBD; Research and Writing: Bibliography/Primary and Secondary Sources

Due: a bibliography comprising at least 6 monograph titles and 6 journal titles and all the primary sources discovered to date; be prepared to discuss process, concerns, and problems

10/15 Fall Break

10/22 TBD; Thesis Statement with Outline

Submit a one-sentence (provisional) thesis statement with an outline sketch of how you plan to develop and prove your thesis, 1-2 pages

10/29 TBD; 1st Paragraph + Outline

Submit a more substantial version of the 10/22 assignment, fashioning a full prose introductory paragraph and fleshing out as fully as possible a paragraph by paragraph sketch (not necessarily full sentence prose) of the whole paper

11/5 TBD; Expanded Outline-- Refine and amplify your 10/29 version
11/12 TBD; Draft 1--Full prose version with citations (in preliminary form)

11/19 TD; Draft 2--Revise Draft 1

11/26 TBD; Complete Final Draft

12/3 –Submit Final Draft; present findings