Course Description and Syllabus

Winter term, 2006/7

This is an introduction, with emphasis on the use of primary sources, to the study of the Later Roman empire from the 3rd to the 10th centuries A.D., focusing on the culture of Late antiquity in Western Europe, the eastern or Byzantine Roman empire in its earlier phases, and the development of Islam and the early Islamic empire. The class meets in Leighton 402 at 5a (M-W 1:50-3:00, F 2:20-3:30), and the format will be flexible, so as to include elements of discussion, slide viewing, and mini-lectures.

The textbooks of the course are described on a separate sheet, "Textbooks for Classics 229."

The principal assignment will be a) to read a selection of primary sources for each class (generally varying from 30 to 60 pages), and b) while reading to keep a running Journal of commentary, reactions, and questions to be written during each reading session. Your journal is an ungraded assignment; and yet it is the principal assignment of the course, the heart and soul of your work. To make our class sessions work, you will need to be scrupulous about doing this assignment faithfully and on time for each class. The journals are to be electronic, handed in before each class period by uploading them on the course page on Moodle. Aim for a page or two of journal writing per class. You needn't write something about every single snippet you read, many of which will be quite short; but I do expect that you will write reflective comments about major topics during each reading session beginning with your preparation for the class on Monday, Sept. 20th. Please turn in your journal entries on the course Moodle page. For more about them please see a separate instruction sheet, “How to Keep your Journal.”

Other assignments: 1) two one-page Irk papers are required (please consult the separate instruction sheet, “How to Write an Irk (Paper”) to be turned in instead of your journal on one day in the 3rd week and one day of the 6th or 7th week, at your choice. 2) There will be a Final Exam with a short factual section and three essays. Here are some optional further assignments. 3) Research Exercises. A separate handout describes many mini-projects which you may choose to do on any day(s) you like as a substitute for the Journal routine (classics majors can use these to help complete your skills portfolios). 4) And finally, you may choose to do a project which you may choose to do on any day(s) you like as a substitute for the Journal routine (classics majors can use these to help complete your skills portfolios).

My office hours this term are M 3:30–5:00, Tu 9:00–10:30, W 9:30–11:00, & Th 2:30–4:00 in LDC 255. If these are inconvenient, please just telephone x 4234 or e-mail to <jbryce> to set up a time that works. Except for my 3a Latin class and occasional other obligations I am likely to be in much of the time.

Schedule of Assignments

Wed, Jan. 3: Introduction: a crash course on basics about the Roman Republic and early Empire.

Fri, Jan. 5: The structure of the Roman Empire. Please prepare by reading a selection of primary documents from Lewis and Reinhold, Roman Civilization II, the Empire, described below (from now on, this textbook will be abbreviated “L&R.”). The goal here is to jump into some primary texts illustrating basic features of the Empire; so as you read please keep in mind the questions below (journal writing is not yet required at this stage):

1. What is the purpose of an emperor? what does he do? and how is his authority maintained? (pages section number ($)/title/description)
   1 general note to ch. I
   3-7 §2 up to “The Break with the Principle of Adoption”
   11-13 §4
   15-19 §6
   19-21 §7 up to “Pliny’s Encomium on Trajan”
   70-73 §§21 - 22 through the inscription from the road to Petra

2. What are the classes within the Empire? how do they function? and how do they relate to one another? (pages section number ($)/title/description)
   41-4 §§12-13 (first two inscriptions only)
   50-55 §15 up to “Citizenship for an Egyptian”
   58-61 §16
   167-8 §48 up to “Wealthy Freedmen”

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§50 through selection from the *Historia Augusta*  
§51

3. **How do cities and municipalities function within the Empire?**

122-3 “Alexandria the Crossroads” & “Rome the Emporium”

140-7 §§39-40 up to “Certificate of Membership”

149-58 §§ 41-3 up to “A Sumptuous Dinner”

231-2 §63

236-8 §65

4. **How does this empire relate to its neighbors?**

31-2 §9 down through the selection from Cassius Dio’s *Roman History* (58 pages)

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**Mon. Jan. 8**  
**Economy, education, and society.** Please read more L&R selections as described below, again keeping certain questions in mind to focus your reading.

5. **What are important features of the economy of the empire?**

   
   (pages section number (§)/title/description)
   
   85-90 §24 up to “The Profitableness of Agriculture”

   288-9 Headnote to §77

   294-5 “Flight from Liturgy”

   307-9 §82 up to “A Census Declaration”

   314-5 “Privileges of the Jews”

6. **How does education in the Empire resemble and differ from education today?**

   
   198-206 §55

7. **What do you think of the quality of life in the later Empire?**

   
   323-4 §87

   329-37 §90

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**Peter Brown, *WLA*.** To make acquaintance with our basic guidebook through the course, Peter Brown’s *The World of Late Antiquity*, please read the Preface and Chapter 1, i.e. pp. 7-21. What are Brown’s main themes, and how as a historian does he illustrate them?

**The 3rd century Crisis, part 1.** Please study L&R chapter 6, pp. 372-388, with sources #104-108. In this material you have a vast variety of ancient primary sources all contributing their little bits. Use your handout Guide to Sources to help keep their individual characteristics distinct. Keep tracking along with your journal, as usual; and as you read and write, think about the issue of appreciating, assimilating, and interpreting all these disparate and unique voices. How do we listen to them attentively, each in its own individual style, with its own peculiar focus and agenda? This attention to and appreciation of unique source-voices constitutes a major project of our course. (53 pages)

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**Wed. Jan. 10: The 3rd century Crisis, part 2.** Please study L&R chapter 6, pp. 388-443, plus Peter Brown’s *WLA*, ch. 2, pp. 22-33. What elements of the crisis strike you as most significant, and how effectively do you think the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine addressed the enormous problems of this period? (61 pages)

**Fri. Jan. 12: The Roman army.** Please study L&R chapter 7. The sources in this batch are of widely divergent time periods, including many from periods well before our official starting date of the third-century; this is necessary to get a complete picture. A question to focus your reading and journal-writing this time might be the following: Can you reconcile the paradox that the famous “Roman Peace” or *Pax Romana* is contiguous with the maintenance of a vast military machine? How do military considerations drive imperial policy? What is the relationship of the military establishment to civilian life? (53 pages)

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**Week III: First Irk Paper due.** On one class day this week at your choice, please turn in an *Irking* on Moodle instead of your regular journal entry. Further information about the craft of *Irking* is available on a separate handout, “How to *Write an Irk* Paper.”

**Mon., Jan. 15:** **Women in the Roman world,** L&R ch. 5. Today’s chapters, again, will require us to go much earlier than our official time period in order to get as complete a picture as possible. The evidence for women is particularly scanty, and as you will note it comes almost entirely from male sources. We live in an era of intense reassessment of how society views women and their roles, and indeed Roman attitudes form a major
factor in the inequities which we are trying to redress; so you might think about how Roman attitudes towards women have shaped those inherited by our society. Good secondary reading for Roman women and family life is Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: men, women, and sexual renunciation in early Christianity* (New York, 1988).

**Roman Law**, L&R ch. 8. This is another area which has had vast impact on contemporary societies. What features of Roman Law seem familiar to you, and what about it seems strange and different?

**4th century society**, WLA ch. 3, pp. 34-47. (57 pages)

**Fri. Jan. 19:** **Enter Christianity.** We continue our study of religion in the LRE mixing in the new element of Christianity. Please study WLA ch. 5, pp. 60-69, L&R pp. 550-582 with sources ##167-176, and finally WLA ch. 6, pp. 70-81. The material involves social, intellectual, and political history; and you will meet new sources including Christian writers, so be sure to keep your handout Source Guide handy. Please be aware that ancient Christianity is extremely different from modern, especially mainstream American Protestantism. Note: a Christian “apologist” is a writer who sought to present and/or defend Christianity to the traditional (“pagan”) intellectual community; the genre is called “apologetics.” Good secondary reading for this assignment and the next two includes a collection of articles edited by Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the fourth century* (Oxford, 1963); chapters XII-XV & XIX-XX in volume XII of the *Cambridge Ancient History*; and a collection of essays by Peter Brown called *Art and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (New York, 1972). Try to think about what continuities there are between traditional Roman religion and Christianity, and also why the latter seemed so dangerous to the guardians of Roman society.

(44 pages)

**Mon. Jan. 22:** **The triumph of Christianity.** Please study L&R pp. 583-599 (sources ##177-182) and 609-618 (#186-190), plus WLA ch. 7, pp. 82-95.

**Imperial coinage.** A different sort of topic for a change, numismatics, the study of coins and their inscriptions: L&R ch. 11, pp. 631-7.

(41 pages)

**Wed. Jan. 24:** **Monasticism and asceticism.** L&R pp. 599-608 (#183-5) and WLA ch. 8, pp. 96-113.

**The end of the Roman west?** L&R pp. 618-630 (#191-4) and Epilogue, pp. 638-9, with WLA ch. 9 & 10, pp. 114-135. How should we sum up the major characteristics of late Roman society in the West before moving on to Byzantium?

(49 pages)

**Fri. Jan. 26:** **Introduction to Byzantium.** Here’s the Byzantine section of the course. Please start with Deno John Geanakoplos’ anthology of sources, *Byzantium*. Study the Prologue (pp. xxxiii-xxxiv) and Introduction (pp. 1-13), which gives a summary of Byzantine history from Constantine to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. From this introductory material, what do you suspect will be the main features of Byzantine society, and how will it differ from the Late Roman society in the West? Also, writing in your journal along the way as before, please study these selections from *Byzantium* Part I, chapter A, “The Imperial Image,” which fall within our period (3rd - 10th centuries), selections 1, 2, 4, 5, 8-9, 12-15; I.B, “Succession to the Throne,” selections 19-21 and 23 (1st two §§ only of 23). Be attentive to the different kinds of sources as before, and comment in your journal accordingly. As you’ll see, this book divides the source passages into topics, and also gives you detailed headnotes; also, some of the same passages that we have read before from L&R will be presented with a different purpose, so you’ll be setting out from already familiar ground. Be sure to take advantage of the chronological *table of emperors* in Appendix A, pp. 449-51, and of the *maps* in Appendix C, pp. 464-70. Appendix B lists the source selections of each Part in chronological order. Then, please study WLA ch. 11, pp. 136-149, plying the map and the chronologies. For your thematic question/direction this time, think about the concept of “Byzantine” vs. “Late Roman.” Is it in fact reasonable to draw this distinction and use two separate terms?

(36 pages)

Wed. Jan. 31:  **Byzantium and Persia at war.** *Byzantium* Part II, ch. A, “The Army,” #67-70, 73, 79; II.B, “The Navy,” #81, 83, 84; II.C, “Diplomacy,” #86-88; plus WLA ch. 13, pp. pp. 160-171. For this military material, it might be well to keep a Peter Brown style question in mind: what continuities as well as changes from the Later Roman Empire can you see both in the military and in foreign policy? does the army have the same civic role within the confines of the empire that we saw in the case of the Roman army?  

**Introduction to the Byzantine (Orthodox) church.** *Byzantium* Part III, ch. A, “The Triumph of Christianity,” #92-94; III.B, “Relationship of Church and State,” #95-102; III.D, “Administration of the Church,” #117-119; III.G, “Churches, Worship, and Hymnody,” #137-141; and III.H, “Relics in Byzantium,” #142-5. It can be particularly difficult for Americans to grasp the fact that the Eastern Orthodox Christianity, as developed from the Byzantine church, is the oldest and most wide spread form of Christianity in history. Certainly this tradition is very far removed from our mainstream Protestantism. What differences do you notice with Christianity insofar as you are familiar with it?  (47 pages)

Fri. Feb. 2:  **Ancient Christian dogma and heresy.** From *Byzantium*, part III, more on what is perhaps the most enduring and influential institution of the Byzantines, their church: ch. C, “The Ecumenical Councils and Dogma,” #106-115; III.E, “Monasticism as an Institution,” #120-122 & 128; III.F, “Monastic Spirituality,” #129-130 & 136; III.I, “Tension between East and West,” #146-149. How can we explain the remarkable fact that what seem like very abstruse questions of theology have major political significance? Can we compare the political importance to the Byzantines of their Christianity to the early attitude of the Romans in the west to their traditional “pagan” religion(s)? Use your handout “Guide to Heresies and Councils” to help with Deno’s chapter C, and read WLA ch. 14, pp. 172-187, for a social and cultural interpretation of these phenomena.  (39 pages)

Mon. Feb. 5:  MID-TERM BREAK; no class.

Week VI-VII: Second Irk Paper due. On one class day this week or next at your choice, please turn in an Irk Paper instead of your regular journal entry. Further information about the craft of Irking is available on a separate handout, “How to Write an Irk Paper.”


**International Relations.** *Byzantium* Part V, ch. A, “The Germans and the Huns,” #241-7; V.B, “Byzantium and the Persians, Arabs, and Armenians,” #248-252 & 254-6; V.C, “Byzantium & the Slavs,” #257-263; and V.D, “Byzantium and the West,” #266-7 & 279-280. Is there a common thread to the relations of the Byzantines with all the different peoples whom your sources discuss, or were they flexible enough to adopt different strategies of relationship with different ethnic groups? What are the major issues in their relationship to western European peoples?  (43 pages)


**Epilogue to Byzantium.** *Byzantium* pp. 442-7 with #330-333. Do you find here any justification for the idea that we can’t really declare the final fall of the Roman Empire until the breakup of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev and Yeltsin?  (22 pages)
Wed. Feb. 14:  **Introduction to Islam.** We begin our third segment of study, on ancient Islam from the 7th to the 10th centuries. The readings will be from the Qur’an, the holy scripture of Islam (frequently spelled Koran in English), and Bernard Lewis’s collection of primary sources called Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople, in two volumes:  I, Politics and War, and II, Religion and Society. To get yourself oriented to ancient Islamic studies, please study the Preface and Introduction to Lewis’s Islam, volume I, pp. xi – xiii; your handout Summary of Early Islamic History, down to the Umayyad Caliphate; and WLA ch. 15, pp. 189-193.

**First readings from the Qur’an.** We start with the later surahs (= chapters), which were actually received first, when Muhammad was still at Mecca, before the Hijrah, his migration to Medina, and before the development of the 'Umma or Muslim community and their embattled return to Mecca. Please read the Introduction on pp. 7-8 of Ahmed Ali’s translation of the Qur’an, and then Surahs 48-55, starting with Victory on pp. 439, through Ar-Raman, p. 464. Focus on the more general theological themes: the nature of God, the relationship of Mohammed’s revelations to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, virtuous conduct by mankind, and death and judgment. For those of you who have some familiarity with the Bible, how is the Qur'an similar? how is it different? (40 pages)

Fri. Feb. 16:  **The Qur’an, concluding surahs.** Please read surahs 56-114 from the latter part of the Koran, starting with “The Inevitable” on p. 465 and continuing to the end of the text. This is a longer assignment than usual (sorry!); but many of the lines are short and also, since there is a lot of repetition in the Koran, you’ll find you can skim some passages. Often many of its major themes are at least touched on in each surah. This text offers certain challenges to us reading it in a prose translation for historical information, as opposed to a believer’s being wafted by its enchanting Arabic poetry towards a meditation on God’s will. How would you articulate what these challenges are? How would you describe the tone, or the personality if you will, of the Qur’an? (70 pages)

Mon. Feb. 19: **Early Caliphates.** Please study our first portion of original source documents from Bernard Lewis’s Islam, Volume I, Politics and War, Part I, Events, chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-42. There is a full chronological table on pp. xxx - xxix for you to use as a reference tool, and also a very useful glossary of special terminology on pp. 243-59; you have as well your handout Summary of Early Islamic History. Unfortunately Lewis’s compilation, though it is full of fascinating source passages, provides very little information about the source texts and authors, leaving us in a kind of vegetable stew of strange, new voices; and many of us will find that Arabic speaking voices are quite different from the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac voices that we have been hearing up to now; sometimes, they may seem almost incomprehensible. The lack of headnotes prevents us from determining biases of our authors except from evidence in their texts. There is occasionally a bit of information in a headnote, but not at each selection; rather, Lewis describes the selections to follow at the beginning of a chapter. Do look out for these explanations at the start of chapters, which are all we’re going to get. Narrative style in classical Arabic can be particularly subtle, with transitions and implications left quite unexplained; selection #3, the Death of ‘Umar, is a great example. For this assignment, try to listen carefully and note the distinctive characteristics of Arabic discourse and expression, in so far as you can compare these qualities with what we’ve been reading up till now. Take note of particularly puzzling passages and bring them up for discussion in class. (40 pages)

Wed. Feb. 21: **Islamic Government.** Please study the documents for our period in Lewis’s Islam, part II, GOVERNMENT: chapter 9, selections 39-42 on pp.149-171, and chapter 11, selections 47-50 on pp. 184-201. Make annotations and comments in your diaries. As before, the assignment skips almost all of the selections that date from after our official course period of the 7th-10th centuries. While reading chapter 9, how do you compare the strong religious element of Islamic rule to that of the Roman and Byzantine empires? In chapter 11, how do you compare Islamic bureaucracy with the Roman and Byzantine, and to bureaucratic practice in our own lives today? (41 pages)

Fri. Feb. 23: **War and Conquest.** Please study and write in your diary about selections from Lewis’s Islam, Volume I, part III, WAR AND CONQUEST, ch. 12, selections 52-4 on pp. 209-213; ch. 13, selections 55 and 59, pp. 214-217 & 224-225; ch. 14, selections 62-65 on pp. 228-241; then finish by going back to Part I, ch. 7 on Muslim Spain, #31-33 on pp.110-123. As Americans living in these difficult times, it can be particularly hard to achieve an objective view of what some call Islamic “Holy War.” Is “holy war” in fact a good translation for jihad? Do warfare and conquest play any part in Judaism and Christianity? (36 pages)

Mon. Feb. 26: **Islamic religion.** Please study and write in your diary about selections from Lewis’s Islam, Volume II, on Religion and Society: part I, RELIGION: chapter 1, selections 1-3 on pp. 1-15; ch. 2, #5, on pp. 19-20; ch. 4, #9 on pp. 33-35 & #13 on pp.44-45; part II, HERESY AND REVOLT: ##15-25 on pp. 50-65. Do the
Hanbalis of 10th century Baghdad remind you of any groups within Islam today? within Judaism or Christianity? (32 pages)


**Intelectual life.** Please study and write about Lewis’s *Islam*, Volume II, part VI, RACE, CREED AND CONDITION OF SERVITUDE: ch. 8, #61-63 on pp. 193-8; ch. 9, #64-67 on pp. 199-207; ch. 10, #71-73 on pp. 209-216; ch. 11, #74-80 on pp. 217-227; ch. 12, #87-8 on pp. 236-8.

**Personalities and humor.** Our last source book selections come from Lewis’s *Islam*, part VII, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL: ch. 13, #92-93 on pp. 257-8; ch. 14, #97-99 on pp. 261-9; ch. 15, #100 on pp. 269-78. Please note down the jokes that are hard to get and we will work on them in class together. (40 pages)

Wed. Mar. 7: **The Qur’an, earlier surahs, part 1.** For our last two classes, we will read from the earlier surahs of the Koran, which the Prophet received later in time than the selections we read before, containing not only moral and theological revelations, but also social and economic material specifically related to the development of the *Umma*, first at Medina, then back in Mecca, and finally in the context of the Persian and Byzantine worlds: for today, surahs 1, 4, 10, 12, & 14. Think about early Islam’s development in its wider intellectual, religious, social, and political contexts. For those of you who have some familiarity with the Hebrew Bible, how do the Surahs about Jonah, Joseph and Abraham compare? (49 pages)

Fri. Mar. 9: **The Qur’an, earlier surahs, part 2.** Please read surahs 17, 19, 30, 43, and 47. What relationship do you see between the *Qur’an*’s presentation of Jesus and Mary and Christian tradition? (30 pages)

Sat.-Sun. Mar. 10-11: **READING DAYS.** A very good way to prepare for the exam is to reread Peter Brown’s *World of Late Antiquity* while reviewing your journal and class notes about the texts we have read. The big question: are you persuaded, after reading Part II, to agree with his assertion in the Preface (page 9, top ¶) that “the narrative itself gravitates towards the eastern Mediterranean; the account ends more naturally at the Baghdad of Harun al-Raschid than at the remote Aachen of his contemporary, Charlemagne”? Go over your journals on Moodle to make sure you have caught up on any neglected texts. I don’t want you to lose points because of missing journal entries!

Mon.-Wed. Mar. 12-14: **FINAL EXAMS**

**Tues. Mar. 13:** FINAL EXAM in Leighton 402 from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.; it can also be taken on a self-scheduled basis. The exam will begin with a brief section of identifications, dates, and map work, and then concentrate on interpretation of sources. You will be given a variety of quotations from primary sources to interpret, with a considerable element of choice. There’s a separate handout previewing the final, available on Moodle.

Wed. Mar. 15, 9:30 p.m.: If you are writing the optional 5-7 page PAPER, it is due today. Please upload it on Moodle. College Regulations forbid me to accept any work past this time, so please make sure I have everything you’ve done for the course by 9:30 p.m. today: exam, papers, journals and all.