

Lewis & Clark Study Abroad Program
Fall Semester 2017
Course Syllabus

A History of Byzantium: The Eastern Roman Empire and its Lasting Legacy

Instructor: John Karavas

Tuesday-Thursday: 15.30-17.30

Course Description:

With close reference to ancient perspectives and sources, this course explores the history of the Eastern Roman or “Byzantine” empire from the time of its Christianisation in the 4th century AD up to the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in the 15th century. Within this chronological framework, particular attention will be paid to an investigation of the prevailing social, political and economic conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean during this period, with special emphasis on their primary social, religious and cultural institutions. In addition to a narrative of the main events that shaped the history of Byzantium during this long period of time, special emphasis will also be placed on various aspects of Byzantine history and culture, such as: the empire’s foreign and internal affairs; frontier strategy and Byzantium’s relationship with its neighbours; trade and the economy; art and architecture; the role of the emperor and the imperial administration in the government of the empire; the central role of religion in Byzantine society and culture and the emergence of the church as a dominant factor in state politics.

Bibliography: The standard prescribed textbook for this course is W. Treadgold’s *A History of the Byzantine State and Empire* (1997). However, during the course of the semester, students will be expected to become familiar with specific passages or chapters from other relevant works such as:

A. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity AD 395-600* (1993);

M. Cary, H. H. Scullard, *A History of Rome* (1959).

A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1967).

C. Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome* (1980);

C. Mango (ed.), *Byzantium* (2002).

R. MacMullen, *Constantine* (1989).

G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 2nd English edition (1968).

A.A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire 324-1453* (1952).

C.M. Wells, *The Roman Empire* (1996).

M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (1996).

In addition, further background or specialist reading material, including passages from ancient sources (in translation), will be introduced to students at the beginning of each separate thematic entity.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. Introduction. Establishing the general historical and geographical setting: A brief survey of the topographic and ethnographic realities and parameters for this course.

2. The 3rd century crisis. The Age of Diocletian and the Roman recovery; his political and administrative reforms; The Tetrarchy; the civil wars up to the accession of Constantine.

3. The Advent of Christianity. The Reign of Constantine (306-337); Imperial Administration; Army Reforms; Foreign - Internal policy; Constantine and Christianity.
(Treadgold, 37-50; Ostrogorsky, 27-50; Mac Mullen, 227-240; Mango 96-119).

4. New Religion – Old Culture. The suppression of polytheism and the establishment of a Christian State and Society in the eastern half of the Roman Empire. The age of migrations and the era of theological disputes and controversies. The Emperor Julian and the short lived revival of polytheism; the battle of Adrianople and its aftermath. The division of the Empire into two parts. (MacMullen, 157-184; Treadgold, 69-101; Ostrogorsky, 50-67; Mango, op.cit, 96-119).

5. Fall of the West – Survival in the East:

Examining the factors that led to the “Fall” of the Western Part of the Empire in 476 AD. The Successor State in the East. (Heather, ch. 9-10; Documentary).

6. The Material Culture of Byzantium. Visit to the Byzantine Museum.

7&8. “Restitutor Orbis”: The age of Justinian.

The “New” imperial government; the Nika revolt; The Law codification; the building project; The Conquest of the West; the aftermath. (Treadgold, ch. 6; Ostrogorsky, 68-82; Mango, 41-51; Procopius, The Secret Histories (selected passages) Procopius, De Aedificiis).

9. Mid Term Examination

10. Defender of the Realm:

The age of Heraclius.

The Persian and Avar wars; the administrative reforms; establishing a new identity for the Empire? (Treadgold, 287-313; Ostrogorsky, 92-110).

11. The Age of Iconoclasm.

(Treadgold, ch. 11; Ostrogorsky, 156-181; Mango, 153-168).

12. Byzantium and the West:

A comparative study on the relations between the two worlds; contacts and conflicts on the level of religion and ecclesiastical heritage, politics, imperial ideology, diplomacy and the field of cultural influence. (Treadgold, 417-435; Ostrogorsky, 182-185; Mango, 168-172).

13. The Rise of Islam: The Historical background.

Byzantine relations with the Islamic world. "Jihad": The shaping of imperial strategy and policy in the face of the Arab onslaught. (Mango 121-128; Treadgold, 301-323).

14. The Byzantine Revival.

A survey of the main events that brought about the era of political and cultural revival in the Byzantine world during the ninth and tenth centuries. The wars of conquest – expansion of Byzantine power; imperial policy under the rulers of the Macedonian dynasty; the extension and diffusion of Byzantine influence beyond the imperial borders; the literary revival. (Treadgold, 709-729; Ostrogorsky, 418-449; Mango 169-184, 214-229).

15. Byzantium and the Crusades.

Byzantine perceptions of the Crusader movement; general outline of Byzantine literary thought and cultural attitude towards the western world; Latin rule over Constantinople (1204-1261). (Treadgold, ch. 16, 18; Ostrogorsky, 283-315).

16. Society, Art and Culture.

Benaki Museum. (Class Handouts).

17. Decline and Fall.

Investigating the political, social, economic and military conditions and factors that brought about the decline and eventual collapse of the Byzantine Empire in the 15th century. (Treadgold, 837-856; Ostrogorsky, 552-570; Mango, 248-268).

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, November 30.

Assignments – Assessment - Grades

Essays

Students will be expected to write one major essay, of not more than 2,500 words, on subjects relevant to this course. Individual titles are of the student's own choosing but will have to be agreed upon after consultation with the instructor. Papers must be properly documented and should include an appended bibliography. Credit will be given for originality, i.e. illustrations, maps etc, personal observation and evidence of independent reading-research.

Title proposals must be handed in at least two weeks before the respective deadline. No extensions will be granted.

Mid – Term Exam:

The two hour mid - term exam will consist of three short essays selected from a list of six titles proposed.

Final Examination

The 2 hour final examination will consist of three short essays selected from a list of six titles proposed.

Grades

The mid-term grade will be calculated on the basis of the mid-term exam (70%) and with regard to student's attendance of and participation in classes (30%).

The final grade will be an average of the mid-term grade (25%), the grade assigned for the final examination (30%), the grade assigned for the final essay (25%) and of that assigned for class participation and attendance over the semester (20%).

Class Attendance - Absences

Student attendance is mandatory. All absences must be excused by the administration and not the instructor. One unexcused absence is allowed; each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a lowered participation grade.

The instructor is available for individual consultation after class or by prior arrangement: Tel.: 210 – 7515567.

E-mail: jnkaravas@gmail.com