

CLASSICS/HISTORY 258: THE ROMAN EMPIRE 31 BCE—337 CE:
Augustus to Constantine
Fall 2020



Prima Porta Augustus (photo, J. Cummins)



Constantine (Jean-Christophe Benoist, CC, Wikimedia)

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Office Hours:
MTWThF: 4:45–5:45 PM &
by appointment

"History is a study of power in human systems: how it is managed, seized, lost, used, and occasionally even shared."

Gordon S. Shrimpton, *History and Memory in Ancient Greece*, McGill-Queen's UP, 1997, p. 3.

CLASS MEETING TIMES

MTWTh: 10:00–11:15 AM

—Allow 15 minutes directly after class each day for an online quiz, though there will not be quizzes every day and in most cases they will take only a few minutes to complete.

F: 10–10:50, **OR** 11–11:50 AM

—Class will be divided into two discussion groups, and each student will be assigned to ONE 50-minute session.

I reserve the right to alter meeting times if necessary, so leave available in your schedule the entire assigned meeting periods: MWF: 10:00–11:50 AM, and TTh: 10:00–11:15 AM.

SUBJECT and PURPOSE

The subject of this course is the history of the Roman Empire from 31 BCE to 337 CE. We will focus on the evolution of the Roman emperor's position, on the means by which he ruled a vast territorial empire, on his imperial family, and on human life in various parts of this empire. We will analyze the difficulties of maintaining this extensive empire and its gradual unraveling. Attention will be paid to the state religion/imperial cult and to the rise of Christianity.

The purpose of this course is not simply to learn a sequence of events from a past time, but to consider carefully how those events are known to us now: to learn about sources—material and written—and how, in spite of their distinct limitations, they can be pieced together to yield a narrative. We will learn to appreciate that there are different kinds of narrative and that any narrative is subject to criticism and revision.

TEXTS:

Potter, David. *Ancient Rome: A New History*. 3rd ed. Thames & Hudson, 2018.

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*. Tr. Catharine Edwards. Oxford World's Classics, 2009.
(Course Reserves in course area on Pweb)

Tacitus. *Annals of Imperial Rome*. Tr. Michael Grant. Penguin, 2003.

COURSE OBJECTIVES and MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

The Department of Classics regards the following list as the competencies which students should acquire in a 200-level course on ancient history:

- 1) Knowledge of chronological framework of events (quizzes and exams)
- 2) Knowledge of geographical context (quizzes)
- 3) Knowledge of significant military, political and social events and their causal connections (class discussion, exams and papers)
- 4) Knowledge of primary sources, whether material or literary; their nature, limitations, and synthesis (class discussion, exams and papers)
- 5) Limited knowledge of scholarship so that students are exposed to effective argumentation from evidence (class discussion, exams and papers)

In addition, students should improve academic skills through analytical reading, writing, and oral presentations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING:

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|---|-----|
| Presence and Participation in Class (attentive listening, comments, discussion, oral reports, quizzes) | 30% |
| Short Papers (1-2 pgs.) | 10% |
| Two longer Essays (4 pgs.) | 40% |
| Mid-Term Test (Either written or oral, Sept. 23rd or 24th) | 10% |
| Final Test (Oral, arranged, either Oct. 20th or 21st) | 10% |

ACCOMMODATIONS

At times students require accommodations for religious observances or for disabilities. Please contact me early in the semester if you require accommodations, so that your documented needs can be appropriately met. If you have a disability, you will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator of Student Disability Resources, Jae Hirschman, x3089; [Hirschma]).

During this pandemic unexpected conflicts and problems may arise that prevent you from being in class, from participating effectively, or from turning in assignments on time. It is critically important that you communicate to me any obstacles to participation that you are experiencing so that we can consult with Student Affairs and work out appropriate accommodations.

POLICIES

Workload. The normal workload for this course is expected to be about three hours per class, but obviously there are individual differences. The reading load from class to class is not always uniform; it is your responsibility to plan ahead in order to handle uneven reading assignments and oral reports.

Textbooks. Required textbooks are available for purchase in the bookstore, or you may buy them online. **You must purchase the correct translation, by Michael Grant, of Tacitus' *Annals of Rome*, because the English of different translations can vary greatly. I strongly encourage you to buy a print version of this text so that you can find the relevant pages quickly during on-line discussions.** Potter's *Ancient Rome: A New History* may be purchased as an e-book since we will not be using it in discussions. All other readings will be available to you through e-reserves in the course area, or on-line through websites whose URLs I will provide.

Courtesy in the virtual classroom. Treat the virtual classroom like a physical classroom. Come to class groomed and alert. As a matter of respect and consideration for other members of the class, observe ordinary norms of courtesy, i.e., arrive before the

beginning of class and, except for necessity, do not leave the room during class and do not eat during class (drinks are fine). It is a good practice in general to arrive a few minutes before class, if possible, and to review your notes. During class leave your video on, unless instructed to do otherwise, and mute yourself, unless you are speaking, in order to cut down on background noise. Feel welcome to visit with one another before class begins. I will not use the chat feature during class and I ask you not to chat privately. Cellphones should be silenced and out of sight, and the screen for class should be the only screen that you have open during class. Because we are physically distant from one another, it is all the more important for us to treat each other respectfully and with careful attention so that we can successfully carry out a shared intellectual enterprise.

Absences. At times absence from class may be unavoidable: in cases of illness, injury, observance of religious holydays, or other conflicts. I grant two absences without direct penalty, unless an absence occurs on a day on which you are assigned an oral report. More than two absences, because of the material that you will miss, are detrimental to your class performance and grade. You should notify me in advance of scheduled absences and, if possible, of unexpected absences due to illness or emergency (I do not need to know details, just to be informed of your absence). Email notification is fine. I also impose a penalty for tardiness.

Penalties for late written work. Detailed directions for papers will be provided separately. The normal penalty for late submission of any written assignment is one-third of a letter-grade per day (for example, A → A-; C+ → C), weekends included, up to a maximum of two full letter-grades (seven days). Late papers should be submitted by email attachment with a doc or docx extension. Final essays **MUST** be turned in by the due date. There are no extensions for the final written assignment in the course.

Missed oral reports. There are no make-ups for missed recorder's reports or oral reports. If you miss class on a day on which you have a recorder's report or oral presentation due, you forfeit the opportunity to give that report or presentation.

Academic honesty. The college's academic honesty policy obviously applies to this course. In addition, students are expected to prepare for class on their own and not to collaborate with other students on any written assignments, and in their preparation for the mid-term and final exams. Informal discussion, however, of the content of the course, outside of class, is fine.

Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center. I will provide feedback on your writing and on your oral presentations. Please feel welcome to make an appointment with the Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center for additional help with either your papers or your oral presentations.

CLS/HIS 258: The Roman Empire
Fall 2020
ASSIGNMENT SHEET I

WEEK I

Monday, August 31

Introduction to Course

Roman Expansion in the Mediterranean (753–100 BCE)

Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (Octavian) in 31 BCE

Recorder (3 minutes):

Fitsum Getahun

QUIZ #1 (given after class, 11:15–11:30 AM, located in file, “Quizzes,” under “Assignments” in the course area on Pweb):

Know the dates for the Regal Period, Republic and Empire:

Regal Period: 753–509 BCE

Republican Period: 509–31 BCE

Imperial Period: 31 BCE–476 CE

—BCE: Before Common Era

—CE: Common Era

ASSIGNMENT:

Discussion of the Roman Empire at the time of Octavian’s accession (based on students’ observations of the maps in the Power Point, “Roman Empire Under Augustus,” in “Written Assignments” under “Assignments” in the course area on Pioneer Web)

Tuesday, September 1

Constitution of the Roman Republic

Recorder (3 minutes):

Jeremy Traw

QUIZ #2 (given after class, 11:15–11:30 AM, located in file, “Quizzes,” under

“Assignments” in the course area on Pweb): Be able to locate the Republican provinces on a blank map

—Use the map, “Roman Empire, 100 BCE” (posted in course area under “Documents” and in the folder “Handouts”) in order to memorize the location and names of the following provinces:

Sicily

Corsica and Sardinia (named Sardinia on map)

Nearer Spain

Further Spain

Macedonia

Africa

Asia

Narbonese Gaul

Cilicia

Reading:

Potter, *Ancient Rome*, p. 64 (“The Early Republican Army,” which was responsible for Roman expansion)

North, John A. “Constitution of Roman Republic” in *A Companion to the Roman Republic* (Blackwell, 2006) 256–267, 268 (just the chart, study it carefully!), 269–70 (“The functioning of the system”); **under “Course Reserves” in the course area on Pweb.**

—This reading will be a little dense and not everything will be clear at first. Just read it carefully and get as much as you can from it. Study the charts that North supplies very carefully Focus especially on the magistrates and the Senate. We will clarify details in discussion and I will add new information in class.

Oral Report (up to 6 minutes) and one-page paper (due by start of class on Wednesday):

Identify North's thesis and discuss the fundamental features of the Roman constitution.

Travis Sloffer

Wednesday, September 2

The Values of the Republican Aristocrats

Roman Warlords

Recorder (3 minutes):

Adam Wood

QUIZ:

Roman Constitution

Reading:

Rosenstein, Nathan. "Military Command, Political Power, and the Republican Elite," in *A Companion to the Roman Army* (Blackwell, 2007) 132–47; **under "Course Reserves" in the course area on Pweb.**

Potter, David. *Ancient Rome: A New History*, "The Reformed Roman Army," p. 135.

Oral Report (up to 6 minutes) and one-page paper (due by start of class on Wednesday):

What is Rosenstein's thesis and evidence for the interconnection of military command and political power in the Republic? In his view, what motivates the "Republican Elite," i.e. the aristocrats?

Abby Burrows

Thursday, September 3

Julius Caesar and Octavian

The Principate of Octavian/Augustus

Recorders (3 minutes):

Amelia Johnson-Post, Michal Baxter

(report on Friday in your respective discussion groups)

QUIZ #3 (given after class, 11:15–11:30 AM, located in file, "Quizzes," under

"Assignments" in the course area on Pweb)): Be able to locate the Republican provinces on a blank map.

—Use handout of Map: "Roman Empire, 44 BCE" (posted in course area under "Documents" and in the folder "Handouts")

—Provinces:

Sicily

Nearer Spain

Macedonia

Asia

Crete

Bithynia

Syria

Cyprus

Corsica and Sardinia (named Sardinia on map)

Further Spain

Africa

Narbonese Gaul

Cyrene

Pontus

Cilicia

Africa Nova

Reading

Potter, *Ancient Rome*, Chapter 4: "The Transition from Republic to Principate," pp. 146–74 ("Culture in the Age of Caesar," 151–55, is optional).

Friday, September 4

The Principate of Augustus (con'd)

The Res Gestae Divi Augusti

Recorders (3 minutes):

10 AM

Emily Barber

(report on Monday to the whole class)

11 AM

Britney He

Reading:

Potter, *Ancient Rome*, "The House of Augustus (31 BC–AD 14)," 174–189.

Brunt, P. A. and J. M. Moore. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti. The Achievements of the Divine Augustus*. Oxford UP, 1969. Text online at:

http://droitromain.upmf-grenoble.fr/Anglica/resgest_engl.htm

In the search bar enter "Res Gestae Divi Augusti;" click on the second item that this search turns up: "Res Gestae Divi Augusti;" this will take you to a Latin text of the document; scroll down and click on the "English" tab; now you should be at the translation by Brunt and Moore.

"Introduction" (PDF)

Oral Reports (up to 6 minutes) and one-page paper (due at start of class on Monday)

10 AM

The Res Gestae Divi Augusti

Analyze Augustus' inscription, which summarizes the achievements of his reign. What achievements does he claim and how does he present his actions? What does he suppress? What kind of portrait of Augustus emerges from this analysis?

Alex Mickus

11 AM

Oliver Willett