

CLASSICS/HISTORY 258: THE ROMAN EMPIRE 31 BCE—337 CE:
Augustus to Constantine
Fall 2024



Prima Porta Augustus (photo, J. Cummins)



Constantine (Jean-Christophe Benoist, CC, Wikimedia)

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Office Hours:
MWF, 3–4 PM,
TTh 4–4:30 PM
by appointment or chance

"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 MEETINGS

MW, 8:30–9:50 AM

Each class will include lecture, and discussion in a variety of formats. Students will also present short oral reports on assigned readings in class or in my office.

SUBJECT and PURPOSE

This course examines 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, and on his imperial family. We will also focus on this extensive empire itself: its geography, economy, social classes, armies and state religion. Careful attention will be paid to the lives of women

and families, and to the spread of Christianity. We will analyze the difficulties of maintaining this extensive empire and its gradual unraveling.

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.

REQUIRED PRINT TEXTS:

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

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

SAMPLING OF REQUIRED ELECTRONIC TEXTS:

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*. Tr. Catharine Edwards. Oxford World's Classics, 2009.

https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=cdi_askewsholts_vlebooks_9780191609107&context=PC&vid=01GCL_INST:GCL&lang=en&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&adaptor=Primo%20Central

Scheidel, Walter. *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy*. Cambridge UP, 2012.

(chapters available on e-reserves in the course area on BlackBoard OR in print on reserve at the Circulation Desk in Burling Library)

(Additional electronic readings will be available as e-books, or articles online).

LEARNING OUTCOMES and MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

- 1) A student will memorize the dates, or approximate dates (where appropriate) of a limited number of the most significant Roman periods and events (quizzes and exams).
- 2) A student will memorize the names and locations of the most significant provinces and cities within the Roman Empire, and the position of important neighboring kingdoms/states (quizzes).
- 3) A student will be able to analyze significant military, political, economic and social events and concepts, and their causal connections (oral reports, class discussion, exams and papers)
- 4) A student will be able to identify and analyze significant primary sources, whether material or literary; their nature, limitations, and synthesis (oral reports, class discussion, exams and papers)

- 5) A student will be able to read and analyze relevant scholarship: to identify the thesis and evidence of the scholarship and to evaluate the persuasiveness of its argument (class discussion, exams and papers)
- 6) A student will express this analysis through analytical written and oral work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING:

Presence and Participation in Class (attentive listening, comments, discussion, oral reports, quizzes)	30%
One or two Short Papers (1-2 pgs.)	10%
Two longer Essays (4 pgs. each)	40%
Mid-Term Test (Either oral, by arrangement; or written, 10-16)	10%
Final Test (Either oral, by arrangement; or written 12-17, 9 AM)	10%

ACCOMMODATIONS

At times students require accommodations for religious observances, for sporting events and other extra-curricular activities 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 Baldree, Steiner 209, x3089; baldreej@grinnell.edu.

Grinnell College is committed to compliance with Title IX and to supporting the academic success of pregnant and parenting students and students with pregnancy related conditions. If you are a pregnant student, have pregnancy related conditions, or are a parenting student (child under one-year needs documented medical care) who wishes to request reasonable related supportive measures from the College under Title IX, please email the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@grinnell.edu. The Title IX Coordinator will work with Disability Resources and your professors to provide reasonable supportive measures in support of your education while pregnant or as a parent under Title IX.

If you have other needs not addressed above, please let me know soon so that we can work together for the best possible learning environment. In some cases, I will recommend consulting with the Academic Advising staff: <http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/academic-advising>. They are an excellent resource for developing strategies for academic success and can connect you with other campus resources. If I notice that you are encountering difficulty, and I have reached out to you and not received a response, or if you have missed multiple class sessions or are not meeting our class objectives repeatedly, I will submit an academic alert via Academic Advising’s SAL portal. This notifies you of my concern, along with the Academic Advising team and your advisor(s), so that they can reach out to you with additional offers of support.

POLICIES

Workload. The normal workload for this course is expected to be about four 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 pace uneven reading assignments and to plan for oral reports and papers.

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 class discussions.** Potter's *Ancient Rome: A New History* may be purchased as an e-book since we will not be referring directly to it in discussions. All other readings will be available to you through e-reserves in the course area on BlackBoard, on-line through websites whose URLs I will provide, or in print format on reserve at Burling Library.

Courtesy in the 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. **Cellphones should be silenced and out of sight when you take your place in class, and should not be consulted during class.** It is important for us to treat each other respectfully and with careful attention so that we can successfully carry out a shared intellectual enterprise.

Use of Laptops. **No laptops may be open during my lecture, unless you have my permission to use one.** Notes should be hand-written. I provide a copy of my lecture after class on BlackBoard, so that all students have easy access to that content. Laptops may be open during discussion of readings in an electronic format so that you can access those readings. My intention in setting these rules is to promote attention to one another and to the material we discuss rather than to our laptop screens. Please feel welcome to discuss this issue with me.

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. **Please note that the use of any external source in a paper, without express citation, is a violation of the academic honesty policy.**

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.