

Byzantium
Christian Raffensperger
History 306

Byzantium did not exist, it is a historical fiction. Or rather, it is a modern term created to describe a real, medieval, empire. The empire called itself the Roman Empire, but modern historians, beginning as far back as the seventeenth century preferred to avoid calling it that,



ostensibly to remove confusion from the “ancient” Roman Empire, with its capital in Rome, to the “medieval” Roman Empire, with its capital at Constantinople.

This class will focus on the medieval Roman Empire during what is known as the “Middle Byzantine” period from roughly the ninth century until the conquest of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade in 1204. We will attempt to understand the medieval Roman Empire through two particular means, primary textual sources and secondary sources. Thus, we will read examples of both to try and understand how the people of the time saw themselves, as well as how we see them, or our constructed vision of them, in the modern period.

PAST Credit

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Office Hours: MW 9:00-9:50 A.M., 11:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M., or by appointment

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Class Objectives

Through our discussions, readings, written exercises, and the viewing of material remains we will achieve the following goals:

- * We will challenge and **re-evaluate our own perceptions of history**.
- * We will accurately **identify and describe historical events and concepts** relevant to the imperial *and* cultural history of Byzantium.
- * We will enhance skills in reading and **interpreting primary and secondary sources** through evaluation and critical reading
- * We will develop **geographical literacy of the regions and civilizations** discussed in the course in the diverse territorial holdings associated with imperial boundaries of the medieval Roman empire.
- * We will **construct arguments and counter-arguments** using historical events and concepts to support or refute historical ideas
- * We will increase our confidence to **communicate clearly both in verbal and written** avenues through cooperative learning, reading, and a variety of written activities

Assignments and Deadlines

There is a separate assignment sheet that I will hand out which details all of the graded assignments for this class. Please follow that assignment sheet in attempting to understand what each assignment is, and if you do not understand, please ask (in advance of the due date!). Due dates are included here on the syllabus.

Class discussion is 10% of your total grade for this class. As such it is incredibly important that you come prepared each day. This means that you will have with you the materials under discussion and you will have read them. Everyone in class is expected to participate in the discussion. You are also all expected to participate civilly and respectfully. This is a community of learners and we should act as such.

Assignments for the Course:

- Attendance – 8%
- Active participation – 10%
- Weekly reading quizzes – 15%
- Byzantine Gender Paper – 10%
- Byzantine Rulership Paper – 10%
- Anna Komnene Paper – 10%
- Final research paper (37%)
 - 2% Research Proposal
 - 2% Annotations #1
 - 2% Annotations Set #2
 - 2% Annotations Set #3
 - 2% Outline
 - 7% First Draft
 - 7% Presentation of research
 - 15% Final paper due

Required Books:

Anna Comnena. *Alexiad*. 2006.

Peter Sarris, *Byzantium: A Very Short Introduction*

Leonora Neville, *Byzantine Gender*

Anthony Kaldellis, *Byzantium Unbound*

A reader of sources will also be provided (readings from the reader will be signaled with the letter “R” before them)

Recommended Book:

Timothy Gregory, *History of Byzantium*

Week 1: Political Overview

Assignments: Reading Quiz Wednesday

Aug. 29 – Monday – Introduction & Overview

Aug. 31 – Wednesday – Sarris, *Byzantium: A Very Short Introduction*, chs. 1-3

Sep. 2 – **No Class** – Friday – Sarris, *Byzantium: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 4-6

Week 2: Byzantine Gender

Assignments: Reading Quiz Wednesday

Sep. 7 – Wednesday – Neville, *Byzantine Gender*, chs. 1-2 (**Required Attendance at a talk by Jitske Jasperse Wednesday 9/7 at 4:00 p.m. in Ness**)

Sep. 9 – Friday – Neville, *Byzantine Gender*, chs. 3-4

Week 3: Zoe and Theodora in the sources 1

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Sep. 12 – Monday – Neville, *Byzantine Gender*, chs. 5-6

Sep. 14 – Wednesday – Psellos 1 (R)

Sep 16 – Friday – Psellos 2 (R)

Week 4: Zoe and Theodora in the sources 2

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Sep. 19 – Monday – Skylitzes (R)

Sep. 21 – Wednesday – Attaliates (R)

Sep. 23 – Friday – Primary Source Comparison

Week 5: Analysis of Byzantine Gender

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Wednesday: Byzantine Gender Paper

Sep. 26 – Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium* (R)

Sep. 28 – Working / Research Day

Sep. 30 – Working / Research Day

Week 6: Byzantium Unbound

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Monday: Research Proposal

Oct. 3 – Monday – Kaldellis, *Byzantium Unbound*, chs. 1-2

Oct. 5 – Wednesday – Kaldellis, *Byzantium Unbound*, chs. 3-4

Oct. 7 – Friday – Discussion of *Byzantium Unbound*

Week 7: Byzantine Empire

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Oct. 10 – Monday – Cameron, “Empire” (R)

Oct. 12 – Working / Research Day

Oct. 14 – Working / Research Day

Week 8: Byzantine Rulership

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Monday: Annotations #1

Oct. 19 – Wednesday – Magdalino, “Basileia: The Idea of Monarchy in Byzantium, 600-1200” (R)

Oct. 21 – Friday – McCormick, “Emperors” (R)

Week 9: What was Byzantium?

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Monday: Annotations Set #2

Oct. 24 – Monday – Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society* (R)

Oct. 26 – Wednesday – Angold, “Capital and Provinces” (R)

Oct. 28 – Friday – Discussion of Byzantium and its rule

Week 10: Alexiad 1

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Monday: Byzantine Rulership Paper

Due Monday: Annotations Set #3

Oct. 31 – Monday – *Alexiad* **pages?**

Nov. 2 – Wednesday – Working / Research Day

Nov. 4 – Friday – Working / Research Day

Week 11: Alexiad 2

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Monday: Outline

Nov. 7 – Monday – *Alexiad* **pages?**

Nov. 9 – Wednesday – *Alexiad* **pages?**

Nov. 11 – Friday – *Alexiad* **pages?**

Week 12: Alexiad 3

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Nov. 14 – Monday – *Alexiad* **pages?**

Nov. 16 – Wednesday – *Alexiad* **pages?**

Nov. 18 – Friday – Neville, *Anna Komnene* (R) Introduction, chs. 1-2

No Class Nov. 21

Week 13: On Anna Komnene

Assignments: Reading Quiz Monday

Due Monday: First Draft

Nov. 28 – Monday – Neville, *Anna Komnene* (R) chs. 3-4

Nov. 30 – Wednesday – Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium* (R)

Dec. 2 – Friday – Discussion of Anna Komnene and Alexiad

Week 14: Presentations of Research

Assignments: Due Monday: Anna Komnene Paper

Dec. 5 – Monday – Presentations

Dec. 7 – Wednesday – Presentations

Dec. 9 – Friday – Presentations

Final Paper Due – Exam Week

Communication with Faculty

If you have questions about class, would like to know your grade, would like to set up a time to meet, or need to let me know that you will not be in class, please email me. When you email me, please put the topic in the subject line so I know what you would like to discuss. Your email should begin with a salutation such as “Dear Professor Raffensperger”. It should not begin with “hey” or “I need”. Your email should close with something polite as well. “Best wishes” “have a good day,” or something similar is just fine, followed by your name. I would emphasize that they are not fussy,

outdated conventions, but things that you will need to know to live in the world. Employers will not appreciate the casual informality with which you might be most comfortable.

Missed Examinations, Papers, and Class Sessions

A good rule of thumb is do not miss anything. However, if you are ill or have a conflict and cannot make a class, notify me in advance or as soon after the class as is possible. *Do not miss examinations!* If you have a conflict, notify me a minimum of one week in advance and we can schedule an exam as close to the normal time as possible. If you miss an examination for reasons that are not discussed with me ahead of time or are not catastrophic you will receive a zero, which is much worse than an F in your overall grade. Late papers are accepted for one week, but the grade will drop one full grade when turned in after class the day it is due. For each additional day thereafter (weekend day or weekday) that it is late, it will drop a fraction of a grade, for example—an A paper handed in after class will be a B paper, handed in the next day will be a B- paper, the next day a C+ paper.

Attendance Policy

As part of your grade for this class, and to get the most out of the class, you are required to attend on a regular basis. Attendance in this class is worth 6% of your grade, and attendance will be taken on a regular basis. If you are going to miss class, let me know in advance. If you accumulate 3 unexcused absences over the course of the semester, you will receive a grade of F for your attendance. If you miss 7 or more classes over the course of the semester you will receive a grade of zero for your attendance, much worse than an F when calculating your final grade. You are solely responsible for signing the attendance sheet, or notifying me of your absence, as proof of your presence in class.

Accessibility Services

Wittenberg University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision and neurological, or temporary medical conditions, etc.), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you must register with the Accessibility Services office by emailing accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu. You can also find information on the Accessibility Services webpage found at www.wittenberg.edu/success. Please note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive. The Accessibility Services Office is located in the COMPASS: Sweet Success Center, Thomas Library, on the first floor.

Weather-Related Concerns

Whenever weather becomes a problem, I shall do my best to adhere to the university guidelines. If the university cancels classes, there will be no class. If the university has not cancelled class, but I am unable or unwilling to risk traveling, I will do my best to post a notice to this effect on Moodle as early as possible. I will do my best not to cancel class if at all possible.

If there is an exam scheduled or a deadline for a written assignment on a day when class is cancelled, you may assume that the exam or assignment will be due on the following class session.

Academic Honesty

Students in this course are expected to uphold the standards of Wittenberg's Code of Academic Integrity. At its most basic level, this means that you will not turn in someone else's writing as your own, quote from a source without proper acknowledgment, or provide a classmate with inappropriate help. You will be asked to submit papers and exams with the following statement followed by your signature: "I affirm that my work upholds the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity at Wittenberg, and that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance." Sanctions for violating these rules range from receiving no credit for a particular assignment to failing the course for a significant act of academic dishonesty. If you are in doubt about any of these rules, please talk to me before submitting your work.