*Note to prospective students: You will not have to spend any money for books in this course as all the assigned materials are available via Canvas through pdfs.

Course Description

This course examines the rise of a distinctly Byzantine phase of Roman history, a development that began in the Seventh Century CE with Arab conquests of the Levant, Egypt, and North Africa on the one hand, Slavic invasions and installations in the Balkans on the other. Moreover, it will identify forces driving Byzantium’s success whilst paradoxically facilitating its ultimate demise. Primary focus highlights the question should Byzantium be seen as a continuation of the Roman experiment, or the beginning of a medieval, Greek state Roman only in name? Topics include: fate of the classical patrimony, Arab invasions, iconoclast controversies, conversion of the Slavs, crusades, Seljuk and Ottoman Turks.

Byzantine Empire (634-1453 CE)

This course will examine the Byzantine period of Roman History from the Arab invasions of the Levant, Egypt, and North Africa to the fall of Constantinople to the Osmanli Turks in May of 1453. Thanks to Byzantine scholiasts much of the Classical inheritance recovered during the Renaissance survives today. You should know that the word Byzantine is a label conjured by modern historians with an eye to highlighting a new period of Roman history, one that endured over eight tumultuous centuries. By any measure of success that is an extraordinary achievement in its own right considering the scope of the external threats surrounding them. For this and other reasons our approach to Byzantine history will be diachronic rather than synchronic.

Interest in political history began to wane in my lifetime during the late 1960s, but it is making a comeback because tastes shift over the course of decades, something I have witnessed first hand. I am an ardent proponent of political history because
the fact of the matter is elites called the shots in ancient societies, there is simply no getting around this simple fact. My saying this does not always sit well with some students, but that is why we post the syllabus early. It’s my way of foreshadowing what this course has in store for you should you decide to take it, and I hope that you will. Moreover, I hope you have an interest in theology or the socio-anthropological dimensions of it, because no survey of Byzantine history is complete without looking at theological rancor and disputation.

Byzantine history is fraught with controversy, and this is a good thing for us because it means you won’t have to dig too deep to find an interesting paper topic to write about—think of it as grist for the mill. From a methodological perspective, I will adopt a two-step approach designed to help you see things from a Byzantine perspective first (as opposed to the traditional Western or Latin one), as a means of transitioning to a synoptic understanding of this much-neglected civilization.

Understand that you are entering a realm shaped by thinkers of stature Edward Gibbon, Arnold Toynbee, Cyril Mango, George Ostrogorsky whose contributions to Byzantine studies resonate to this very day. All historians have an ax to grind including myself, and presentism is often a factor in Byzantine History. This part goes to social relevancy; indeed, the word Byzantine has acquired a variety of meanings centering on theme sinister or duplicitous to facile. This circumstance is a by-product of the empire’s turbulent interaction with the West, events that culminated in the catastrophic events of 1204. After the Fourth Crusade being Byzantine in Western eyes meant being sly, treacherous, and cowardly. In microcosm, this example highlights the estrangement between Greek East and Latin West, two halves of a once united Imperium Romanum. Understanding how this situation came about is the principal theme of this course.

**Texts**


http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/AnnaComnena-Alexiad-intro.asp

Course Requirements

You will have two “take home” exams (Weeks 8 & 16). As regards written assignments you have two choices: submit a 12-15 page research paper, or two 7-8 page papers. Both are due at the end of the semester. Graduate students must submit a paper using primary or various secondary languages most relevant to Byzantine Studies as an academic discipline. In addition to the research papers, students will participate in weekly discussion forums. Finally, please do not forget to complete your course evaluations. The URL is http://evals.wustl.edu. These evaluations are important to the university in a variety of ways so please turn in your submission. I will remind you of this matter as the we near the end of the semester.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Understand Byzantium’s role in preserving and adding to the classical patrimony
2. Explain Arab expansion into the East Mediterranean Basin
2. Discuss the development of the Byzantine political economy.
3. Assess the constitutional position of the emperor in relation to the senate over time.
4. Examine the rise of the Latin West and its implications for Byzantium.
5. Understand Byzantine “Grand Strategy”.
6. Investigate the causes of Byzantium's demise.
7. Summarize Byzantium's cultural legacy.

Course Evaluation Criteria Based on a 1000-Point System
30% Active participation in online discussion forums or 300 Points
5% Research Paper Proposal (2 pages) or 50 Points
35% Research paper (12 pages) or 350 Points
15% Mid-Term Exam (Take Home Essay) or 150 Points
15% Final Exam (Take Home Essay) or 150 Points

**Grade Scale**

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<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
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**Course Delivery Methods**

This course delivered via distance learning will give students an opportunity to receive a university degree in a manner that affords them a high degree of flexibility. Course materials and access to the online learning management system (Canvas) will be made available to each student via the wustl Canvas portal. The url is [https://mycanvas.wustl.edu/](https://mycanvas.wustl.edu/).

2. **Discussion Forums:** Students are expected to participate in the weekly discussion forums, and this includes the introductory forum where students post some biographical information about themselves. The purpose of this exercise is to assess your ability to synthesize and analyze the assigned readings, and these threads will be graded at the end of each week.

3. **Written exams:** The exams will be of “take home” formulation, and it will be based on a primary source. Now the first thing I want you to understand is that this is not a research paper, meaning you don't have to use footnotes and bibliography unless you intend to quote from a secondary, scholarly source, but I would prefer that you don't do this because I want you to sit down and do the analysis as best you can without recourse to notes or sources.

4. **Research paper:** During the fourth week of the semester, each student must choose paper topic(s). Your preliminary research topic proposal(s) must be cleared with me in advance. The paper will be no less than 15 pages, that includes proper footnotes/endnotes and bibliography formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. If you are unfamiliar with CMS see the links and resources I will make available for you. If you prefer
to write two shorter papers the length requirement is 7 to 8 pages.

RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL

Overview: Provide a short explanation of a historical question, working thesis, and preliminary annotated bibliography for your research paper.

Subject: The topic of your research paper must be a major concept, event, or person in Byzantine history. Once you select a topic, focus on developing a provisional thesis statement. Use at least FOUR academic sources for your preliminary bibliography that supports your thesis. Your sources should focus on primary sources and scholarly articles from Olin library. A sample topic from another Classics course might be Alexander the Great. For instance, “Why did the Persians fail to defeat Alexander the Great on the field of battle?” Your thesis statement could be: “The Persians lost because they lacked heavy infantry to counter the Macedonian Phalanx.” With a bona fide thesis statement to hand, you are ready to delve into the primary and secondary sources.

Grading Criteria: The proposal will be graded on the strength of your thesis statements, on your exposition of logic, and on the way you integrate sources into your argument. See Resources for Research Paper Proposal Grading Rubric.

Format: The Research Paper Proposal will be 3 pages in length and you should use the Times New Roman (12 point) with spacing set at 1.5.

Submission Mechanism: Click on the “Assignments” link in the course navigation menu to submit your Research Paper Proposal.

RESEARCH PAPER

Overview: Complete a research paper(s) on one of the major concepts, events, or people associated with the politics, economy, religious policy of the Byzantine Empire.

Subject: The topic of your research paper(s) must be approved by me. Moreover, your research paper(s) must reflect your own, original thoughts, even though the ideas are derived from your understanding of the primary and secondary sources.

Grading Criteria: The research paper(s) will be graded according to the following criteria: 1) introduction—containing an argumentative thesis statement; 2) body—the paragraphs in this section of your paper should bolster and align with your thesis
Synthesis and analysis is the name of the game in this course. Thesis exposition is paramount, so please consult the grading rubric I will be using to evaluate your work. I have posted two pdf copies of the rubric on Blackboard, one for the take-home exams, and the other for the final paper.

Forum Postings 28% of the final grade or 280 Points
Midterm Exam 15% of the final grade or 150 Points
Research Topic Proposal 7% of the final grade or 70 Points
Research Paper(s) Depending on the option you choose either 15% or 30% of the final grade for 150 or 300 Points
Final Exam 20% of the final grade or 200 Points

Late or Missing Work: If you have a problem with any of the assigned deadlines please try to reach out to me before the deadline if possible. You will find that I have a fairly liberal policy on late work as long as the concessions don’t keep you from finishing the rest of the course work. Sometimes doing you a favor in the short run makes things worse in the long run.

Plagiarism: It is my policy to check, at my discretion, any written work submitted for this class. Plagiarized work will be returned to the student with a failing grade. The definition of
plagiarism includes but is not limited to taking credit for someone else’s work without proper citation. That said, I do reserve the right to give offenders a second chance.

**Additional Resources**


**Grading Rubric Assessment Categories**

Critical Thinking: defined as a method to evaluate something, students engage in critical thinking when they demonstrate nascent conceptual framework.


Evidence: gleaned from primary and secondary sources; all arguments stand or fall on the basis of logic and source material.

Presentation: arranged from weakest to strongest. Includes concession to opposition.

Insight: eschew narrative in favor of analysis that posits solutions to historical problems.

Scholarly Apparatus: your name, the title, footnotes, page numbers, proper fonts (12 pt) and spacing (double for text, single for footnotes). Historians use the *Chicago Manual of Style* and so must you in this class. See here and here for examples.

**Academic Integrity**
Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that can result in a range of penalties. If you have not read the university’s academic integrity policy do so before the beginning of the course. Accommodations: Students in need of special facilities or accommodations need to see me during the first two weeks of the session.

**Netiquette**

Online universities cultivate knowledge through positive and constructive debate—both inside and outside the classroom. Discussions on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the absence of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting where basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” are the order of the day. This means no personal attacks, or attempts to stifle the discussion of others.

**Pass/Fail and Incomplete Requests, Extensions**

A “C” is a passing grade in this course. Note the grade scale above. You are still required to meet the reading, research, and writing criteria for the course. Regarding assignment extensions, see late policy below; here suffice to say these will be granted on a case by case basis for appropriate situations. Nonetheless, ideally approval must be obtained in advance of the deadline. With respect to incompletes these will be granted with the proviso you have completed 70% of the coursework. If you find yourself in a situation where an incomplete is warranted see me as early as possible.

**Attendance and Late Policy**

Online courses are asynchronous propositions unless they are of hybrid variety which this particular course is not; indeed, the flexibility inherent in the asynchronous approach is key to student success for the simple reason one can complete the weekly assignments, view the mini-lectures, and so forth any time one’s schedule permits: day, night, weekends as the case may be. Consequently, logging in to course shell as much as possible each week and for sustained periods of time with an eye to participating in the weekly discussion forums, watching the weekly lectures and so forth represents your attendance. If you don’t log in, if you don’t meet your discussion forum requirements, you have not have meet the attendance requirement.
The penalty is a 10% deduction from the weekly discussion forum total grade (20 points per/discussion). See discussion forum rubric for the assessment criteria. I will allow you to post a late discussion post but only in consultation with me; however, you will not be allowed to post late response threads because the idea behind the exercise is to have an on-going discussion and late responses defeat the purpose of the endeavor. Related to attendance is something called engagement, and simply put this means I need to see you post your discussion threads over the course of two, three consecutive days. Posting discussion forum threads on the last day of the week at the eleventh hour undermines insightful discussion. Please pay attention to these policies on a weekly basis throughout the course. Late written assignments (mid-term, final, research paper) will likewise incur a 10% deduction off the total points available.

**Course Evaluations**

Please do not forget to complete your course evaluations. The URL is [http://evals.wustl.edu](http://evals.wustl.edu). These evaluations are important to the university in a variety of ways so please turn in your submission. I will remind you of this matter as we near the end of the semester.

**Computer-Related Matters**

· **A & S Computing** will help you troubleshoot IT-issues relating to cookies, browser support, and java updates. All of these components are essential to a seamless, on-line experience.

· Be sure you have downloaded the most recent version of java. This is free software program that helps you access Canvas. You can check which version of Java you currently have and update it (if necessary) by visiting [www.java.com](http://www.java.com). Keep Java updated for best results.

**Requesting Academic Accommodations**

This [link](http://evals.wustl.edu) will take you to the WUSTL Student Disability resources page. I quote the relevant sections should you require their services:

“Requesting academic accommodations through Disability Resources (DR) is a simple two-step process.
How to request academic accommodations

If you are requesting accommodations for the very first time the steps will be slightly different than if you are already registered with DR for other accommodations."

Useful Links At your fingertips

WUSTL Canvas Portal:  https://mycanvas.wustl.edu/

Writing Center Portal:  https://wustl.mywconline.net/

Writing Center Main Web Page:  https://writingcenter.wustl.edu/

Conerstone:  https://learningcenter.wustl.edu/

Disability Resources:  https://learningcenter.wustl.edu/ or for accommodations:  https://students.wustl.edu/requesting-academic-accommodations/

Java:  www.java.com

Lectures & Readings

Week 1. Introduction. Justinian and the Eusebian Synthesis. The weekly forums are there but they are invisible to you now. They will become visible each Monday along with the discussion prompts. On-line courses usually feature a get-to-know you exercise during the first week. Post your introduction to the Week 1 intro forum and tell us something about yourself, what your major is, along with any interests or hobbies. Gregory, Chapter 1. Pdf Reading #1.

Learning Objective: Analyze the factors that led to the near collapse of Roman authority in the Sixth Century.

Week 2. Maurice, the “Last Roman Emperor” (Read the entries for the first four councils only). Gregory, Chapters 2 & 3. PDF reading #2.

Learning Objectives: Construct a deeper understanding of the syncretic currents that coalesced into these heretical movements.

Learning Objectives: Assess the consequences of Theodosius' accommodation policy. Understand the philosophical and theological tenets that underlay the Eusebian synthesis.


Learning Objectives: Formulate an understanding of the cultural forces that helped to forge a unique Late Antique milieu.


Learning Objectives: Identify the events that led to the expansion of Islam into the East Mediterranean basin.


Learning Objectives: Identify the range of arguments scholars use to explain the appeal of iconoclasm.


Learning Objectives: Analyze the effect of the Slavic migrations and installations on the Balkans.

*Week 8. Mid-term Exam (take-home).*


Learning Objectives: Analyze the effect of Charlemagne’s imperial coronation in the West with its reception in Constantinople.

Learning Objectives: Examine the factors that facilitate the final defeat of iconoclasm, and opened the door to a cultural renaissance.


Learning Objectives: Identify the strategic objectives of the Crusades. Finish reading The Alexiad and prepare to discuss it in the forum.

Week 12. Empire of the Straits. Gregory, Chapter 15.

Learning Objectives: Appraise the diminished status of Byzantine as a pawn of regional powers

Week 13: 1453. Read pdf #11 on the fall of Constantinople. Prepare to discuss it in the forum.

Learning Objectives: Outline the stages in the siege of Constantinople.


Learning Objectives: Explain the Palaeologan Renaissance in its Western and Eastern European flowerings

*Week 15 Epilogue: Byzance apres byzance (Byzantium after the fall of Byzantium)- the great idea in pre-modern Greek history. Final Exam (take home critical essay question) Pdf Reading # 13.