Course description:

This course explores the history of the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantium, from the founding of the city of Constantinople in 330 to its fall in 1453. While the Western Roman Empire fell and was carved into smaller kingdoms that would become the nations of western Europe, the eastern half of the Roman Empire did not fall to barbarians, but stood for another thousand years, producing one of the richest cultures the world has ever seen. In their own eyes, the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire were and remained Romans, right through the middle of the fifteenth century.

We will examine several key questions over the course of the semester:

- What are the points of continuity and discontinuity with Roman culture? When can we say that “Roman” culture has become “Byzantine” culture?
- What is the role of religion in this culture, and how did that role differ from the role religion played in the contemporary West?
- What does material culture – the art and architecture of Byzantium – have to say about these questions?

Material and visual culture will be a key part of our focus, and the backbone of the way we will be learning about Byzantium. We will take seriously the visual legacy of the Eastern Roman Empire as seriously as its textual legacy, and evaluate the ways in which an alabaster chalice has as much to tell us as a historical chronicle.

This course will use two main textbooks, one of which tells the story of Byzantium as a historical narrative (i.e. this famous person did this thing, and then this other famous person did this thing) and one of which tells the story of Byzantium as an art historical narrative (i.e. this famous artwork was created, and then this artwork, and then this one.) Using those texts as a foundation, we will build on that with primary source readings – the words of Byzantines themselves, telling
us how they understood themselves, their society, and their religion. You will be expected to purchase these foundations texts, but primary source readings will either be scanned and available to you on Canvas, or will be linked. Most of the art and architecture we study will be presented in class, and those power points will be loaded to our class page on Canvas. They are also part of the course material you are expected to master, along with the primary and secondary readings.

You should expect weekly reading to amount to between 30 and 50 pages. Sometimes we will come in under that, and sometimes a little over. It is my hope that the amount of reading will never be so great that it overwhelms your capacity to think about what you have read, and offer thoughtful response in class.

The general structure will be that Fridays are devoted specifically to art, architecture, and visual evidence, but evidence from material culture is the backbone of this course, so you should expect our Mondays and Wednesdays to feature some discussion of material culture as well.

**Grading:**

1. You will have a mid-term test, and a final exam.

2. You will have **two brief papers** (ca. 2500 words). Papers will be due electronically by 5 p.m. on the due date.

   For the first paper, you may choose any topic of interest to you in what we have discussed so far. This is a reflection paper that asks you to a) summarize the scholarly thinking on a particular topic or object, and b) explore your own response to the topic, supporting your argument by your reading, by class discussion, and by primary and secondary sources. For this first assignment, I am open to any topics that interest you, and I hope you will be adventurous.

   For the second paper, you will be choosing an illuminated image from a Byzantine menologion (a calendar containing lives of the saints for each day of the year) and then writing about that image and the associated saint or saints. You are not expected to be able to read the Greek text of the menologion, but to use the image as a starting point for your research. What was the significance of this saint in Byzantine devotion? What can you discover about this saint? Why might the illuminator have chosen to depict this saint in this particular way, and what message is the image conveying? (You will find a link to the menologion database under “resources,” below.)

3. I will also administer **reading quizzes**, but these are always very short and (if you have done the reading) very simple. Ideally, reading quizzes are a way of motivating you to read while providing you with a chance to do well.

4. Finally, your **class participation** is a part of your grade. Your engagement and attention are a crucial contribution to our exploration together. Class attendance is a part of that. With the exception of our mid-term and final exam, you may miss any two classes you wish. Life happens – illness, emergency, a dryer fire that destroys all your clothes. So
save those two free absences for the emergencies, and don’t waste them. After the second absence, I will begin to deduct points from your participation grade.

Textbooks:
*Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*, by Judith Herrin
(Princeton University Press, 2008, $13.57)
*Byzantine Art and Architecture: An Introduction*, by Lyn Rodley
(Cambridge University Press, 1996, $35.93)

Expectations:
- Reading assignments will be completed on the day they are due.
- All classmates will be addressed with courtesy and consideration at all times.
- You will abide at all times by Emory’s honor code, which is available for you to view here: [http://conduct.emory.edu/](http://conduct.emory.edu/). Plagiarism, or any form of academic dishonesty, will not be tolerated.
- If an emergency arises that leaves you unable to complete an assignment, you will communicate with me immediately.

Important Dates:
First paper due: Thursday Feb 15
Mid-term exam: Wednesday Feb 28
Second paper due: Thursday Mar 29
Final exam: (exam calendar not published yet)

Additional books and resources:
Digitizations of all major Byzantine menologia available here:
[https://library.princeton.edu/byzantine/subject-theme/menologion](https://library.princeton.edu/byzantine/subject-theme/menologion)

Adamnan, *Pilgrimage of Arculf*
John of Damascus, *On The Holy Images*
Theodore of Studium, *Rule of Studium*
Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*
*Rule of St. Athanasius*
Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*
Helen Evans, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Period, 843-1261*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997 (on reserve)
Helen Evans, *Byzantium: Faith and Power* (sequel to *The Glory of Byzantium*), Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004 (on reserve)
Week One: Foundation Stories

Jan 17
Introductory Lecture, or:
Why Did Constantinople Get The Works? The Story of the Siege of 1453

Jan 19
*secondary*: Herrin 1/2: 28-46; excerpt from Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, 60-67 (the serpent column)

Week Two: Church and State

Jan 22
*secondary*: Herrin 3, 47-57

Jan 24
*secondary*: Herrin 4, 58-74
*primary*: Eusebius, excerpts from *Life of Constantine* (chapters 27-32, 40-44)

Jan 26
Ivories and Manuscripts (Rodley 45-53)

Week Three: Justinian and Hagia Sophia

Jan 29
*secondary*: Herrin 5, 75-85
*primary*: Procopius, description of Hagia Sophia from *De Aedificiis*

Jan 31
*secondary*: Herrin 6, 86-94
*primary*: Procopius, description of the Plague of 542 (*History of the Wars*, II. xxii-xxxiii)

Feb 2
Architecture in Constantinople (major churches) (Rodley 16-26)

Week Four: Jerusalem in Conquest and Pilgrimage

Feb 5
*secondary*: Herrin 8 part 1, 107-122
*primary*: Adamnan, *Pilgrimage of Arculf*, Book I, chapters 1-10

Feb 7
*secondary*: Herrin 8 part 2, 107-122

Feb 9
Diptychs, Mosaics, and Domes (Rodley 89-114)
*primary*: Huneburc of Heidenheim, *Journey of St. Willibald* (161-177)
Week Five: Icons in Politics and Devotion
Feb 12
*secondary:* Herrin 9, 123-129

Feb 14
*secondary:* Herrin 10, 130-143
*primary:* decree of Second Nicaea on Icons, 550/551 (https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/nicea2-dec.asp)

Thursday Feb 15: FIRST PAPER DUE

Feb 16
Icons and Iconoclasts (Rodley 125-131)

Week Six: Monastic Life
Feb 19
*secondary:* Herrin 11, 144-155

Feb 21
*secondary:* Herrin 12, 156-162
*primary:* Reform Rules of Theodore of Studium (http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/theostud-rules.html)

Feb 23
Liturgical Objects of the Macedonian Renaissance (Rodley 163-178)

Week Seven (Mid-Term)
Feb 26
Review Day

Feb 28
MID-TERM EXAM

Mar 2
Copts and Robbers: The World Beyond The Empire
*secondary:* 224-235, excerpt from *The Treasures of Coptic Art: in the Coptic Museum and Churches of Old Cairo*

SPRING BREAK
Week Eight: Imperial Court Life
Mar 19
secondary: Herrin 15, 185-209
primary: Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Ceremoniis*, Book II, chapters 46-48

Mar 21
secondary: Herrin 16, 210-225
primary: Liutprand of Cremona, Embassy to Constantinople, excerpts
(https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/liudprand-embassy-excerpts.asp)

Mar 23
Illuminated Manuscripts of the Macedonian Era (Rodley 179-190)

Week Nine: Of Warfare and Warlords
Mar 26
secondary: Herrin 17, 226-231
primary: Digenes Akrites, Books 1-3, Lay of the Emir (Mavrogordato 3-65, English side only)

Mar 28
secondary: Herrin 18, 232-243
primary: Digenes Akrites, Book 7, (Mavrogordato 217-231)

Thursday Mar 29: SECOND PAPER DUE

Mar 30
Tenth Century Ivories (*Glory of Byzantium*, 126-135)

Week Ten: Theophano, Photius, and Manzikert
Apr 2
secondary: Herrin 19, 244-252
primary: vision of Otloh of Sankt Emmeram (excerpt of *Liber de tentationibus*, from *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society*, ed. Michael Goodich)

Apr 4
secondary: Herrin 20, 253-260
primary: Theodore Skoutariotes, from the *Synopsis Chronika*
(https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/source/skoutariotes1.asp)
primary: John Skylitzes, excerpts on Battle of Manzikert (from longer version)

Apr 6
Vasiliki Tsamakda, *The Illustrated Chronicle of John Skylitzes in Madrid* (118-146)
Other Illuminated Manuscripts of the Comnenan Period (Rodley 247-258)
**Week Eleven: Anna Comnena**

**Apr 9**
*secondary:* Herrin 22, 273-282
*primary:* Alexiad of Anna Comnena, Book II 50-78 (Alexius’ rise to power)

**Apr 11**
*primary:* Alexiad of Anna Comnena, Book XIII.1-6, 357-374 (assassination plots)

**Apr 13**
Commenan Mosaics of Sicily and Hagia Sophia (Rodley 229-233)

**Week Twelve: Crusades**

**Apr 16**
*secondary:* Herrin 24, 296-306
*primary:* William of Tyre, *History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, Book VIII: End of the Pilgrimage (First Crusade and conquest of Jerusalem)

**Apr 18**
*secondary:* Herrin 25, 307-321
*primary:* Geoffrey de Villehardouin, *Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade*, 47-57 (sack of 1204) ([https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/villehardouin.asp](https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/villehardouin.asp))

**Apr 20**
Latin Occupation (Rodley 265-274)

**Week Thirteen: Empire’s End**

**Apr 23**
*secondary:* Herrin 26, 322-347
*primary:* Ignatius of Smolensk, *Journey to Constantinople*, Part IV (coronation of Manuel II)

**Apr 25**
*secondary:* Herrin 27/28, 348-369
*secondary:* Steven Runciman, *Mistra: Byzantine Capital of the Peloponnese* (selection TBA)
*primary:* George Phrantzes, *Fall of the Byzantine Empire*, 87-101

**Apr 27**
Paleologan Iconography (Rodley 314-338)

**Week Fourteen**

**Apr 30 (EXAM REVIEW SESSION)**