American University of Beirut
Department of History and Archaeology

History 225 Byzantine Empire and Civilization, 330-900

Dr. Nadia El Cheikh
College Hall, room 442, ext. 4188
Email: nmcheikh@aub.edu.lb
Office hours: Tuesday, 12.30-2.30

Learning outcomes
This course outlines fundamental aspects of Byzantine history and culture from the foundation of Constantinople in the fourth century until the beginning of the Macedonian dynasty in the ninth century. In it we will trace the transformation of the ancient world and the emergence of a distinct Byzantine civilization. We will also observe the growth of Christianity and its transformation into a world religion.

Upon completion of the course students will have acquired knowledge of salient aspects of Byzantine history and culture during the period from 330 to 900, most notably: the foundation of Constantinople, religious developments, disappearance and revival of cities, monasticism, the interaction between Byzantium and its neighbors and Byzantium’s response to economic, political and military challenges.

In addition you will be expected to improve your skills in:
* Gaining a sense of historical change and methodologies.
* Analyzing primary texts and documents.
* Improve through class discussions constructive oral skills.
* Improve your writing skills.
* Improve your critical reasoning skills.

Resources Available to Students
All assigned readings will be photocopied and placed on reserve in Jafet library.
Web resources: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall

Requirements and Grading
Weekly reading assignments are taken from a variety of selected chapters and articles and primary sources which constitute the core of class discussions.
Class participation contributes to 15 % of your final grade.
The students are required to write a mid-term exam 35%,
and a final exam: 50%

Grading for History majors who are required to write a 5-7 pages book review due at the beginning of the reading period.
A mid-term exam: 25%
A final exam: 35%
Book-Review: 25%
Class participation: 15%

Course Policy
This course has a lecture-discussion format. Regular and informed participation in class is essential. All students must come to class having read and reflected on the readings and are expected to participate actively in class discussions.
This course, in line with University policy regarding academic honesty, considers any form of cheating a serious offense.
Schedule and Readings

**Week 1  Introduction**

Lectures
February 16  Introduction to Course
February 18  The Late Roman Revolution

Readings

**Week 2  From Rome to Byzantium**

Lectures
February 23  A Society in Crisis
February 25  Christianity in the Late Roman Context

Readings:

**Week 3  Constantine the Great**

Lectures
March 2  Constantine’s Conversion to Christianity (I)
March 4  Constantine’s Conversion to Christianity (II)

Readings:


**Week 4  Constantine the Great**

Lectures
March 9  The Meaning of Constantine’s Conversion
March 11  The Founding of Constantinople

Readings:
*Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, pp. 82-95.

**Week 5  The Making of Orthodox Byzantium**

Lectures
March 16  The Ecumenical Councils and Dogma
March 18  Religious Controversy

Readings:

Discussion: “The Nicaean Creed.”
Week 6  The Last Hellenes
Lectures
March 23 Emperor Julian. Discussion of texts by Libanius and Nazianzus.
March 25 Education and the Last Hellenes. Discussion: Emperor Julian:
“Rescript on Christian Teachers.”

Readings
Discussion: Primary sources related to Emperor Julian.

Week 7  A New Landscape
Lectures
March 30 Asceticism and Monasticism
April 1 The Holy Man in Late Antiquity

Readings
*Peter Brown, The World of Late Antiquity, pp. 96-112.

Week 8  Women, Private Life and the Church
Lectures
April 6 Women and Private Life
April 8 Holy Women of the Christian Orient

Readings

Week 9  The Age of Justinian
Lectures
April 13 Constantinople in the sixth Century
April 15 Procopius, Justinian, and Theodora

Readings
*Judith Herrin, Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire, pp. 50-79.
Discussion: Procopius, The Secret History (selections).

Week 10  The Disappearance and Revival of Cities
Lectures
April 20 Circus Factions and Urban Violence
April 22 A Late Byzantine City: Ephesus

Readings
*C. Mango, Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome, chap. 3.
**Week 11  Heraclius and the Rise of Islam**

Lectures
April 27 The New Participants
April 29 Emperor Heraclius

Readings


**Week 12: the Byzantine Empire in the seventh Century**

 Lectures
May 4 *Bilad al-Sham*: What did the Conquerors find?
May 6 Arab Sieges of Constantinople

Reading

**Week 13  Iconoclasm**

Lectures
May 11 The Iconoclastic Period: Political and Social Phenomena (I)
May 13 The Iconoclastic Period: Political and Social Phenomena (II) and discussion of John of Damascus.

Readings:

Discussion: John of Damascus: “In Defense of Icons.”

**Week 14 The Age of the Iconoclastic Crisis**

Lectures
May 17 The Restoration of Icons
May 20 Women and Iconoclasm

Readings


Decree of the Second Council of Nicaea

**Week 15 Revision**