



AH/RL/HS 253 FROM PONTIUS PILATE TO THEODOSIUS: THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY

IES Abroad Rome

DESCRIPTION:

From the time of the first persecution under the Emperor Nero (64 AD), Christianity gradually became a decisive force to contend within the Roman world and developed into a structured monotheistic religion that ultimately became the official religion of the Empire. At a time when the sheen and polish of Rome's imperial splendors were in fact fading, the city of Rome became the center of this extraordinary transformation and ultimately the seat of the Chair of Peter. How did the Empire go from pagan to Christian? How did a minor sect of Judaism develop into the Rome-centered Catholic Church? How was orthodoxy established in light of the many differing cultural and theological tenets that distinguished and divided the early Christian communities? And what did Rome have to do with it? The course seeks to explore fundamental issues concerning the birth of a worldwide religion also within the context of the cultural, historical, social and political framework of the environment into which Christianity developed. In examining the particular context of this transformation it will be useful to understand events and conditions in the latter centuries of the Roman Empire; investigate the political climate in Rome on the eve of Constantine's accession to power; determine the social tensions within the cities of the Empire; establish the import of political, financial and military instability in the III and IV centuries AD.

In order to understand how Christianity developed and set itself apart from the Judaism of its roots the course will study how the Jewish messianic cult that was Christianity had then to integrate the Greco-Roman worldview in order to realize Paul's goal of converting Gentiles. A radical translation occurred from a Semitic to a Greco-Roman context, and many of the religious practices and beliefs of the Greco-Roman world were integrated into Christianity. The course will make extensive use of field studies in an attempt to investigate Late Antique Rome and how the advent of Christianity gradually but significantly altered the urban landscape of the city; transformed the iconography of public and private art, yet at the same time maintaining astonishing elements of continuity in painting, sculpture and architecture.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures
- Seminar discussion
- Course-related trips

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation 10%
- Assignment 20%
- Midterm 25%
- Paper 20%
- Final exam 25%

***Details of required work:**

Grading Rubric for student participation:

A	Excellent participation
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	The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that he or she has been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course, and with his or her own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. He/she respectfully states his/her reactions about other classmates' opinions, and is capable of contributing to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
B	Very good participation The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student is able to construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. He/she is respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography, but in a superficial way. He/she tries to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provides comments that indicate lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way, and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- outline the structure and history of the Roman Empire between the I and V centuries AD;
- identify the specific context of Roman rule in Palestine;
- trace the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire;
- assess the significance of the reigns of Constantine and Theodosius for the history of Christianity;
- determine how Christianity came to affect Roman values, traditions, art and architecture and how it assimilated important components of the Roman tradition.
- recognize how Christianity developed out of its Jewish context and was transformed in the Greco-Roman world, adopting foreign and pagan religious practices.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Attendance is mandatory for all IES classes, including field studies. If a student misses more than one class in this course, 2 percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for every additional absence. Any exams, tests, presentations, or other work missed due to student absences can only be rescheduled in cases of documented medical emergencies or family emergencies. IES will only consider extreme emergency cases and will strictly adhere to this policy. Do plan your semester accordingly.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1	Introduction Contextualizing the advent of Christianity: understanding values and traditions of the Greco Roman world; the power of religion in the ancient world; paganism vs. monotheism.	<u>Readings:</u> Wilken, <i>The Christians as the Romans Saw Them</i> , pp.1-47. (on reserve)
Week 2	Emperor and Empire	<u>Readings:</u>

	The Roman Empire in the I - III centuries AD.	- Goodman, <i>The Roman World 44 BC- AD 180</i> (chs. 9-15). (textbook) - Barrow, <i>The Romans</i>, pp. 163-174. (Moodle)
Week 3	Roman Religion and the Imperial Cult The structure of the Roman State religion. The Emperor and divine rulership.	<u>Readings:</u> Goodman, <i>The Roman World 44 BC- AD 180</i> (ch. 29). (textbook)
Week 4	Aspects of Roman Rule in the Provinces Conquest, Pacification, and Romanization; Roman Rule in Palestine Religion and politics in Judea Course-related trip: Roman Forum, Palatine, Imperial Fora	<u>Readings:</u> - Goodman, <i>The Roman World 44 BC- AD 180</i> (chs. 23, 26, 28). (textbook) - Josephus, <i>The Wars of the Jews</i>, Book II and Book VI www.gutenberg.org, War of the Jews (Moodle) <u>Readings:</u> Claridge, <i>Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide</i> , pp. 61ff. (on reserve)
Week 5	The life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth Judaism and messianic movements in Palestine. The revolutionary message of Christianity. The early Christian church in Jerusalem. Film Viewing: "The Inquiry"	<u>Readings:</u> Goodman, <i>The Roman World 44 BC- AD 180</i> (ch. 30). (textbook)
Week 6	Early Christian Communities The spread of Christianity to the Greco-Roman world: the preaching of Paul and the first communities in Rome and in the Empire Midterm exam	<u>Readings:</u> - Goodman, <i>The Roman World 44 BC- AD 180</i> (ch. 31). (textbook) - Ehrman, <i>After the New Testament</i>, (Moodle) "Justin: Dialogue with Trypho" (pp. 18-24), (Moodle) "Letter of Ignatius to the Romans (pp. 28-30), (Moodle) "Justin: First Apology" (pp. 57-65), (Moodle) "Athenagoras: Plea Regarding the Christians" (pp. 65-71), (Moodle) "The Didache" (pp. 346-347). (Moodle) - Paul's "Letter to the Romans" in <i>The Oxford Annotated Bible</i> (Moodle) "Acts of the Apostles" in the <i>Oxford Annotated Bible</i>. (Moodle)
Week 7	Gnosticism and other Heresies Different interpretations of Christianity Course-related trip: Saint Paul outside the walls	<u>Readings:</u> Pagels, <i>The Gnostic Gospels</i> (on reserve)

Week 8	Persecution Early Christian communities and the Roman structure of government. Course-related trip: Tomb of Saint Peter and Vatican Basilica	<u>Readings:</u> • Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>, Passages 15.37 – 15.44 (Moodle) • “Letter of Gaius Plinius to the Emperor Trajan” (Moodle) • Ehrman, <i>After the New Testament</i> • “The Martyrdom of Polycarp” (pp. 30-35), (Moodle) • “The Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons” (pp. 35-41), (Moodle) • “The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas” (pp.42-50), (Moodle) • Wilken, <i>The Christians as the Romans Saw Them</i>, pp.48-67. (on reserve)
Week 9	The Revolution of Constantine How the politics of a fading Empire determined the acceptance of Christianity. Course-related trip: Colosseum and Arch of Constantine	<u>Readings:</u> • “The Edict of Milan” (Moodle) • Lewis & Reinhold, <i>Roman Civilization, II</i>, pp. 571-582. (on reserve) <u>Readings:</u> • Claridge, <i>Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide</i>, pp. 268-292. (on reserve) • Wilken, <i>The Christians as the Romans Saw Them</i>, pp.126-163. (on reserve)
Week 10	The Apotheosis under Theodosius The final triumph of Christianity over Paganism; St. Ambrose vs. Emperor Theodosius: the hold of the new religion on imperial power Film Viewing: “Agora”	<u>Readings:</u> • “The Edict of Thessalonica” (Moodle) • Eusebius, “Priviledges” (Moodle) • Lewis & Reinhold, <i>Roman Civilization, II</i>, pp.609-618. (on reserve) • Wilken, <i>The Christians as the Romans Saw Them</i>, pp.164-205. (on reserve)
Week 11	The Beginnings of Christian Art Early Christian iconography in Roman catacombs, sarcophagi and paintings. Course-related trip: Catacombs of Santa Domitilla	<u>Readings:</u> • Fiocchi-Nicolai-Bisconti-Mazzoleni, <i>The Christian Catacombs of Rome. History, Decoration, Inscriptions</i> (ch. II). (on reserve) <u>Readings:</u> • Fiocchi-Nicolai-Bisconti-Mazzoleni, <i>The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions</i>, pp.9-60. (on reserve)
Week 12	Beginnings of Christian Architecture The great Christian Basilicas and the development of a public ritual Course-related trip: Basilica of Santa Sabina and Aventine Hill	<u>Readings:</u> • Krautheimer, <i>Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture</i>, (ch. 1) (on reserve) • Krautheimer, <i>Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture</i>, (chs. 2 and 7; pp.127-130). (on reserve)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Barrow, *The Romans*
- Goodman, *The Roman World 44 BC- AD 180* (textbook)
- Pagels, Elaine, *The Gnostic Gospels*
- Claridge, Amanda, *Rome : An Oxford Archaeological Guide*
- Ehrman, *After the New Testament: a Reader in Early Christianity*
- Eusebius, *Priviledges*
- Flocchi-Nicolai-Bisconti-Mazzoleni, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions*
- Krautheimer, Richard, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*
- Lewis & Reinhold, *Roman Civilization, vol. II*
- Pliny, *Letters*
- St. Paul *Letter to the Romans* in *The Oxford Annotated Bible*
- Tacitus, *Annals*
- Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*
- *The Edict of Thessalonica*
- *The Edict of Milan*
- *Acts of the Apostles* in the *Oxford Annotated Bible*.

ON INTERNET:

- Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews* (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/index.htm>)