
AH/CL/RL330 LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY CHRISTIAN ART IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD
IES Rome Syllabus

DESCRIPTION: Considering the area of the Mediterranean world, with emphasis on the cities of Rome and Ravenna, and focusing on the period included between the 4th and the 6th centuries A.D., the course will trace the pivotal mainstreams of visual art determined by the crisis of the Roman Empire and the birth of a specific Christian art. The course will examine the dialogue/contrast between pagan and Christian art by paying a particular attention to the mechanisms and to the strategies of translation and transformation of visual languages.

The structure of the course will be, thus, centred on lines of internal communication (among different social, political and religious spheres) and of geographical communication (between Western and Eastern Empires). By the end of the course students will have an outline of the history and geography of the later Roman Empire; a familiarity with the principal works of early Christian art and architecture; an awareness of the interaction of cultures which is at the basis of the birth of Christian art; an awareness of the meaning of the concept of the "loss of centre"; basic knowledge of the main artistic techniques used in the later Roman Empire (mosaics, wall painting, etc.); and basic knowledge of early Christian iconography.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF PRESENTATION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: \$200.00

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: lectures, seminar discussions, visits to monuments and sights, slides, use of multimedia and Internet resources (selected by the instructor).

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation (15%)
- Midterm exam (20%)
- Research paper (30%)
- Final exam (35%)

Details of required work:

Exams

Both midterm and final exams consist of short essay writings, direct question answering, slide identifications and multiple choice questions.

Research Paper

A 5000 characters paper dealing with a topic chosen with the professor.

Presentation

Student will give a class presentation on the research paper topic. Presentations will last a maximum of 10 minutes.

Participation

A rubric for participation will be posted on Moodle and shared with students at the beginning of the term.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Explain the political and religious meaning of late antique art and architecture
- Comprehend the cultural and spiritual environment of the Mediterranean area between the 4th and the 6th century
- Identify the cultural merging of two very different worlds, the monotheistic Abrahamic tradition and the Mediterranean polytheistic tradition
- Recognize and detect pagan symbols carried into the new Christian iconographic models of power
- Distinguish the main protagonists and characters of the 4th and 6th centuries with reference to the art works

List of course related excursions:

- Mysteric cults and Mithraism section of the Baths of Diocletian. The collection of relics included marble reliefs, bronze, metal instruments and gilded statuary from the imperial and late antique period which emphasize the importance of religious Mystery cults, including those of Mytres, Anna Perenna, Isis and Osiris.
- Catacombs of St. Callixtus. The focus of the visit will be on the frescoes, the funerary structures, and the iconography of the different religious cults, particularly related on the good shepherd, the prayer and the Orpheus and a comparison between the different use of symbols.
- Santi Cosma and Damiano Basilica. The first place of Christian worship inside the Roman Fora in the 6th century, constructed with the permission of emperor Theodoric. The focus will be on the structure and apsidal mosaics of the church, one of the main symbols of change in use of these spaces. Attention given to the reusage of ancient roman marbles and materials, in a transition from pagan to a Christian use.
- Santa Pudenziana Church. It is one of the most ancient churches in Rome. In this church we will analyze the symbolism of the apsidal mosaics, dated around the 390 A.D., one of the earliest Christian mosaics. The church was probably built on the ruins of the *domus* of senator Pudenzio, father of Saint Pudenziana and we will analyze how part of this ancient building were reused to erect part of the church.
- Pio-Cristiano collection of the Vatican Museum. The Pio-Cristiano section of the Vatican Museums was founded in the 19th century to house remains of the early Christian community. We will analyze the statuary, relics, and the large collection of Christian sarcophagi, which represent an important corpus of early Christian iconography.
- Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. One of the first early Christian Basilicas, this church was built by the pope Sisto III, between the 432-444 A.D. The basilica is mostly made up of remains of ancient warehouses and pagan places of worship demolished in the Christian era. We will analyze many of these remains and consider the mosaics of the central nave and of the triumphal arch with Old and New Testament representations as the first figurative cycle created in a Roman church.
- Overnight academic trip to Ravenna: church of San Vitale, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Mauseoleum of Galla Placidia, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. Ravenna, capital of the Western Roman Empire in late antiquity, was also the first archiepiscopal seat in the history of Christianity. The city was also the capital of the Byzantine Exarchate. In visiting the most important site, we will analyze their mosaics, the evolution of the style of this technique and the strong political and religious symbolism of the mosaics.

CONTENT

Session	Content	Readings and Assignments
Session 1	Introduction to the Course Overview of the course	
Session 2	The late Antique Roman world and the “Tetrarchy” of political revolution	- Elsner, Jas. Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity. Pp. 21-49 (29). - Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 1-15 (14). - Kitzinger, Ernst. Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in the Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century. Pp. 7-21 (14).
Session 3	Before Christianity: the syncretic and mystic cults in the Roman world.	- Elsner, Jas. Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity. Pp. 50-88 (38) - Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 27-35 (9). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 25-50 (25).
Session 4	A new power: Constantine and his vision.	- Elsner, Jas. Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity. Pp. 157-190 (33). - Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 53-63 (10). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 53-63 (10).
Session 5	From the classical world to late antiquity: styles, differences and transformations.	- Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 167-186 and 237-247 (29). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 3-22 (19).
Session 6	Field study n.1	<u>Mystic cults and Mithraism section of the Baths of Diocletian.</u> The collection of relics included marble reliefs, bronze, metal instruments and gilded statuary from the imperial and late antique period which emphasize the importance of religious Mystery cults, including those of Mytres, Anna Perenna, Isis and Osiris.
Session 7	The light from the dark: Mithraism and the deep links with Christianity.	- Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 195-225 (30). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 199-221 (22)

Session	Content	Readings and Assignments
Session 8	Field study n.2	<u>Catacombs of St. Callixtus</u>. The focus of the visit will be on the frescoes, the funerary structures, and the iconography of the different religious cults, particularly related on the good shepherd, the prayer and the Orpheus and a comparison between the different use of symbols.
Session 9	The great art and structures from the roman to the Christian world.	- Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 115-138 (23). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 167-186 (19)
Session 10	Field study n.3	<u>Santi Cosma and Damiano Basilica</u>. The first place of Christian worship inside the Roman Fora in the 6th century, constructed with the permission of emperor Theodoric. The focus will be on the structure and apsidal mosaics of the church, one of the main symbols of change in use of these spaces. Attention given to the reusage of ancient roman marbles and materials, in a transition from pagan to a Christian use.
Session 11	Midterm exam review	General review of the studied program
Session 12	Midterm exam	
Session 13	The usage of symbolism in the late antique world.	- Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 138-158 (20). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 54-91 (37)
Session 14	Field study n.4	<u>Santa Pudenziana Church</u>. It is one of the most ancient churches in Rome. In this church we will analyze the symbolism of the apsidal mosaics, dated around the 390 A.D., one of the earliest Christian mosaics. The church was probably built on the ruins of the <i>domus</i> of senator Pudenzio, father of Saint Pudenziana and we will analyze how part of this ancient building were reused to erect part of the church.

Session	Content	Readings and Assignments
Session 15	The catacombs, a subterranean world.	- Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 248-257 (9). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 93-142 (49)
Session 16	The artistic depiction of Christ in a world of Gods.	- Elsner, Jas. Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity. Pp. 21-48 (27) - Elsner, Jas. Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity. Pp. 89-125 (36).
Session 17	Formalizing Christianity: symbolic passages from polytheism to monotheism.	- Elsner, Jas. Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph. Pp. 23-54 (31). - Mathews, F. Thomas. The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art. Pp. 115-141 (26)
Session 18	Field study n.5	<u>Pio-Cristiano collection of the Vatican Museum.</u> The Pio-Cristiano section of the Vatican Museums was founded in the 19th century to house remains of the early Christian community. We will analyze the statuary, relics, and the large collection of Christian sarcophagi, which represent an important corpus of early Christian iconography.
Session 19	Polytheism and Christianity, a political (not religious) issue in the roman society.	Film viewing: <i>Ágora</i>, by Alejandro Amenábar (2009) about life and death of Ipazia of Alexandria.
Session 20	Field study n.6	<u>Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.</u> One of the first early Christian Basilicas, this church was built by the pope Sisto III, between the 432-444 A.D. The basilica is mostly made up of remains of ancient warehouses and pagan places of worship demolished in the Christian era. We will analyze many of these remains and consider the mosaics of the central nave and of the triumphal arch with Old and New Testament representations as the first figurative cycle created in a Roman church.
Session 21	From west to east: Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire.	Kitzinger, Ernst. Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in the Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century. Pp. 7-22 and 45-80 (50)

Session	Content	Readings and Assignments
Session 22	Ravenna: a seat of power in the Byzantine cultural and political area of influence.	- Mathews, F. Thomas. <i>The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art.</i> Pp. 142-176 (34) - Kitzinger, Ernst. <i>Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in the Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century.</i> Pp. 81-98 (17)
Session 23	<u>Overnight academic trip to Ravenna: church of San Vitale, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Mauseoleum of Galla Placidia, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo.</u> Ravenna, capital of the Western Roman Empire in late antiquity, was also the first archiepiscopal seat in the history of Christianity. The city was also the capital of the Byzantine Exarchate. In visiting the most important site, we will analyze their mosaics, the evolution of the style of this technique and the strong political and religious symbolism of the mosaics.	- Elsner, Jas. <i>Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity.</i> Pp. 89-125 (36) - Kitzinger, Ernst. <i>Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in the Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century.</i> Pp. 99-122 (23) - Mathews, F. Thomas. <i>The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art.</i> Pp. 177-191 (14)
Session 24	Final exam review	General review of the studied program
Session 25	Final exam	

REQUIRED READINGS

Elsner, Jas. *Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity.* Cambridge University Press, 1995.
 Elsner, Jas. *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph.* Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
 Kitzinger, Ernst. *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in the Mediterranean Art, 3rd-7th Century.* Cambridge, Mass., 1977.
 Mathews, F. Thomas. *The clash of Gods. A reinterpretation of Early Christian Art.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Cameron, A. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity (AD 395-600).* London: Routledge, Routledge History of Ancient World, 1993.
 Ensoli, Serena and Eugenio La Rocca (eds.). "Aurea Roma. Dalla città pagana alla città cristiana." Exhibition catalogue, Rome, 2000/2001.
 Grabar A. *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins.* New York, 1968.
 Jensen, Robin M. *Understanding Early Christian Art.* New York: Routledge, 2000.

Lowden, J. Early Christian and Byzantine Art. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997.

Mazzarino, Santo. The End of the Ancient World. Greenwood Pub Group; Reprint edizione (1 luglio 1976).

Weitzmann K. (ed.). Age of Spirituality, Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century. New York, 1979.