COURSE DESCRIPTION AND ABSTRACT

Rome – *Umbilicus Mundi*, the navel of the world, the centre of civilisation, by far the greatest city in Antiquity. The “most splendid of splendid cities” counted approximately one million inhabitants in its heyday. Lavish provisions of food and wine, as well as spectacles and various forms of urban decoration, magnificent temples and public buildings were pretty much the norm. Public baths, gardens, libraries, circuses, theatres and amphitheatres gave access to all the citizens of Rome. An elaborate network of roads and aqueducts, well-maintained throughout the centuries, all led to the Eternal City. It must have appeared at the time that Rome would never end!

*The World of Classical Rome* takes us on a journey, a journey through time. If you always thought space to be the final frontier, then you’re wrong: time is! This course investigates the historical development of the Roman people through study of their history, politics, society and culture especially in the 1st centuries BC and AD, the turning points of Republican and Imperial Rome. Actually, speaking of turning points, the last phrase of the previous, first paragraph, might be a bit misleading… At least to a contemporary Roman at the time… Because to some of those old chaps, the Roman Republic seemed to be in grave danger… And with the Republic, Rome… With Rome, the world… Think Star Wars: the Republic, the Empire that strikes back… Chaos: political, social, economic, cultural, religious chaos… Wars, both external and civil, corruption, violence… Rome could have ended, at least according to some, right then, right there… Classical Rome, and the journey that it is, takes us right back to some of the major characters of Roman history: to the Scipio clan, the Gracchi, Marius, Sulla, Pompeius, the big JC himself, and the rather short Octavian, who became *Augustus* in 27 BC – august, elevated, perhaps because he was sporting some impressive platform heels?

This course intends to demonstrate that the period concerned was indeed a time of chaos, but also one of gradual transformation and even a certain degree of continuity. Both literary sources and the archaeology and epigraphy shall be combined to show how classical Rome took shape, was modified, but at the same time was carried further by the likes of *Augustus*.

Throughout this course, some of the major issues in the study of the city of Rome in this transitory period are more closely examined. History is never a single-minded and uniform matter. The various contributions of numerous scholars, along with the use of the textbook of the great English ancient historian H.H. Scullard, are all intended to stimulate the mind to ask further questions, and to start thinking into only few of all the possible directions towards possible answers – or mere hypotheses. Primary sources, as well as secondary literature from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, reveal the drama of the history, society, politics, and culture of Classical Rome and its empire. This course is focused on evaluating the validity of various theories, research findings, and attitudes related to issues such as “the fall of the Republic”, “continuity and change”, *et cetera*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The key objective of this course is to survey the history of Rome in the period of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, with some flirtations to earlier and later periods. Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge about the significant political, cultural and social accomplishments, events, institutions, trends, questions, and concerns, and the major figures of the age. One of the main problems concerning the studies of Rome and of the Ancient World in general is always one of evidence. Also in this particular case one has to rely on biased, and often fragmented literary sources. Archaeology and epigraphy supplement the literary evidence, but also provide information that partly stands completely on its own. All the evidence has to be
weighed with extreme care and consideration. At the end of this course, students are expected to be aware of all the problems and debates concerning a few key themes taken from this time span, and the sensitivities regarding the evidence at hand. They need to demonstrate an understanding of the working of historical mechanisms. They need to be able to evaluate and critically analyse this historical period, having acquired a set of skills to scrutinize the available source material. They need to demonstrate that they are able to comprehend, paraphrase, summarise, and contextualise both the primary sources and the discussions around them.

**PROCEDURES AND POLICIES**

*The World of Classical Rome* meets twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 03:40 PM to 04:55 PM. It is expected of students to contribute in a significant way to this course. They are responsible for completing all of the assigned readings, according to the schedule attached to this syllabus. Class discussions and activities (including on-site meetings in the centre of the City of Rome) encourage students to generate their own ideas, hypotheses, opinions, theories, questions, and proposals; and develop strategies for seeking and synthesizing information to support an argument, make a decision, or resolve a problem. This course has no prerequisites and assumes no prior knowledge of Roman history, or indeed of the Latin language. It is intended that students acquire a basic knowledge and understanding of the historical background and facts of ancient Rome, as well as that of the working of historical mechanisms, as described above.

It is strongly recommended to take notes, both when reading and listening. These notes are an indispensable part of studying and learning, often the best means to anchor your thoughts with true understanding, transform opinion into knowledge, and establish comprehension rooted in memory. Writing is learning – with half as much effort.

**ATTENDANCE AND ASSESSMENT**

Attendance is mandatory. The success of each session depends to a considerable extent on the students’ presence, as well as on their preparation and participation.

Final grade assessments will be based on the combination of two exams, one mid-term and one final, and one large essay (10-15 pages) concerning a topic of free choice and based on primary sources and secondary literature. A small percentage of the students’ grade will be derived from attendance and participation.

The 2 (TWO) exams will be tests of your acquired knowledge and understanding of the book by Brown, as well as the topics dealt with in the lectures and seminars, as well as the additional secondary literature. The book provides a general outline of the developments of Roman history, society and culture in Late Antiquity. The facts and the various backgrounds of events, both in time and in the city, are the framework of any basic historical understanding and mode of thinking.

As far as the essay is concerned, it is strongly recommended to start thinking of a suitable topic, including (some of) the appropriate material, right at the beginning of the course. In any case will you be summoned for a consult the week before mid-term, in order to establish an outline of the final essay. Essays count a maximum of 15 pages.

Information MUST under all circumstances be cited. Plagiarism of any sort will result in a grade of “F” for the assignment, or, depending on the level, perhaps even for the entire course.

**ESSAY GRADING AND EXAM GRADING SCALE**

Written work, and to a certain extent also the final exam, meriting the grade of “A” (excellent) must:

* • address the assigned question or topic directly and intelligently;
  • demonstrate a careful and considered reading of the texts at hand;
  • present a lucid thesis and a persuasive argument in its defence;
  • use correct grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction;
• make ample and appropriate use of quotations from the texts;
• weave together thesis and argument, quotations and interpretations;
• reveal thoughtfulness, originality and insight.

Written work and examinations awarded the grade of “B” (good) adequately fulfil a majority of these criteria, with areas of improvement indicated by grading remarks and comments.

The grade of “C” (average) is given when written work and examinations fail to meet most criteria, therefore indicating to the student that an appointment should be made with the professor, before the next essay assignment, to discuss methods for improvement.

Finally, the grade of “D” is assigned to written work and examinations that are simply unacceptable, according to the criteria outlined above, in which case an appointment must be made with the professor and arrangements determined for re-submitting the assignments in an acceptable form.

**Grading Percentages:**

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<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
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<td>Final Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presence / Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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More information on the requirements for the specific essay assignment will be handed out in class.

Students who wish to request a review of the final course grade must provide original versions of all their graded course assignments.

**Literature**

• Christopher S. Mackay, *The Breakdown of the Roman Republic. From Oligarchy to Empire* (Cambridge, 2009).
• *Reader.*
Week 1: *Ab Vrbe condita… From the beginning!*


Week 2: *Hannibal and the elephants… Devastating effects of the Second Punic War?*

- Mackay 2009, pp. 10-35.

Week 3: *Brothers in arms… The Gracchi and Gaius Marius*

- Mackay 2009, pp. 36-57; 84-117.

Week 4: *The Social War and the ‘Great Dictator’…*


Week 5: *Pirates of the Mediterranean… The rise and fall of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus*

- Mackay 2009, pp. 196-221.

Week 6: *Democracy ‘alla Romana’*

- Mackay 2009, pp. 229-51.

**Week 7:**  ‘Beware the Ides of March’... That’s what he said!

• Andrew Lintott, ‘The assassination’, in Miriam Griffin (ed.), *A Companion to Julius Caesar* (Chichester, 2009), pp. 72-82.

**Week 8:**  Three men… and a little empire!

• Mackay 2009, pp. 315-50.

**Week 9:**  Platform heels… Augustus!

• Mackay 2009, pp. 351-61.

**Week 10:**  “I found a city in brick…” Augustus, part deu!

• Mackay 2009, pp. 362-96.

**Week 11:**  *RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI*… Augustus, one more time! Sorry!


Week 12: It’s all in the family… After Augustus!

• Mackay 2009, pp. 397-403.
• Barbara Levick, Claudius (London, 1990), pp. 81-114.