Latin 9100A

FLAVIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

General Course Information

This course is intended to provide students with a detailed experience in the historiography of a specific period of Roman history: namely, the period from 1st July, 69 to 18th September, 96, which encompasses the regimes of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. This will mainly be in Latin; however, anyone who has tackled an original source-based examination of almost any period, or even event, in Roman history will know full well that Greek sources are invariably present: for example, what were Caesar’s last words? and why, for the date of the 4th century BC sack of Rome by the Gauls, do we have to go to Polybius, Plutarch and even Timaeus and Aristotle? The same is, inevitably, true for the Flavians; which means that, although our course is labeled Latin 9100A, there will be a certain amount of Greek material to be considered. However, “new” grad. students can vary considerably in their familiarity with Greek, and Greek texts will be studied in the “original”, if possible. However, for students whose knowledge of Greek is somewhat “basic”, English translations will be used also, so that everyone in the class will be able to work through the Greek material.

We should also note that, while the period between the death of Nero in June of 68 and the demise of Vitellius at the hands of Flavian troops in Rome in late December, 69 is well-covered by copious extant literary sources, the period thereafter to September, 96, which will be our primary focus, is much less richly endowed: we have to consult Suetonius’ fairly brief Lives of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian and excerpts from Books 2, 3, and 4 of Tacitus’ Histories, and the somewhat cropped account of the period from the Roman History of the Greek consular historian Cassius Dio; and there is also useful information in the Greek writings of the originally Aramaic-speaking Jewish historian Josephus. Beyond this, however, for source material we have to go to the scattered references to the period in the Letters and Panegyricus of Pliny the Younger and some of the Flavian poets, and also to inscriptions, including coins, papyri, and the so-called consular Fasti plus the Roman equivalent of a modern “court calendar”, the Acts of the Arval Brethren. This means two things: there is not a huge bulk of unmanageable literary sources for students to master; and equally, there is much more room for re-interpretation and ingenious theorizing with regard to “problems”. So, we have Historiography as “the study of history-writing” as our main aim, and this raises two serious questions: did our ancient sources “get it right?” and, even more interestingly, “Have moderns got it right?”

To achieve this aim, students have to be made comfortable in reading, assessing, using, and squeezing to the limit, in their original languages, all the varieties of evidence
that have been used to create a picture of Roman government and policies in the Flavian period. There is no set text, but students should arrange to have regular and easy access to the main literary sources listed above. A large number of important books and texts will be placed on short-term Reserve in the Weldon library, and Xerox copies of important articles and documents will be made available in the Department as the course progresses. However, as useful general introductions to both the Vierkaiserjahr and the Flavian years, please see the Cambridge Ancient History chapters (2nd edition) by T.E.J. Wiedemann (Vol. X, 256-282) and Miriam Griffin (Vol. XI, 1-83): both of these volumes are available online via the Weldon Library; the first of them should have been “looked at” by the time of our first class on 12th September.

After an introductory session on 12th September, which will provide a general overview of the events of 68-69 to the capture of Rome by Flavian troops in December, 69, and a lecture on Vespasian’s background and the rise to prominence of the Flavian family in latter part of the “Julio-Claudian” period, subsequent classes will consider in detail a number of major themes from an historiographical point of view:

The Flavian plan to seize power: origins and execution.
Why did the Year of the Four Emperors happen at all?
Vespasian and the “Army Problem”.
Overview of the events of the reigns of the three Flavian Emperors.
General Constitutional Aspects of the Flavian regime.
Domitian’s particular personal policies and activities.
Flavian finance.
Administrative practices in the Flavian period.

Note that, since these topics do not naturally fall into neat 50-minute packages, it is not possible to produce a week-by-week schedule at this stage. Once classes begin, however, reading assignments will be announced about 10 days before the class for which they are needed. Each week there will be one journal research paper to be read (a master copy will be placed in a specific file for this course in the Department), plus ancient source passages to be considered in class (not all of these will be translated in class in full; but student “comfort levels” will be carefully watched; and this too will determine the speed of progress through the above agenda). Note also that in said agenda Domitian gets what may seem to be disproportionate attention; however, his reign was longer than those of his father and brother combined, and he never quite conformed to “standard practice” in anything (for example, after the final suppression of the great Jewish rebellion, there were no major wars until Domitian came to power: where, why and when these happened requires explanation and dissection).
Course Procedures:

The course (in Lawson Hall 2205) will proceed by means of lectures, discussions and student presentations (*hoffentlich* no more than one on any class day, each about 20 minutes in duration, eventually with one from each student, and written-up afterwards). In addition, there will be one major term paper (at least 4000 words in length and due on the last day of classes), a short translation test towards the end of October, and a final exam during the December exam period.

There will also be a Course Website, which should be up and running by Labour Day. Future communications and information for class purposes will be sent out on it.

Grade distribution will be as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General participation in class</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class Presentation:</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translation test:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term-paper:</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam:</td>
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**NOTE FROM THE DEAN OF ARTS and HUMANITIES:** You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

**PLAGIARISM:** Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

**POLICY ON ACCOMMODATION FOR MEDICAL ILLNESS:**

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

[downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): https://studentservices.uwo.ca [under the Medical Documentation heading]

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Office of the Dean of their home faculty and provide documentation.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION CANNOT BE GRANTED BY THE INSTRUCTOR OR DEPARTMENT.

**UWO ACCESSIBILITY POLICY.** Western has many services and programs that support the personal, physical, social and academic needs of students with disabilities. For more information and links to these services:

http://accessibility.uwo.ca/