

LATIN 9100A (Fall, 2017)

Flavian Historiography

The period of the Flavian Emperors in Rome (A.D. 69-96) marks the first major modification of the refurbished Roman “Republic” as instituted by Augustus. The rise of the Flavii to political prominence during the period of Gaius, Claudius and Nero (A.D. 41-68) occurs while the constitutional edifice was falling apart through the activities (or inactivity) of rulers who were either unsuitable for their task or incapable of bringing about meaningful change. After the near catastrophe of civil war during the period 68-69, Vespasian and his two sons revived the Roman Principate and strengthened its functions through fiscal, governmental and military reforms, so that its survival for several centuries was assured.

The title of this course is “Flavian Historiography”. There are two basic meanings of the word “historiography”: “the writing of history” and “the study of history-writing”. The second item is much more interesting than the first: what we have as historical sources for the Flavian period comes from all sorts of materials—literary, epigraphic and numismatic—in both Latin and Greek; and while we examine material from Suetonius’ *Lives* of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian and from excerpts of Books 2, 3, and 4 of Tacitus’ *Histories*, and on the remains of the Greek text of Cassius Dio’s *Roman History*, we shall always ask our key question: “Have they got it right?” And, even more interesting perhaps, “Have moderns got it right?”

The course format will involve a weekly two-hour session (Tuesdays, 9:30-11.30 a.m.) plus a one-hour session (Thursdays, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.), comprising lecture/discussions, along with student-led analysis of particular “problems”. There is no set text, but a considerable number of relevant books will be on two-hour loan in the reserve section of the Weldon Library. (A more detailed course outline will be issued later this summer.)

CLM