

CS 2903A (Fall 2014)
The Roman Emperors:
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Dr. Alexander Meyer
Mon., Wed.: 10:30-11:30am
UC 85 – NBC Universal Screening Room



Course Description

This course will examine the characters, policies, and actions of many of the most famous and infamous of Rome's emperors, including Augustus, Nero, Domitian, Marcus Aurelius, Constantine and Julian the Apostate. We will discuss the virtues of the best emperors, the depravities of the worst emperors, and the means by which these men are judged. In the process we will examine the public and private lives of Roman emperors and their associates, from the spectacles sponsored by victorious generals to the scandals of the imperial household. We will use literary, documentary and archaeological evidence to determine what made a good or bad emperor, how their reputations were formed, and whether their reputations are justified.

Instructor

Alexander Meyer is an ancient historian with particular interest in the formation and perception of identity in the Roman world. Dr. Meyer is fascinated by issues of travel, migration and communication in the ancient world in general. Before coming to Western he studied at the University of Pennsylvania, Tufts University and Duke University. He has also taught at Duke and at the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome. In the summer he is co-director of an archaeological field school at the Roman fort of Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall in northern England. Please feel free to introduce yourself at any time. He is very happy to talk about any aspect of the ancient world or just to get to know you.

Contact Information

Alexander Meyer

Department of Classical Studies

Lawson Hall, Room 3224

Email: ameyer26@uwo.ca

Telephone: (519) 661-2111 ext. 84522

Office Hours: Wed. 9:00-10:00am, Thurs. 10:30-11:30am

Required Texts (for purchase)

Tacitus. *Annals*. Translated by Cynthia Damon. London: Penguin Classics, 2012. (978-0140455649) **[Tacitus]**

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*. Translated by Catherine Edwards. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. (978-0199537563) **[Suetonius]**

Lives of the Later Caesars: The First Part of the Augustan History. Translated and edited by Anthony Birley, London: Penguin Classics, 1976. (978-0140443080) **[SHA]**

Additional Texts

Further readings will be supplied electronically by the instructor through Web CT. These texts are every bit as important as the books listed above so be sure to allow yourself sufficient time to access them. Details will also be provided if you prefer to check these sources out of the library.

Course Objectives and Skills attained

Objectives:

- An understanding of how history is written and reconstructed.
- A familiarity with Roman literature, art and archaeology as it relates to Roman emperors.

- A basic knowledge of the history of Rome.
- A familiarity with some of the most important literary sources from ancient Rome.
- An understanding of the potential and limitations of ancient sources (literary, archaeological and documentary).
- The ability to analyze and discuss the significance of these sources in a coherent manner and in their historical context.

Skills:

- Critical thought
- Argumentation
- Analysis of written material
- Interpretation of archaeological evidence
- Scrutiny of artistic evidence

Course Structure and Topics Covered

This course will examine the lives and characters of twelve of the most interesting Roman emperors. We will cover a different emperor each week. In doing so, students will read excerpts of some of the major historical sources from which we learn about these men. We will then compare these sources and additional archaeological and documentary evidence in order to evaluate the merits and faults of each emperor. We will also discuss how each emperor's legacy has been shaped by the historical record and whether their reputations are justified.

This course will be largely lecture based. However, students will be given the opportunity to participate in discussions and exercises whenever possible.

We will examine the lives and careers of Augustus, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Domitian, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Diocletian, Constantine, and Julian.

Assessment

Assessment for this course will be based on one test, a final exam, two short quizzes and in-class participation. The first test will take an entire course period and will consist of 50 multiple choice questions. The final exam will take place in the time and place determined by the registrar's office during the final exam period. This exam will be two hours long and comprise 100 multiple choice questions. The content and date of quizzes will be announced at least one week in advance and will test students' knowledge of geography and chronology. Class participation grades will be determined by the quantity and quality of individual students' involvement in class discussion and group exercises.

First test: 30%; Final exam: 50%; Quizzes (2 total): 10%; Attendance and Participation: 10%

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.

WESTERN 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/>

WESTERN SUPPORT SERVICES: Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.