

History 636: Graduate Colloquium in Ancient Mediterranean History

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This colloquium provides an introduction to some of the most important issues and debates in modern historiography on ancient Greece and Rome. Because of its enormous chronological and geographical scope, covering the Mediterranean world and beyond from archaic Greece (c. 750 BC) to the emergence of early medieval Europe (c. AD 700), the course is both selective and comparative. Themes have been chosen for their general interest and importance, for the methodological questions they raise, and, in most cases, for their ability to stimulate comparative discussion, reflection, and synthesis. Comparison will not be limited to Greece and Rome; on the contrary, perspectives from more recent history, other regions of the world, and related disciplines, are welcomed.

In addition to the identification and interrogation of crucial themes in ancient history, this colloquium also aims to equip students with a range of essential practical skills, from bibliographical and bibliothecal strategies to the delivery of an oral presentation to the critical reading and written review of modern scholarship on the world of the ancient Mediterranean.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Note that the supplementary reading list (distributed separately from this syllabus) contains a detailed bibliography for each week, organized by topic. Students will select at least one additional book or article each week from the supplementary bibliography. The books listed below are required for all students and form the basis of our common readings each week.

1. Bradley, Keith. *Slavery and Society at Rome*. Key Themes in Ancient History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. ISBN: 0521378877 (pbk).
2. Brown, Peter. *The Making of Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978. ISBN: 0674543211 (pbk).
3. Brown, Peter. *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015. ISBN: 0674967585.
4. Dodds, E. R. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Sather Classical Lectures 25. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951. ISBN: 0520242300 (pbk).
5. Harper, Kyle. *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013. ISBN: 0674660013 (pbk).
6. Holmes, Brooke. *Gender: Antiquity and Its Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN: 0195380835.
7. Horden, Peregrine and Nicholas Purcell. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. ISBN: 0631218904 (pbk).
8. Kay, Philip. *Rome's Economic Revolution*. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 0198788541 (pbk).
9. Lendon, J. E. *Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. ISBN: 0300119798 (pbk).
10. Millar, Fergus. *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC-AD 337)*. London: Duckworth, 1992. ISBN: 0715617222.
11. O'Donnell, James J. *Pagans: The End of Traditional Religion and the Rise of Christianity*. New York: Ecco, 2015. ISBN: 0061845396 (pbk).

12. Ober, Josiah. *The Rise and Fall of Classical Greece*. The Princeton History of the Ancient World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. ISBN: 0691173141 (pbk).
13. Padel, Ruth. *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. ISBN: 0691037663.
14. Sahlins, Marshall. *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. ISBN: 0226734005 (hbk).

*** In addition to the books listed above, students are encouraged to purchase or otherwise obtain access to copies of books listed below as “Core readings” for particular weeks, since we will make specific reference to them in class. These books, as well as articles for core readings, will (in almost all cases) be available online and/or on reserve at the library. Other arrangements will be made for exceptions.*

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Colloquium coursework falls under three major categories:

- A. **Weekly readings and discussion** (25%). Each week everyone will read the core assignment, usually a book and/or one or more articles on the week’s theme. Beginning in the second week each person will also select an additional item from the bibliography given for that week. Please note the following guidelines:
 1. While students are encouraged to identify items of particular interest when choosing supplementary readings, the instructor reserves the right to assign readings as needed to ensure breadth and depth of coverage in a given week.
 2. Active, vocal, informed, and constructive participation in ordinary three-hour class meetings is an essential part of the seminar. Unless arranged in advance or otherwise documented, attendance at *all* class meetings is mandatory. (Missing one class is the equivalent of missing an entire week in a lecture course, and will have a corresponding impact on grades.) Advance arrangements for unavoidable absences will ordinarily include supplementary readings and written work, in addition to the week’s scheduled assignments.
 3. Participation in this component of the course is graded independently of formal presentations (see below).
- B. **Note cards** (10%). In support of weekly readings and discussion described above, beginning in the third week of classes students will prepare and distribute one 4x6 index card (or equivalent) per reading, *before* each class. Note cards will ordinarily contain a summary of the work’s thesis and its most important conceptual, methodological, and/or historical points, distilled as precisely and concisely as possible. Further details, and a demonstration, will come in the first two weeks of class.
- C. **Book review** (15%). Each student will review one book, chosen in consultation with the instructor from the core readings or supplementary bibliographies. The review will consist of **two** independently graded parts:
 1. **Written review** (10%). This will be a brief review (2-3 pages) written as if for publication in a scholarly journal. Students are encouraged to consult journal reviews for guidance on scope and content; further instructions will be distributed and discussed in class.
 2. **Presentation** (5%). This will be a formal presentation of the written review, tailored for delivery to participants in the colloquium. Further instructions will be distributed and discussed in class.

- Due dates: Written reviews and presentation will be prepared for the class to which the book pertains. For this reason, late reviews and presentation cannot be accepted, delivered, or graded.
3. **Historiographical essay** (30%). Each student will write a longer historiographical paper (10–12 pages) that surveys scholarship on a major theme of ancient history, identifies the most important debates and issues involved in this scholarship, and offers a synthesis of both problems and possibilities for future research on the theme. The theme must be chosen in consultation with the instructor.
 - All papers are due by the end of the day on **Friday, December 8**. Papers turned in during the first 24 hours after this time are subject to an automatic reduction of a full letter grade; within the following 3 days papers are subject to a reduction of two full letter grades; any turned in more than four days late are subject to a reduction of three full letter grades. No paper will be accepted more than one week late. Computer-related excuses will be politely and consistently refused, so plan ahead accordingly.
 4. **Final examination** (20%). There will be a two-hour written final exam, consisting primarily of essays, administered during exam week.

SCHEDULE

1. Aug 30 Introductions
2. Sept 6 Culture and Comparison
3. Sept 13 Mediterranean Histories: Environment, Ecology, Archaeology
4. Sept 20 Economy
5. Sept 27 Economy (continued)
6. Oct 4 Politics and Social History
7. Oct 11 Military History
8. Oct 18 Slavery and Race
9. Oct 25 Sexuality
10. Nov 1 Gender, Body, Family
11. Nov 8 Philosophy, Literature, Self
12. Nov 15 Greek and Roman Religions
13. Nov 22 Christianity and After
14. Nov 29 Late Antiquity
15. Dec 6 Transitions and Conclusions