

TOPICS IN ANCIENT HISTORY:
IMPERIAL COMMUNICATIONS IN THE ROMAN WORLD (190:582)

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Office hours: Thursday 1:00-3:00 PM
Meeting time: Wednesday 5:00-7:40 PM
Location: Ruth Adams Building 003, Douglass Campus

Description:

This graduate seminar will focus on the topic of official communications in the Roman Imperial period. Responding to important work on this topic by F. Millar, C. Ando, S. MacCormack and others, we will explore the different modes through which emperors and their subjects communicated. We will examine a wide range of texts including panegyric, official and private correspondence, petitions and accounts of embassies, and also explore the significance of moments of contact between emperors and subjects such as the *adventus* ceremony and judicial audiences. The aims of the seminar are to explore the various ways in which emperors and their subjects of differing social status interacted and how those interactions changed with developments in the imperial office, and to introduce students to the modern theoretical discussions about communication, transmission of imperial ideology and the practice of Roman administration. Some comparative material may be included. All primary texts to be studied in the course will be available in English translation.

The course:

The intellectual aims of this course are to approach the question “How did emperors and their subjects communicate?” using a range of materials in different media and applying theories and approaches from different disciplines to them; to understand and analyse critically contemporary debates in Classics about imperial communication; to acquire an understanding of the methods or approaches that Classicists are mining in other disciplines; to increase your understanding of Roman government and the imperial office; to develop your research skills.

You will achieve these intellectual aims by the following means: reading and discussion of a wide range of ancient primary material of various genres, periods and media; reading and discussion of secondary material that includes both classic readings and new revisionist texts; reading and discussion of comparative material that illuminates the possible fruitfulness of interdisciplinary approaches; in-depth research and analysis of an assigned topic for presentation, which may serve as the basis for a research paper; intellectual development journal and paper (see below); producing a research paper that shows extensive use of research tools and unassigned materials.

The professional aims of this course are to develop your skills in presenting material to different audiences, such as your peers and undergraduates, and in different formats; to develop your skills in engaging in constructive academic debate in a public setting; to improve your ability to apply

familiar methodologies to unfamiliar material, even outside your immediate discipline; to begin thinking about how you would effectively present material to an undergraduate class.

You will achieve these professional aims by the following means: in-class presentation, which you will reconfigure for an undergraduate audience and then possibly for a research paper; constructive engagement in class discussion; discussion of and implementation of approaches and theories outside of Classics; professional development paper (see below).

Structure of the sessions

- I shall begin our sessions with brief remarks about my reasons for choosing the assigned materials and my aims for our discussion.
- Most weeks one of the participants will present on the primary material in group A of the session's readings. He/she should make sure to incorporate discussion of the required secondary material and is strongly encouraged to discuss other material, including that which has been recommended. Another participant will then give a brief response to the presentation, after which we will begin a general conversation about the group A material.
- 10 minute break.
- Building on our discussion of the group A material, we will discuss group B on the same basis.
- Wrap-up, in which I shall offer a summary of and conclusions to our discussion.

Assessment

- In-class presentation (25%): depending on the number of participants, you will be asked to give one or two in-class presentations lasting 20-25 minutes. This should be a polished presentation which demonstrates that you have conducted research into the topic, reflected on the topic and considered carefully your presentation of the subject to your peers. It should take account of the other readings met thus far in the semester and especially of the other material assigned for that session. You should prepare a handout for your colleagues containing relevant citations and bibliography.
- In-class response (5%). You will be assigned to give one or two formal 5-10 minute responses to an in-class presentation, in which you will summarise the presentation, pose questions to the presenter and suggest avenues for further discussion.
- 5-page teaching outline (15%). Taking the material assigned for your in-class presentation, you will reconfigure it for a class presentation to a group of freshmen and sophomores who have taken Roman Civilisation, but no other courses in Classics or Ancient History. Your outline will map out (continuous prose is not necessary) how you will present the material for a new audience. (You will have the option of participating in a workshop, in which seminar participants try out their teaching outlines on their colleagues and receive feedback from them.)
- 15-page research paper on a topic of your choosing that must relate closely to the theme of this seminar (40%). You must draw on a range of material in different genres, preferably in different media. You will be assessed on how well you draw on evidence and integrate others' secondary syntheses and theories to produce innovating insights into the subject of imperial communication. You will also be assessed on your ability to structure and present an argument and on evidence that you have conducted substantial

independent research into your topic. You should approach this paper as a potential submission to an academic journal. Your paper must be accompanied by a 250-word abstract.

- 3-5 page intellectual and professional self-analysis paper (15%). In this paper, you will outline how you integrated the intellectual and professional experiences and development you gained in your reading, in-class presentation, in-class response, participation in discussion into your final research paper and what intellectual and professional insights you gained from the teaching outline.

All written work is due by the end of the semester (date TBA).

I encourage you to discuss with me your oral and written work -- just send me an email to set up an appointment.

Schedule

Most sessions (except the first two and the last) will have 2 groups of readings, A and B.

1. 5 September: Introduction to the course

- A. Establishing themes: modern parallels
- B. Exemplary Roman emperors
- C. Imperial titles
- D. Preparatory reading for the course

2. 12 September

No presentation this week, but a lot of reading to do! I shall share out the questions among you to kick start our conversations, but I shall expect you all to have considered every question.

- A. Defining imperial powers
 - ***Lex de imperio Vespasiani***

- B. Imperial self-definition
 - ***Res Gestae***

3. 19 September

- A. Pliny writes to Trajan
 - **Selected letters of Pliny to Trajan**

- B. Trajan responds to Pliny
 - **Selected responses from Trajan**

4. 26 September

A. Early Imperial Panegyric

- **Pliny's Panegyric to Trajan (1-4, 7-9, 21-23, 34-35, 51-55, 66, 80-83, 85, 88, 93-95)**

B. Early Imperial Monumental Communication

- **Trajan's Column -- www.stoa.org/trajan**

5. 3 October

A. Nero's Coinage

- **www.wildwinds.com -- look up coins of Nero.**

B. Graffiti about Nero

- **Neronian graffiti (URL upload)**

6. 10 October

A. An early imperial embassy

- **Philo, *ad Gaium***

B. Other embassies

- **Embassy of Priscus to Attila the Hun**
- **Ammianus Marcellinus 29.6.1-16, 30.5.1-15, 30.6.1-6**

7. 17 October

A. The people petition their emperor

- **The inscription at Scaptopara**

B. The emperor in his public

8. 24 October

A. Fronto to Marcus Aurelius

- **Fronto's letters to Marcus (Teubner pp. 250-55, 249-50, 25-26, 62-63, 45-47)**

B. Marcus Aurelius to Fronto

- **Marcus' letters to Fronto**

9. 31 October

A. Constantine and the Veterans -- to be presented by Serena Connolly

- **CTh 7.20.2**
- **Tacitus on Germanicus and the veterans (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.31-49)**

B. Brother of his soldiers

- **Joshua Levithan, ‘Emperors, Sieges, and Intentional Exposure’** (this will become available later in the semester. If you are interested in presenting on this topic, please ask me for an early copy)

10. 7 November

A. Late Roman Panegyric

- **Claudius Mamertinus’ Letter of Thanks to Julian.**
- **Claudian, *Panegyric for the Sixth Consulate of Honorius*, in *Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii*, ed. M. Dewar.**

B. Adventus

- **Ammianus Marcellinus on the arrival of Constantius at Rome (Teubner & Penguin)**

11. 14 November

A. Emperors professing their faith

- **Excerpts from Croke and Harries.**

B. Subjects communicate with emperors about faith

- **Life of Constantine -- <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iv.vi.html>** (or *Life of Constantine*, trans. Cameron & Hall) (Sections to be chosen with advice of presenter)
- **Anti Pagan Polemic: Carmen contra paganos; Pseudo-Cyprian, Carmen ad senatorem, in Croke and Harries.**

12. 28 November

A. Symmachus and the Altar of Victory

- **Symmachus, *Relatio 3***
- **Selected letters of Ambrose (17, 18, 57)**

B. Symmachus the Prefect

- **Selected *Relationes* of Symmachus**

13. 5 December

A. Acclamation

- ***Gesta Senatus***

B. Voicing popular opinion

- ***Chronicon Paschale***

14. 12 December

A. Rome communicated to posterity: Theoderic

- **Letters of Theoderic (Medieval Sourcebook, URL)**
- **Sidonius Apollinaris, Ep. I.2**
- **Panegyric of Ennodius**
- **URL links: coin, Theoderic's palatium in mosaic, Sant Apollinare Nuovo, Mausoleum, Mausoleum of Hadrian**

B. Conclusion

Graduate Seminar Presentations

You will be expected to do the following in a graduate presentation:

- present your material in a professional manner, giving attention to your style of delivery
- supply your colleagues with a clear and succinct handout that contains relevant material, including bibliography (you may use Powerpoint, but only for images)
- provide an introduction to the primary text that supplies necessary background information at a level suitable for your colleagues
- address a couple of key issues in the text that concern communication
- explain how the assigned secondary material treats the text and give your opinion clearly and succinctly of that material's aims, approaches and conclusions
- raise topics for further discussion and include these on your handout

Your presentation must be polished and prepared, as though you were speaking at a conference. You may read aloud a paper -- but make sure you have written it to be heard, not read! -- or speak from notes. Whichever you choose, you should aim for clarity of argument and smoothness of presentation.

You must speak for at least 20 minutes and no more than 25 -- I shall cut you off if you run over time.

If your presentation has a title, email it to me at least 3 hours before the start of the session.

Have a look at the following websites for tips on giving academic presentations:

<http://www.cgu.edu/pages/864.asp>

http://gradschool.about.com/od/presentations/Public_Speaking_Presentation_Skills.htm

Responses:

You should do the following in your brief (5-10 minute) response:

- summarise briefly the presentation
- comment on the substance of the presentation (both in agreement and in disagreement) in a professional and constructive manner
- pose questions to the presenter
- suggest further topics for discussion

While a response cannot be prepared, you should demonstrate that you have read and considered the assigned materials and followed the presentation carefully. You should use the response as an opportunity to practise speaking ex tempore in an academic setting.