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## SYLLABUS ARCHIVE

### Course and Instructor Information:

#### **The Roman Empire**

Prof. Eliza Gettel

Villanova University, Department of History

### Helpful Context:

Course first designed in Spring 2020.

Average enrollment: 15

This is an undergraduate course primarily intended for majors.

It was initially designed to be taught completely in-person, but because of COVID-19 the second half was delivered online.

It is an elective for History and Classical Studies majors.

### Reflections of the Instructor:

*Q: What do you consider to be particular strengths of this course?*

A: A strength is the case study approach. Most class meetings focus on a particular person and/or place. I had found that students often struggled to jump into big debates about the Roman Empire with a chronological or even thematic approach.

Comparatively, the case study approach intentionally foregrounds compelling evidence and equips students with examples that they can draw on in building their own arguments about the Roman Empire.

*Q: In what ways do you think the course could still use improvements/adjustments?*

A: Next time, I plan to incorporate a session that more directly addresses the Roman economy.

*Q: How generally have students responded to the course? Have there been any patterns in student feedback?*

A: Students responded very well to the case-study approach. Stepping into ancient individuals shoes helped to bring the Roman world to life for them, and it led to rich questions about ruling the Roman Empire and living within it.

# HIS 3017

## THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Section of Peutinger Table.  
Wikimedia Commons



### INSTRUCTOR

Prof. Eliza Gettel  
[eliza.gettel@villanova.edu](mailto:eliza.gettel@villanova.edu)

Office Hours:  
XXX

### COURSE MEETINGS

MWF 12:30-1:20  
XXX



Roman lamp from the Met in NYC  
[www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)

### COURSE INFO

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Roman Empire was massive by the 2nd century CE: its provinces stretched from Britain to Egypt to Syria and beyond. This course covers the expansion and transformation of the Roman state between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and early 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. Along the way, it explores the diverse lives and experiences of individuals who were touched by Roman power. We will read biographies of emperors, but we will also learn about queens who challenged Roman authority at its borders. We will meet massively wealthy individuals who lived in the provinces, as well as the farmers, soldiers, and slaves that lived alongside them. Case studies based on literary accounts as well as material evidence will bring these individuals back to life. Along the way, we will raise questions about how the Roman state handled the diversity of groups that fell under its hegemony and about how these groups in turn viewed Rome.

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To acquire knowledge of the general trajectory of Roman history between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and 5<sup>th</sup> century CE
- To be able to read and analyze a range of primary (both textual and material) and secondary sources for Roman imperial history
- To construct and communicate a cogent argument about what it was like to rule the Roman Empire and to live within it
- To be able to examine critically interpretations and visions of the Roman Empire put forward in today's society

## REQUIRED TEXTS

None! PDFs of readings will be posted to the course website. See the 'Online Resources for Roman History' handout for helpful supplementary links as well as the Library's online course guide:

<https://library.villanova.edu/research/course-guides/history-course-guides/roman-empire>

## GRADING

Class Participation	15%
Biography of Emperor	15%
Research Paper	25%
Case Study Lead	10%
Quizzes (lowest of 6 dropped)	15%
Final Exam	20%



Bust of Augustus from Glyptothek in Munich. Wikimedia Commons.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### CLASS PARTICIPATION • 15%

The class participation grade consists of four components:

- 1) *Attending class*: Students are expected to attend **ALL** course meetings, unless they notify me **in advance** about an excused absence. After the first unexcused absence, any subsequent ones will result in a **-2 deduction** from the overall participation grade. See full attendance policy on p. 4 for more details.
- 2) *Completing readings*: All readings are to be completed in advance of the date under which they are listed. Please bring a print or digital copy of readings to the relevant course meeting.
- 3) *Participating actively in discussions*: Pose questions, answer questions, and engage in debates! The success of the class depends on the active engagement of all members.
- 4) *Engaging in in-class exercises*: During particular course meetings, you will be asked to engage in active learning exercises. These exercises are informal, but they are important for improving your written and verbal communication and for building skills assessed in course assignments.

### BIOGRAPHY OF AN EMPEROR • 15% (MON. FEB. 17 by 10pm)

**Length: 1000 words**

We will be reading several ancient biographies of emperors during the third week of class. You will then choose an emperor, whom we will not focus on in class, and write your own mini biography in the style of these ancient biographies. This assignment is not an invitation for complete creative license. Instead, you should do research into your emperor and base your creative biography on your reading of primary and secondary sources. Warning: This assignment is fun but deceptively difficult!

**Late Work: penalty of -3 for each 24-hour period**

## GRADING SCALE

100-94	= A
93-90	= A-
89-87	= B+
86-83	= B
82-80	= B-
79-77	= C+
76-73	= C
72-70	= C-
69-67	= D+
66-63	= D
62-60	= D-
59 -	= F

### RESEARCH PAPER • 25% (FRI. APRIL 24 by 10pm)

#### Length: 2000-3000 words

Students will write a research paper pertaining to the experience of living within the Roman empire. This paper may focus on one particular individual who lived within the empire, or it may be broader in scope. We will hold workshops in class in order to help you write a fantastic paper: Primary Source Workshop (Wed. March 25); Secondary Source Workshop (Fri. April 3); and a Paper Draft Workshop (Fri, April 17). More instructions, including a list of possible topics, will be provided later in the semester. **Late Work: penalty of -3 for each 24-hour period**

### CASE STUDY LEAD • 10% (varies)

#### Length: 30 minutes

In groups of 2-3, students will take responsibility for one of the case studies that we address in Weeks 8-13. You will introduce your colleagues to the case study and its implications for our study of the Roman Empire (15-20 minutes). Then, you will lead the class in discussion of the case study. More information to come!

### QUIZZES • 15% (varies)

Over the course of the semester, there will be six announced quizzes. The format of each will be announced in advance. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

### FINAL EXAM • 20% (FRI. MAY 8 at 2:30pm)

The format of the final exam will be announced in advance.

## COURSE POLICIES

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to uphold Villanova's Academic Integrity Policy and Code. Any incident of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for disciplinary action. For the College's statement on Academic Integrity, you should consult the Student Guide to Policies and Procedures. You may view the university's Academic Integrity Policy and Code, as well as other useful information related to writing papers, at the Academic Integrity Gateway website: <http://library.villanova.edu/help/academicintegrity>



Sarcophagus from Vatican Museums.  
Wikimedia Commons.

**FOOD AND DRINK**

Water bottles and caffeine can be enjoyed, but no food is allowed to be consumed in class.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

No phones should be visible in class, even for note taking. Laptops and tablets may be used, but please disable wifi and strictly use your device to reference the readings and take notes.



Roman coin showing a port. Ostia-antica.org

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance and regular participation in class are expected from all students. While being present in class will count towards your participation grade, most of that grade will be based on **regular, active contributions** to class discussions.

**Unexcused absences** will count against your participation grade. After the first unexcused absence, each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a **-2 deduction** from the overall participation grade. **In accordance with university policy, first year students with seven or more unexcused absences will receive a failing grade (“Y”) for the course.** There is no penalty for excused absences.

**Excused absences** include being absent for the following:

- NCAA athletic competitions
- special academic events (e.g., conferences)
- official university business
- significant immediate family events (e.g., funerals, weddings)
- religious holidays (see policy below)
- college-approved participation in placement activities (e.g., job or graduate school interviews)
- documented serious illness or disability

Please notify me **in advance** (if possible) to request an excused absence.

**Absences for Religious Holidays:** Villanova University makes every reasonable effort to allow members of the community to observe their religious holidays, consistent with the University’s obligations, responsibilities, and policies. Students who expect to miss a class or assignment due to the observance of a religious holiday should discuss the matter with their professors as soon as possible, normally at least two weeks in advance. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the absence.

<https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/provost/resources/student/policies/religiousholidays.html>

**OFFICE OF DISABILITIES (ODS) & LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES (LSS)**

It is the policy of Villanova to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. Go to the learning support services website (<http://learningsupportservices.villanova.edu>) for registration guidelines and instructions. For physical access or temporarily disabling conditions, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 610-519-4095 or email [stephen.mcwilliams@villanova.edu](mailto:stephen.mcwilliams@villanova.edu). Registration is needed in order to receive accommodations.

## SCHEDULE

\*\*\*Readings are subject to change at instructor's announcement

\*\*\*Scans of readings can be found on the course website

### **WEEK 1: Historical Background**

Monday, January 13: Welcome to The Roman Empire

Wednesday, January 15: Rome, Emergence of an empire, 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE (Polybius)

Readings:

- (1) Polybius, *The Histories*, Book 6, sections 2-4, 11-18, 50-58
- (2) Beard, "A Wider World" in *SPQR* (2015), p. 169-207

**Quiz # 1: Syllabus Quiz**

Friday, January 17: Rome, Emergence of an empire, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Verres)

Reading:

- (1) selections of Cicero's *Verrine Orations*
- (2) Beard, *SPQR* (2015), p. 253-61

### **WEEK 2: Historical Background**

Monday, January 20: NO CLASS (MLK DAY)

Wednesday, January 22: Emergence of an empire, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Caesar)

Readings:

- (1) Potter, *Ancient Rome: A New History*, p. 149-68
- (2) Caesar, *Civil War*, beginning of Book 1

Friday, January 24: Emergence of an empire, 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Antony)

Reading:

- (1) Potter, *Ancient Rome: A New History*, p. 168-78
- (2) end of Plutarch, *Life of Antony*

**Quiz #2: Roman history, 3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE**

### **WEEK 3: Emperors, 1<sup>st</sup> century CE**

Monday, January 27: Augustus

Readings:

- (1) Woolf, "Emperors" in *Rome: An Empire's Story* (2012), p. 163-83
- (2) Augustus, *Res Gestae*

Wednesday, January 29: Caligula

Reading:

- (1) Suetonius, *Caligula*
- (2) Introduction and chapter 3 of Winterling, *Caligula: A Biography* (2003), p. 1-7 and 90-131

Friday, January 31: Vespasian

Reading: (1) Suetonius, *Vespasian*

**WEEK 4: Emperors, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE**

Monday, February 3: Hadrian

Readings:

- (1) *Historia Augusta*, Life of Hadrian
- (2) Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (2000), chapter 1, p. 3-17

Wednesday, February 5: Marcus Aurelius

Readings:

- (1) *Meditations* selections
- (2) Strauss, "Marcus Aurelius: The Philosopher" in *Ten Caesars* (2019), p. 209-35

Friday, February 7: Septimius Severus

Reading: (1) Strauss, "Septimius Severus: The African" in *Ten Caesars* (2019), p. 237-61

**WEEK 5: Roman Society**

Monday, February 10: The Roman Social Order (Ovid, Pliny)

- (1) Reading: Goodman, *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 180*, p. 182-99
- (2) Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10
- (3) Pliny the Younger, Letter 3.20

Wednesday, February 12: The Family and Women in Roman Society (Turia, Calpurnia)

Readings:

- (1) *Laudatio Turiae*
- (2) Pliny the Younger, Letter 4.19
- (3) sections 1-2 of Evans Grubbs, "The Family," p. 313-20

Friday, February 14: Roman Religion

Readings:

- (1) Goodman, *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 180*, "Religion," p. 309-25
- (2) Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, chapter 2, p. 18-29

**Quiz #3 on Weeks 3-5**

**WEEK 6: Roman Society**

Monday, February 17: *Humiliores*

Preparation: Watch *Meet the Romans*, Episode 2: Streetlife

***Biography of an Emperor due by 10pm***

Wednesday, February 19: Enslaved Individuals

Reading: Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, "Slaves," p. 163-85

Friday, February 21: Freedpersons (Trimalchio and Eurysaces)

Reading: Petronius, *Satyricon* (Trimalchio's dinner)

**WEEK 7: Infames and Outsiders**

Monday, February 24: 'Foreigners' (*Peregrini*)

Preparation:

- (1) Read Tacoma, "Conceptualizing Migration" in *Moving Romans*
- (2) Read Beard editorial in *WSJ*



Wednesday, February 26: Gladiators

Reading: Futrell, "The Life of the Gladiator," in *Roman Games: Historical Sources in Translation* (2009), p. 120-59

Friday, February 28: Hybrid Virtual Reality Experience with Rome Reborn, Forum and Colosseum

Preparation: We will be walking through the Roman Forum and Colosseum area using an Oculus headset. Research the two monuments assigned to you. Be prepared to present on the following questions.

1. What do your monuments look like?
2. Where in the Forum were they?
3. When were they built and/or rebuilt?
4. Who was involved in construction and/or reconstruction?
5. What was their use and/or purpose?
6. How does the monument relate to conversations that we have had in class?

### March 2-6 SPRING RECESS

#### **WEEK 8: Northwestern Provinces**

Monday, March 9: Gaul

Readings:

- (1) excerpts of Caesar, *Gallic War*
- (2) Woolf, "Roman power and the Gauls," in *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (2000), p. 24-47

Wednesday, March 11: Germany

Reading: (1) Tacitus, *Germania*  
[Case Study Lead #1]

Friday, March 13: Spain

Readings:

- (1) Fear, "The Iberian Peninsula in the Roman Period" in *A Companion to Ancient History* (2008), p. 273-83

#### ***Quiz #4 on Weeks 6-8***

#### **WEEK 9: Britain**

Monday, March 16: Introduction to Roman Britain and Research Papers

Preparation:

- (1) Explore inscriptions from Roman Britain here: <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/>. Under the 'Inscriptions' tab, focus on the 'Roman Inscriptions of Britain' and 'Bloomberg Tablets'. (Save the 'Vindolanda Tablets' for Friday).
- (2) Choose one inscription or Bloomberg tablet that you find interesting. Be prepared to share your inscription with the class on Monday.

Wednesday, March 18: Boudica

Reading: chapter of Gillespie, *Boudica: Warrior Woman of Roman Britain* (2018)  
[Case Study Lead #2]

Friday, March 20: Soldier along Hadrian's Wall

Preparation:

- (1) Explore translations of the Vindolanda Tablets (<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/>)
- (2) Read Pollard, "The Roman Army" in *A Companion to the Roman Empire* (2009), p. 207-225

**WEEK 10: The East**

Monday, March 23: Pliny the Younger in Bithynia

Preparation:

- (1) Read selection of Pliny's letters  
[Case Study Lead #3]

Wednesday, March 25: Plutarch and strong thesis workshop

Preparation:

- (1) Read 'A Greco-Roman World,' p. 526-33 part of the epilogue to Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece*
- (2) Read Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft*
- (3) Read handouts about writing a strong thesis statement
- (4) Write two thesis statements about life in Greece under Roman rule. Make one weak and the other strong.

Friday, March 27: Herodes Atticus and Regilla

Preparation:

- (1) Look up Herodes Atticus in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*
- (2) Read Philostratus on the life of Herodes Atticus
- (3) Read Pomeroy, *The Murder of Regilla* (2007), chapter 4, p. 119-36

**Submit your proposed research paper topic and in-progress thesis statement by 10pm on Friday March 27<sup>th</sup>**

**WEEK 11: Farther East**

Monday, March 30: Josephus

Reading: selection of his *Histories*  
[Case Study Lead #4]

Wednesday, April 1: Babatha

Reading:

- (1) Read this introduction to Babatha and her archive on the PBS website:  
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/scrolls/life.html>
- (2) Launch the interactive viewer on the top right to read a translation of one of her documents
- (3) Read Isaac, "The Babatha Archive: A Review Article," *Israel Exploration Journal* 42.1-2 (1992): 62-75  
[Case Study Lead #5]

Friday, April 3: Research Paper Preparation

Preparation:

- (1) Find three primary sources (either textual or material) that relate to your proposed research paper topic
- (2) Find three secondary sources that relate to your proposed research paper topic

**WEEK 12: North Africa**

Monday, April 6: Intro to Africa within the Roman Empire

Preparation:

- (1) Watch the videos about houses in different parts of the empire, including at Carthage in the Roman period: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/social-economic-history/exploring-romano-african-city-thugga/content-section-2.6>

- (2) On the same site, read sections 2.2 Modelling cultural interaction through 2.2.4 on Model 4, fusion.
- (3) Choose which of the four models you think best fits the evidence for houses of Roman Africa and be prepared to explain your choice in class discussion.

Wednesday, April 8: Perpetua

Readings:

- (1) *The Passions of Saints Perpetua and Felicity*
- (2) Evans Grubbs, "The Family" p. 321-6 on Perpetua
- (3) Gold, ch. 5, "Carthage: The Early Christian Community" in *Perpetua: Athlete of God* (2018)

**Online Quiz #5 on Weeks 9-11 due by Wednesday April 8<sup>th</sup> at 10pm**

Friday, April 10: NO CLASS (EASTER RECESS)

**WEEK 13: North Africa and the Edges of Empire**

Monday, April 13: NO CLASS (EASTER RECESS)

Wednesday, April 15: Augustine

Reading: Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 3-5  
[Case Study Lead #5]

Friday, April 17: Peer editing workshop for research papers

Preparation: at least five double-spaced pages of draft of research paper (any part of it)

**WEEK 14: End(?) of Empire**

Monday, April 20: Into the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE

Readings:

- (1) Goodman, "Severans to Constantine", *The Roman World, 44 BC-AD 180*, p. 357-60
- (2) Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, p. 22-45

Wednesday, April 22 at 12:30: The Ends. Rome and its Environment.

Readings:

- (1) Ward-Perkins, "Did Rome ever fall?" in *The Fall of Rome*, p. 1-10
- (2) Harper, *The Fate of Rome*, selections

Friday, April 24: Put the finishing touches on your research papers!

**Research Paper due by 10pm**

**WEEK 15**

Monday, April 27: Race and the Roman Empire

Preparation:

- (1) Read this article. It starts out in the more modern American context but then it provides an overview about how people in the ancient world thought about race. <https://eidolon.pub/what-would-james-baldwin-do-a778947c04d5>
- (2) Read at least one of these links about a Twitter war that Mary Beard was involved in about Roman Britain.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/08/dna-romans/535701/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/06/mary-beard-twitter-abuse-roman-britain-ethnic-diversity>

**Tuesday, April 28 (Friday schedule): Virtual Museum Visit**

We will use Google Arts and Culture to visit museums across the world. Details TBA.

***Quiz #6 on Weeks 12-14***

**Wednesday, April 29 (Monday schedule): Wrap-up and Review**

There is no new reading, but you do still need to do preparation for class:

1. Formulate your three biggest takeaways from our course this semester. It might help to think about this question: How has my understanding of the Roman Empire changed between our first and last class of the semester?
2. Think of at least one question you still have about the Roman Empire.
3. **Post your three takeaways and question.**

***Details about the take-home Final Exam announced in class***