

CS 2480A - 650 (Fall 2024)
The Roman Emperors:
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Dr. Alexander Meyer
Online and Asynchronous Lectures
In-person Exams



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 in 2012 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. He also leads study trips to Rome and the Bay of Naples. Please feel free to introduce yourself at any time.

Contact Information

Dr. Alexander Meyer (he/him)
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Teaching Assistant
TBA
Department of Classical Studies
Lawson Hall, Room 3270H
Email: TBA
Office Hours: TBA
Zoom: TBA

Communication

Students must use their Western (@uwo.ca) email addresses when contacting their instructors.

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) **[Historia Augusta]**

Additional Texts

Further readings will be supplied electronically by the instructor through OWL. 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 eleven 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 entirely lecture-based. Lectures will be released on OWL every Friday, unless otherwise announced.

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

Assessment

Assessment for this course will be based on **one tests and a final exam**. All assessments will be online. The tests will consist of no more than 50 multiple choice questions. You will be given one minute per question to complete the tests. The final exam will take place at the time determined by the registrar's office during the final exam period. This exam will be a maximum of two hours long and comprise no more than 100 multiple choice questions.

The test and final exam for this class will be in-person on the UWO campus. Self-reported absences will not be accepted for either the test or the exam. No outside materials will be permitted during the exam. You may not collaborate with anybody on the tests once they begin, nor may you receive information about the tests from anyone who has completed them or share information about the test with anyone who has not yet completed them. Your answers must be yours and yours alone.

First test: 35%; Final exam: 65%;

Schedule

First Test: TBA (mid-October)

Final Exam: TBA (Dec. 6-22)

Important Policies

Student Absences

All assignments for this course, except the test and exam are online and asynchronous.

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totaling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Advising Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University's medical illness policy at

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Student who miss tests in this course will be given the opportunity to take a make-up exam. The test and exam will not be reweighted.

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above.

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Advising office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf.

Academic Policies

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>.

In accordance with policy,

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf,

the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

Scholastic offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Digital Student Experience

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being:

<https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.