

CMHI 390D: GIBBON AND THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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Winter 2013

Course Objectives

This seminar study serves a two-fold purpose. First, it provides an introduction to the problem of the decline of the Roman empire and to the general question of the decline of civilizations. Second, the course exposes students to some of the issues within the philosophy and discipline of history through a study of the historiography of the decline of Rome. For example, what is the relation between the experiences of the individual historian and the records and materials of the past? How objective or subjective is historical study? Is history essentially scientific or humanistic?

This is primarily a reading course. We meet twice a week and generally speaking, students will read one book or the equivalent each week in preparation. The weekly assignments often include a short (2 page) writing exercise.

Common Readings

- E. Gibbon, Memoirs of My Life, ed. Betty Radice (Penguin, 1984)
_____, History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, abridged by David Womersley (Penguin, 2000)
M. Grant, Fall of the Roman Empire, (Collier Books, 1990)
D. Nardo, ed., The End of Ancient Rome, (Greenhaven Press, 2001)
Av. Cameron, The Later Roman Empire, (Harvard, 1993)
Ammianus Marcellinus, Later Roman Empire, (Penguin, 1986)

Grades

- Mid-Term Paper 1/3
- Final Paper 1/3
- Short Assignments / Class Participation 1/3

Mid-Term Paper

In what ways did Gibbon's personal experiences mold his interpretation and reconstruction of Roman history? Evaluate him as an historian.

Final Paper

A 15 page typed paper on a subject of your choosing related to the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Some possibilities include studies of the traditional "suspects" (the economy; barbarian invasion; Christianity; social injustice) or a study of a prominent historian associated with the subject of the fall of Rome (for example: Boak, Walbank, Toynbee, Rostovtzeff).

SYLLABUS AND READINGS

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| Jan. | 7 | Introduction to the Course | |
| Jan. | 11 | Introduction to “The Problem” | (Grant xi-xiii; Nardo 8-24, 95-101; Nardo Documents # 1, 15; Cameron 1-65) |
| Jan. | 14 | Later Roman Empire | (Grant 1-23; Cameron 66-194; Nardo 26-45, 63-72) |
| Jan. | 18 | Later Roman Empire | (<u>Decline</u> ix-xxxiv; begin <u>Memoirs</u>) |
| Jan. | 21 | MLK | |
| Jan. | 25 | The Enlightenment | (Xeroxes) |
| Jan. | 28 | Gibbon | (Complete <u>Memoirs</u>) |
| Feb. | 1 | Lizard Tails: Modern Theory of Empires | (<u>Decline</u> 3-120) |
| Feb. | 4 | Decline and Fall: Christianity | (<u>Decline</u> 121-194) |
| Feb. | 8 | Decline and Fall: Julian | (<u>Decline</u> 195-326) |
| Feb. | 11 | Decline and Fall: Causality | (<u>Decline</u> 327-445) |
| Feb. | 15 | Decline and Fall: Gibbon’s Prose | (Work on papers) |
| | | Winter Break | |
| Feb. | 25 | Open Discussion: Gibbon the Historian * 1st Paper Due in Class | |
| Mar. | 1 | Religious Disunities | |

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Revised Syllabus

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| Mar. 4 | Gibbon's Prose | |
| Mar. 8 | Religious Disunities | (Grant 145-202; Nardo Documents # 9, 10, 11; review Cameron 66-84; Peter Brown, xerox; Augustine, xerox; Nardo 46-61) |
| Mar. 11 | Society and Economy | (Grant 51-110; Nardo Documents # 4, 13, 18; Nardo 119-131; Nardo Documents # 8, 12, 16, 17; review Cameron, chapter 8) |
| Mar. 15 | The Army | (Grant 27-47, 113-123; Nardo 145-155; Nardo Documents # 5, 7; review Cameron 133-150) |
| Mar. 18 | Ammianus: Introduction to Source Criticism | (Ammianus 13-233) |
| Mar. 22 | Ammianus | (Ammianus 234-368) |
| Mar. 25 | Ammianus | (Ammianus 369-443) |
| Mar. 29 | Late Roman Literature | (Xeroxes) |
| Apr. 1 | Barbarian Invasions | (Grant 124-141; Nardo 73-94, 156-161; Nardo Documents # 2, 3, 6, 19, 20; Xeroxes) |
| Apr. 5 | Decline or "Transformation"? | (Xeroxes; Nardo 102-112, 162-167) |