

Byzantine Archaeology and Art - Material Stories of a Christian Empire



Course description:

Byzantium is often considered as a dark period, an unfortunate pause gap between the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the European Renaissance. Yet Byzantium is among the longest living empires in world history and had an artistic and cultural impact felt far beyond its borders and longevity.

In this course, Byzantine emperors, soldiers, monks, eunuchs and artists all come together to tell their stories of how the Empire came to being, how churches were built, palaces and houses were lived in and icons venerated. The course will introduce students to a series of art works, architectural masterpieces, and archaeological discoveries that illuminate our understanding of the Byzantine Empire. To fully appreciate the multi-cultural tapestry of Byzantium, emphasis will also be placed on cultural exchange and artistic dialog with the Islamic world and the Latin West.

Evaluation Scheme:

Mid term: 20% (February 28)

Final exam: 30% (TBA)

Four short writing assignments: 40% (10% each)

Group/individual presentations: 10%

Exams: There will be two exams, a midterm and a final.

Short writing assignments:

- **Constantinople at the time of Constantine the Great: A Christian city?** Build your argument using specific monuments and discuss whether you think that Constantinople was just a typical late antique city or was intended to be a Christian capital (3 pages). **[Due February 12]**
- **Material culture and political propaganda.** This written assignment should stem from your presentations in political propaganda. Present one or two artifacts/monuments or works of art to explore how they were used to serve the imperial agenda and how these objects were means of negotiating authority (2 pages). **[Due February 21]**
- **The function of holy images.** In this assignment you will explore the role of holy images within Byzantine society. You can discuss the multiple functions of these images or focus on a sphere of byzantine activity (social, economic, artistic, political, symbolic, religious) or on the use and perceptions of holly images by a specific social group (elite, peasants, clergy, Emperor) (4 pages max). **[Due March 14]**
- **Life in a byzantine city.** Assume the role of a Byzantine character (Emperor/Empress, monk/nun, artist, merchant, court official) and describe your typical day at Constantinople. Think about the century you want to live in, describe buildings and tasks that match your character and your time period (3 pages). **[Due April 29]**

Group & individual presentations:

Group presentation on the Late Antique cities: Each group of students gives an informal 10 minute presentation on the archaeology and material culture of a Late Antique city that has been chosen by the group. **[February 5]**

Individual presentations on material culture and political propaganda: Each student presents one object and one coin of their choice and discuss how these artifacts are related to imperial imagery and authority. **[February 14]**

Group presentation on Byzantine cities: Each group of students gives an informal 10 minute presentation on the archaeology and material culture of a Byzantine city that has been chosen by the group. **[March 21]**

Requirements: No previous knowledge on Byzantine culture is required. Students are responsible for doing the assigned reading before class and hand in their assignments on time.

Text books R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, Oxford 2000. (ISBN: 0192842110). Other assigned readings will be available as pdf files in the password-protected course wiki.

Week 1: January 24: Why Byzantium?

Week 2: (January 29 & 31) Pagans and Christians

29 January: The making of a Christian capital?

S. Bassett, 'The Antiquities in the Hippodrome of Constantinople', pp. 87-96.

S. Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople*, Chapter 1

Extra reading for graduate students:

J. Crow, 'The Infrastructures of a Great City: Earth, walls and water in Late Antique Constantinople', pp.251-285.

31 January: Classical tradition & Early Christian art

R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, Chapter 1.

C. Mango, 'Antique Statuary and the Byzantine Beholder', pp. 55-75.

Extra reading for graduate students:

H. Saradi-Mendelovici, 'Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries', pp. 47-61.

Week 3: (February 5 & 7) The late antique world

February 5: The archaeology of the late antique city

W. Liebeschuetz, 'The end of the ancient city', pp. 1-48.

For the group presentations **choose one** of the following readings:

- C. Foss, *Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine, and Turkish City*, pp.46-95.
- S. Provost, 'City walls and urban area in late-antique Macedonia: the case of Philippi', pp. 123-136.
- J. Crow, 'Fortifications and urbanism in late antiquity: Thessaloniki and other eastern cities', pp. 89-106.
- L. Zavagno, *Cities in Transition*, Chapter 2 (Athens).
- W. Bowden and J. Mitchell, 'The Triconch palace at Butrint', pp. 455-76.

Extra reading for graduate students:

L. Lavan, *Recent research in late-antique urbanism*, pp. 9-26.

Group presentations on late antique cities/regions

February 7: The late antique rural landscape

N. Christie, *Landscapes of Change: Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Chapter 1.

B. Caseau, 'The Fate of Rural Temples in Late Antiquity and the Christianization of the Countryside', pp.105-144.

Extra reading for graduate students:

G.D. R. Sanders, 'Problems in interpreting rural and urban settlements in Southern Greece, AD 365-700', pp. 163-193.

Week 4: (February 12 & 14) Architecture, monumentality and political propaganda

February 12: Monumentality and propaganda in the time of Justinian

R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art*, Chapter 2.

E. Zanini, 'The urban ideal and urban planning in Byzantine new cities of the sixth century AD', pp. 196-223.

Extra reading for graduate students:

A. Brown, 'Justinian, Procopius, and deception: Literary lies, imperial politics, and the archaeology of sixth-century Greece', pp. 355-69.

February 14: Power, art and imperial imagery [Class will meet in the new digital scholarship lab at the Rockefeller Library]

A. Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, Chapter II.

H. Maguire, 'Heavenly court' pp. 247-258.

Extra reading for graduate students:

A. Walker, *The Emperor and the World*, Chapter IV.

Individual presentations and group discussion on the byzantine material culture and political propaganda

Week 5 (February 19 & 21): The material culture of pilgrimage

February 19: NO CLASSES

February 21

A. Weyl Carr, 'Icons and the Object of Pilgrimage in Middle Byzantine Constantinople', pp. 75-92.

C. Foss, 'Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor', pp. 129-151.

Extra reading for graduate students:

S. Coleman & J. Eisner, 'The pilgrim's progress: Art, architecture and ritual movement at Sinai', pp. 73-89.

Week 6 (February 26 & 28) Trade, markets, merchants

February 26

M. Mango, 'Byzantine trade: local, regional, interregional and international' pp. 3-14.

B. Pitarakis, 'Daily Life in the Marketplace in Late Antiquity and Byzantium', pp. 399-426.

Extra reading for graduate students:

D. Jacoby, 'Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West', pp. 197-240.

February 28: MIDTERM

Week 7 (March 5 & 7) Symbolism and meaning in Byzantine architecture and art

March 5: Form and meaning in Byzantine church architecture

R. Ousterhout, 'The Holy Space: Architecture Serves the Liturgy,' pp.81-120.

H. Maguire, 'The Cycle of Images in the Church', pp. 122-151.

Extra reading for graduate students:

D.L. Chatford Clark, 'Viewing the liturgy: a space syntax study of changing visibility and accessibility in the development of the Byzantine church in Jordan', pp. 84-104.

March 7: Iconoclasm and the triumph of icons

R.Cormack, *Writing in Gold. Byzantine Society and its Icons*, Chapter 3.

Extra reading for graduate students:

L. Brubaker, 'Icons and Iconomachy', pp. 323-337.

Week 8 (March 12 & 14): Ritual, piety and artistic patronage

March 12: Experiencing the icon

A. Kartsonis, 'The Responding Icon' pp. 58-80.

N. Patterson Ševčenko, 'Icons in the Liturgy', pp. 45-57.

Extra reading for graduate students:

B.V. Pentcheva, 'The Performative Icon', pp. 631-655.

March 14: Artistic Patronage in Byzantium

V. Dimitropoulou, 'Giving Gifts to God: Aspects of Patronage in Byzantine Art', pp. 161-170.

R. Ousterhout, *Master builders of Byzantium*, Chapter 2.

Extra reading for graduate students:

A. Weyl Carr, 'Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art', pp. 189-198.

Week 9 (March 19 & 21) The Byzantine City

March 19: THE CITY

P. Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople: Built Environment and Urban Development', pp. 529-537.

C. Mango, 'The development of Constantinople as an urban center', pp.1- 20.

Extra reading for graduate students:

R. Ousterhout, 'Constantinople and the construction of a medieval urban identity', pp. 334-351.

March 21: Each city has its own history [Class will meet in the new digital scholarship lab at the Rockefeller Library]

C. Bouras, 'Aspects of the Byzantine City, Eighth--Fifteenth Centuries', pp. 487-518.

Students must **choose one** of the following case studies: G. D. R. Sanders, 'Corinth', pp.633-640; C. Foss and J. Ayer Scott, 'Sardis', pp. 602-609; K. Rheidt, 'The Urban Economy of Pergamon', pp. 610-616; A. Louvi-Kizi, 'Thebes', pp. 617-624; M. Kazanaki-Lappa, 'Medieval Athens', pp. 625-632.

Group presentations on Byzantine cities

[March 23-31 Spring Break]

Week 10 (April 2 & 4) The Byzantine landscape

April 2: Byzantine fortifications

T. Gregory, 'The Fortified Cities of Byzantine Greece', pp. 14-21.

C. Foss and D. Winfield, *Byzantine Fortifications: An Introduction*, Chapter 3.

Extra reading for graduate students:

N. Bakirtzis, 'The practice, perception and experience of Byzantine fortification', pp. 352-371.

April 4: The Byzantine village

M. Rautman, 'The villages of Byzantine Cyprus', pp. 453-63.

L. Safran, 'The Art of Veneration: Saints and Villages in the Salento and the Mani', pp. 179-190.

Extra reading for graduate students:

K. Rheidt, 'City or Village? Housing and Settlement in Middle and Late Byzantine Anatolia', pp. 221-232.

Week 11 (April 9 & 11) Living spaces

April 9: The Byzantine house

L. Sigalos, 'Housing People in Medieval Greece', pp. 195-221.

C. Bouras, 'Houses in Byzantium', pp. 1-26.

Extra reading for graduate students:

N. Oikonomides, 'The Contents of the Byzantine House from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century', pp. 205-214.

April 11: Monastic spaces

J. Patrich, 'Monastic landscapes', pp. 413-445.

S. Popović, 'Dividing the indivisible: The monastery space – secular and sacred', pp. 47-60.

Extra reading for graduate students:

A. M. Talbot, 'Women's Space in Byzantine Monasteries', pp. 113-127.

Week 12 (April 16 & 18) Looking to the West before and after the Crusades

April 16: Artistic interaction between East and West

K. Weitzmann, 'Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai', pp. 179-203.

A. Weyl Carr, 'Byzantines and Italians on Cyprus: Images from Art', pp. 339-357.

Extra reading for graduate students:

H.A. Klein, 'Refashioning Byzantium in Venice, 1200-1400', pp. 193-226.

April 18: Frankish Greece

C. Kaufman Williams, 'Frankish Corinth: An Overview', pp. 423-434.

P. Lock, 'The Frankish Towers of Central Greece', pp. 101-123.

J. Bintliff, 'The Archaeology of Frankish- Crusader Greece', pp. 416-435.

Extra reading for graduate students:

S.E. J. Gerstel et al. 'A Late Medieval Settlement at Panakton', pp. 147-234.

Week 13 (April 23 & 25) Material Culture and Identity in Late Byzantium

April 23: Late byzantine art & architecture

R. Cormack, Byzantine art, Chapter 6.

R. Ousterhout, 'Contextualizing the Later Churches of Constantinople: Suggested Methodologies and a Few Examples', pp. 241-250.

Extra reading for graduate students:

A. Eastmond, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond*, pp. 97-116.

April 25: The late byzantine city

K.P. Matschke, 'Builders and Building in Late Byzantine Constantinople', pp. 315-328.

C. Bakirtzis, 'The Urban Continuity and Size of Late Byzantine Thessalonike', pp. 35-64.

Extra reading for graduate students:

C. Morrisson, 'The Emperor, the Saint, and the City: Coinage and Money in Thessalonike from the Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century', pp. 173-203.

Week 14- Course review (April 30)

29/4-4/5= READING PERIOD