The emperor Augustus: cruel tyrant or enlightened despot?

Advanced Seminar 600.

Fall semester 2007.

Lecture room: Greek and Latin Reading Room (Memorial Library, 4th floor). In order to access the room you need a key. You need to pay a deposit of $10.00 on the third floor of Memorial Library.

Time: Wednesday 11:00-1:00.

Instructor: Marc Kleijwegt, Humanities 5219; tel.: 263 2528; email: mkleijwegt@wisc.edu

Office Hours: Monday 11:00-12:00; Friday 11:00-12:00.
After eighteen years of civil war (49 and 31 BC) the youthful Octavian, the adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar, finally re-imposed order and stability on an exhausted Roman state. After his decisive victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC, Octavian found himself alone in charge of the Roman Empire. No opponent was strong enough to challenge him. The important question that was on everybody’s mind was how Octavian would rule. The answer came in the first meeting of the senate in January of 27 BC when Octavian dramatically renounced all his powers to the Roman Senate. In exchange for these powers Octavian received a new name, Augustus, and a number of titles that illustrated his unique position of power. Augustus claimed to have restored the Republican government as it had existed before the civil wars erupted with Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon. In retrospect it appears that Augustus provided the foundations for the establishment of a new type of government, the absolute rule by a single individual. The pronounced ambivalent character of Augustus’ reign - in terms of its ideology a constitutional monarchy, in actual fact an absolute monarchy - has interested scholars for generations. This seminar will research a number of aspects of Augustus’ rule, including letters and the arts, in order to answer a number of essential questions: what sort of ruler was he, and how do we qualify his reign?

Required Books:


Books on Reserve in Greek and Latin Reading Room


**Books on Reserve in the Art Library**


Other important publications on various aspects of Augustus’ reign

The following articles are available for downloading and printing through JSTOR. Go to the main page of MadCat and click on TOP 10 databases. Use the title of the article or the name of the author to find the relevant article:

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**Course Aims**

This course is designed as an intensive reading, discussion, research, and writing experience for advanced undergraduates. Students are expected to read and comment on the secondary literature for each seminar. They should be prepared to discuss what they have read in seminar each week. This means that students should read carefully, taking extensive notes. Before each seminar, students are encouraged to review their notes and prepare a list of questions and discussion topics they wish to raise during the class meeting. Students are expected to find additional material by using reference works, bibliographies, and internet search tools.

Students are expected to write a polished original research paper for this course. The details of this assignment are discussed below. The student research paper will focus on a specific and narrowly defined topic, but it must also reflect on some of the larger themes raised in class readings and discussions. Students will consult individually with the instructor as they formulate their research topics, collect sources, draft their papers, and revise their work for final submission. The length of the research paper is between 15 and 20 pages.

**Class Participation**

Class discussions are a central part of this course. Students are expected to attend every seminar. Not attending meetings will only be allowed for serious medical, personal or other circumstances and should be reported to the instructor by email, preferably before the seminar is meeting. Students should complete all of the assigned reading before each seminar meeting, and arrive prepared for a detailed and critical discussion. Seminars are designed to exchange opinions on the reading, analyze important historical questions, and compare various viewpoints. The quality of each student’s class participation during the semester will comprise 5% of his/her grade.

**Class Presentations**

Each student will give one presentation on a week’s assigned reading. The instructor will schedule these during the first meeting of the semester. In these short presentations students should offer a quick evaluation of the reading, along with 2 or 3 questions for discussion. These presentations are designed to kick-off an exchange of opinions. They are also intended to give each student some experience with presenting material before a group. Presentations should reflect detailed preparation, clear ideas, and effective organization. These presentations will start in the third week and will comprise 10% of each student’s grade in total.

**Essay Presentations**

In addition, each student will give a ten-minute presentation on the topic they have chosen for their research paper. These presentations will take place in the final two weeks of the course. This will comprise 10% of each student’s grade in total.
Research Paper Proposal and Topic Outline

On **October 24** students should submit a 2 page research paper proposal and an outline of topics in class. The research paper proposal should include the following:

1. A statement of the main research question;
2. A statement of the hypotheses and arguments that the student will make in the paper;
3. An explanation of how these hypotheses and arguments revise existing interpretations;
4. An explanation of the strengths and shortcomings in the available sources.

The research paper proposals should reflect careful and polished writing. Proofread your proposals before submission! Avoid passive voice, clichés, and awkward phrases. Check your grammar carefully. Make sure that each paragraph has a topic sentence. Each sentence should contribute to the point of the paragraph where it is situated.

Students should also include a general outline of the topics they plan to cover in their papers. The topic outline should provide a sense of how the paper will be organized, and how the student will employ his/her sources. The research paper and topic outline will count for 10% of each student’s grade.

Draft of the Research Paper

On **November 21** each student should submit a completed 5-10 page draft of his/her research paper in class. These drafts should not be “rough.” They should include polished prose, careful argumentation, clear organization, a creative introduction, a thoughtful conclusion, completed footnotes, and a full bibliography.

Proofread your papers before submission! Avoid passive voice, clichés, and awkward phrases. Check your grammar carefully. Make sure that each paragraph has a topic sentence. Each sentence should contribute to the point of the paragraph where it is situated.

I will read the draft papers carefully for style and substance. I will offer extensive written and oral comments for students to use in the final version of their papers. The draft research paper will account for 10% of each student’s grade.

Final Version of the Research Paper

The required length of the research paper is between 15 and 20 pages. Students must submit the final version of their research papers to the instructor’s office by **4:00 PM on Friday, December 14**. Late papers will not be accepted. Students should try to implement as many of the revisions suggested on the draft paper as possible. The final papers should also reflect additional proofreading for clarity, style, and overall presentation. The final paper will account for 50% of each student’s grade.
Grading

- Class Participation: 5%
- Exercise on Sources: 5%
- Class Presentation: 10%
- Essay Presentation: 10%
- Research Paper Proposal and Topic Outline: 10%
- Draft of the Research Paper: 10%
- Final Version of the Research Paper: 50%
Week 1: 9/5/2007

There will be no meeting. Instead you will list the major sources for Augustus’ reign and check their reliability. You do this with the help of the required reading. I will help you in the process with some information.

It is generally assumed that of the sources which deal with the reign of Augustus the documents that survive are the most important. They are contemporary and they appear to be reliable. These consist of personal correspondence, inscriptions and other documentary evidence. Then follow the historians. Here it is usually a matter of personal competence (who is a good historian and who is not), proximity in time (the closer to the events that are being described the more reliable a historian is considered to be) and access to reliable sources and documents. Last but not least, we have the literary sources from his reign: the poets and their works. Make a list of the main sources of information on the reign of Augustus and check whether this hierarchy of reliability is in fact correct. Is it perhaps possible that something which comes from the environment of Augustus, let’s say his Res Gestae, is not as reliable as it appears to be at first sight?

Week 2: 9/12/2007

Introducing Augustus.

Week 3: 9/19/2007

Discussion theme: Caesar’s Heir: from the second triumvirate to the battle of Actium.

Reading:


Week 4: 9/26/2007

Discussion theme: The constitutional settlement of 27 BC.

Reading:


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**Week 5: 10/3/2007**

**Discussion theme: Augustus and the elite.**

Reading:


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**Week 6: 10/10/2007**

**Discussion theme: Governing the Empire.**

Reading:


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**Week 7: 10/17/2007**

**Discussion theme: Augustus and the city of Rome.**

Reading:


Week 8: 10/24/2007

Submission of research paper proposal.

**Discussion theme: Augustus and the arts**

Reading:


Week 9: 10/31/2007

Meet with instructor individually to discuss research paper.

**Discussion theme: Man or God?**

Reading:


Week 10: 11/7/2007

**Discussion theme: Opposition to Augustus**

Reading:


Week 11: 11/14/2007

**Discussion theme: Augustus and the Res Gestae.**

Reading:


Week 12: 11/21/2007

**Draft of research paper due in class.**

**Discussion theme: Judging Augustus**

Reading:

Peter J. Davis, ‘Since my part has been well played: conflicting evaluations of Augustus’, *Ramus* 28 (1999), 1-15.


Discussion Theme: Augustus on the Small Screen

- An episode from the BBC-production *I, Claudius*.
- An episode from the HBO-production *Rome*.

Week 14: 12/5/2007

Presentations.

Week 15: 12/12/2007

Presentations.