

Paul Stephenson

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## **HI313: AN INTRODUCTION TO BYZANTINE HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION**

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Fall 2005 (September 5th - December 14th): Monday & Wednesday, 2.30-3.45pm; 1221 Humanities (with occasional classes in 274 Van Hise, as noted)

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### **Course Description**

In this course we will explore the origins, development and enduring importance of the East Roman or Byzantine Empire in the Middle Ages (AD 330-1453). We will familiarize ourselves with the sources for Byzantine history (written and archaeological), locate Byzantium in a secure historical context, and investigate the legacy of this "World Civilization" in those countries which once belonged to the empire, including modern Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. We will explore institutions (for example Government, Monasteries), practices (Warfare, Diplomacy) and material resources (Coinage, Silks, "Greek Fire"). Byzantine art and architecture, literature and theology, will be studied in addressing aspects of the culture and ideology of the empire. Our principal task throughout will be to understand forces for continuity (conservative ideologies, education) and processes of transformation (The Decline of Cities, Iconoclasm). It is hoped that participants will gain insights into neglected aspects of medieval civilization, and will appreciate more fully the history of regions of Europe and the Middle East of particular interest today.

### **Course Web Site**

<http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/madison/byzantium/syllabus2005.html>

### **Weekly Reading Assignments**

*Weekly reading assignments, listed as Sources (S) or Required Reading (RR), are compulsory. Students will be quizzed to ensure they have completed the reading. The first quiz will take place in Week 5, at which time students will be expected to show familiarity with our principal textbook, Mango's Oxford History of Byzantium, and other set texts. Classes will not always cover the same ground as reading assignments, which are the essential background to lectures and class discussions.*

#### *Sources (S)*

Sources are provided largely as on-line translations with introductions by Professor Stephenson. Hard copies of certain texts will be available in class. It is essential to read these texts, as we will discuss them each week.

### *Secondary Literature: Required Reading (RR)*

- Mango, C., ed. (2002), *The Oxford History of Byzantium*. Oxford & New York.
- Angold, M. (1997), *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*. London and New York
- We will make extensive use of electronic texts, which may be downloaded by individuals from Dumbarton Oaks. Most of these texts are also available as hard copies in the Memorial Library.

### *Secondary Literature: Suggested Reading (SR, see the separate full bibliography, which includes the following principal works)*

- Cavallo, G. ed. (1997), *The Byzantines*. Chicago.
- Gregory, T., (2004), *A History of Byzantium*. Oxford & New York.
- Harris, J. ed. (2005), *Palgrave Advances in Byzantine Studies*. London & New York.
- Kazhdan, A. & G. Constable (1982) *People and Power in Byzantium. An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*. Washington D.C.
- Mango, C. (1980) *Byzantium. The Empire of the New Rome*. London & New York.
- Obolensky, D. (1971, but recently reprinted) *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe 500-1500*. London.
- Ostrogorsky, G. (1968, but recently reprinted) *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey. Oxford.
- Vasiliev, A. A. (1952, but recently reprinted), *History of the Byzantine Empire, 325-1453; vol. 1, 325-1081*. Madison.
- Stephenson, P. (2000), *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*. Cambridge.
- Whittow, M. (1996), *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025*. Berkeley.

A fuller on-line bibliography is provided separately at  
<http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/madison/byzantium/bibliog.html>

*Students should endeavor each week to read as much of the suggested material as possible. I repeat: Reading the sources (S) and required secondary literature (RR) is mandatory. However, the set texts will not be sufficient for students wishing to excel on their two major papers (outlined below), hence the importance of the additional suggested reading (SR).*

## **Attendance, Writing Assignments and Grades**

Attendance at all classes is mandatory, and permission to be absent must be sought in writing a week in advance.

On two occasions students will be asked to prepare a paper at home. The grades for these two papers will, together, comprise 80% of your final grade (30% + 50%). Regular attendance, class discussion and quizzes will be factors in assigning this final 20%: the difference between an A and a C. There will be no final examination.

Explicit Grading Criteria which will be employed in marking the papers may be viewed here.

The First Major Paper (30% of final grade) will be set formally on Monday, October 3rd, and collected on Wednesday, October 19th. It should comprise 4-5 pages

The Second Major Paper (50% of final grade) will be set formally on Monday, November 14th, and collected on Wednesday, December 7th, unless an extension has been sought. If granted, the final submission deadline will be Friday, December 16th at 12pm. This second paper should comprise 5-6 pages.

For guidance on writing refer to the Writing Center. Also, be aware that plagiarism will not be tolerated, and will result in an automatic failing grade.

Instructions are incorporated into the class schedule below in **Green**.

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## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### *Abbreviations*

S: Source

RR: Required Reading

SR: Suggested Reading

### Week 1

#### **An introduction to Byzantium**

An introduction to the lands, peoples and languages of the Byzantine empire; an introduction to modern Byzantine studies

For our second meeting, you will be asked to read: this syllabus, carefully; a section from chapter one of Cyril Mango's 1980 book, *Byzantium. The empire of the New Rome*

### Week 2

#### **From Constantine to Justinian**

An introduction to the sources for Byzantine history; Constantine the Great and the conversion of the Roman Empire; Constantinople

S: Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, books 1 (all) and 2 (at least cc. 1-10); *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Church History), book 10

RR: Mango 2002, Introduction, c. 1, + (pp. 1-59)

SR: Angeliki E. Laiou 2002 (*Political History: An Outline*, download from Dumbarton Oaks); Mango, cc. 8, 9; Cavallo 1997, Introduction, cc. 7, 10; Kazhdan & Constable 1982, Introduction; Vasiliev 1952, cc. 1, 2

Week 3

## **The Sixth Century**

Wednesday, September 21st, class will take place in 274 Van Hise. On this first occasion, meet in 1221 Humanities, and we will walk up the hill together.

Justinian's Roman Empire; sources for Justinian's reign; life in the New Rome: games, law and the plague

S: Selections from Procopius, *Secret History*, at least chapters 1-14 (available on-line, but you may wish to buy the Penguin paperback)

RR: Mango 2002, cc. 2, 3, + (pp. 60-120)

SR: Mango 1980, c. 2; Moorehead 1994; Vasiliev 1952, c. 3

Week 4

## **The Seventh Century**

Heraclius and after: Persians and Arabs, Slavs and Bulgars; the Theme (*themata*) System; Byzantine coins and lead seals; the decline of cities: a survey of sites in Balkans and Asia Minor

S: Nikephoros, cc. 29-41 (hard copy provided in class); Theophanes, AD 620-6 (at *De Re Militari*)

RR: Mango 2002, c. 4, 5, + (pp. 121-150)

SR: Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage* (Download from Dumbarton Oaks); Mango 1980: c. 3; Haldon 1990: cc. 2, 3, 6; Foss 1973; Foss 1977; Herrin 1987, c. 5; Ostrogorsky 1959; Ostrogorsky 1968, c. 2; Vasiliev 1952, c. 4;

Expect a quiz on Required Reading to date next week on Wednesday

Week 5

## **The Eighth Century**

Iconoclasm: political background; theology; education, icons and authority

S: Bryer & Herrin 1977, Anthology of translated sources (hard copy provided in class)

RR: Mango 2002, c. 6, + (pp. 151-68)

SR: Mango 1980, cc. 6, 7; Brown 1973; Bryer & Herrin 1977, Introduction by Mango; Cameron 1994; Herrin 1987, c. 8; Mango 1963; Mango 1975; Vasiliev 1952, c. 5

Begin work on your First Major Paper, to be set Monday

Week 6

## **The Ninth Century**

Wednesday, October 12th, class will take place in 274 Van Hise.

*Taxis* and *Taktika*: imperial ideology, precedence lists and administration; missionary activity and the lives of Saints Cyril and Methodios

S: Pope Nicholas, *Responses to the Bulgars*, AD 866; Lives of Ss. Cyril & Methodios

RR: Mango 2002, cc. 7, 9 (pp. 169-213, 230-247)

SR: Mango 1980, cc. 10, 11, 12; Bury 1911; Cavallo 1997, c. 8; Dvornik 1970, cc. 1, 2, 3, 4; Obolensky, c. 3; Vasiliev 1952, c. 6

Week 7

## **The Tenth Century**

Byzantium and Bulgaria; the *De Administrando Imperio* and imperial diplomacy; Monasticism

S: *DAI*, cc. 1-13 (hard copies provided in class); Life of Athanasios of Athos, (chapters on foundation of Great Lavra)

RR: Mango 2002, c. 8 (pp. 214-229)

SR: Cavallo, c. 3; Dennis 1997; Haldon 1997; Obolensky 1963; Obolensky, c. 4; Shepard 1992; Stephenson 2000, Introduction, c. 1

Week 8

## **The Eleventh Century, I**

Wednesday, October 26th, class will take place in 274 Van Hise.

Liutprand's embassy; Nikephoros II Phokas and imperial triumph; John Skylitzes; Basil II "the Bulgar-slayer"

S: Liutprand of Cremona, *Legatio*; Selection from Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historion*  
RR: Angold, Introduction, cc. 1, 2, 3, 4 (pp. 1-80)  
SR: Harvey 1989, conclusion; Lemerle 1977; Ostrogorsky 1968, c. 5

Week 9

## **Constantinople: City and Court**

The emperor and ceremonial; coronation; medieval Constantinople and the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai*

S: *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (*Brief Historical Expositions*, excerpts as directed from KCL site); *De Cerimoniis*, on coronations  
RR: Angold, cc. 5, 6, 7 (pp. 81-135)  
SR: Cavallo, 1997, cc. 8, 9; Maguire 1997, pt 5; Magdalino 1996, cc. 1, 2; Mango & Dagron 1995, cc.1, 2; Mango 2000 (Download from Dumbarton Oaks)

Week 10

## **The Eleventh Century, II**

Michael Psellos; the emergence of a provincial military aristocracy; seals and surnames

S: Psellos, *Chronographia*, as much as possible, but at least bks 2-4 (or you may wish to buy the Penguin paperback)  
RR: Angold 1997, cc. 8, 9, 10 (pp. 136-180)  
SR: Angold 1984, c. 1; Kazhdan & Constable 1982, c. 7; Cheynet 1990, pt 2; Kazhdan & Epstein 1985, c. 3; Stephenson 1994; Stephenson 2000, cc. 2, 3

Week 11

## **The Twelfth Century I: Byzantium and the West**

Wednesday, November 11th, class will take place in 274 Van Hise.

Alexios Komnenos and the West; Anna Komnene and her *Alexiad*

Begin to think about your Second Major Paper, to be set on Monday.  
It will require additional reading from the full bibliography.

S: Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, books 10 and 11 (available on-line, but you may wish to buy the Penguin paperback)  
RR: Angold 1997, cc. 11, 12, 13 (pp. 181-240);

SR: Magdalino 1993, c. 1; Laiou and Mottahedeh (download from Dumbarton Oaks); Stephenson 2000, cc. 4, 5

Week 12

## **The Twelfth Century, II: A Golden Age?**

The empire of Manuel Komnenos; the image of the emperor

You must now have begun your Second Major Paper. This will require additional reading from the full bibliography.

S: Cinnamus; Choniates; Manganeios Prodromos (excerpts provided)

RR: Angold 1997, cc. 14, 15, 16, 17 (pp. 241-328)

SR: Magdalino 1993, c. 6; Stephenson 2000, cc. 6, 7

Week 13

## **Economic life in Byzantium**

The economy and the state economy

S: The Book of the Eparch

RR: Laiou, ed, *The economic history of Byzantium*: Download chapters by Dagron and Lefort from Dumbarton Oaks. These are very long, so read them selectively. SR: Additional chapters from Laiou, op. cit., by Magdalino and Bouras

Week 14

## **The Twilight of Byzantium**

The final centuries to 1453: a Christian empire?

Complete your Second Major Paper, to be submitted on Wednesday, December 7th.

S: Choniates

RR: Mango 2002, c. 10, 11, 12 (pp. 248-305)

SR: Brand 1968; Wolff, 1949 (download from JSTOR at

<http://80-www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu>); Stephenson, c. 8, conclusion

Week 15

## **The end of things: Death in Byzantium**

The death of the emperor; dying rich and dying poor; the end of times

S: Nicholas Mesarites, *Ekphrasis on the church of the Holy Apostles*; Life (and death) of a holy woman (download from Dumbarton Oaks)

SR: Dennis 2001; Velovska 2001; Alexakis 2001; Daley 2001 (Download all from Dumbarton Oaks)

**Please see the course webpage at**

**<http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/madison/byzantium/syllabus2005.html> for a version of this syllabi with active links.**

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Paul Stephenson, August 2005