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HI313: AN INTRODUCTION TO BYZANTINE HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION

Spring 2003/4 (January 20th - May 6th, 2004): Tue & Thu, 2.30-3.45pm; 1217 Humanities

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/syllabus2003.html>

Weekly Reading Assignments

Weekly reading assignments, listed as Sources (S) or Required Reading (RR), are compulsory. They are not onerous, and must be completed before the Tuesday class. Students will be quizzed to ensure they have completed the reading. The first quiz will take place in Week 3, 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. \$45.00 (Sorry it is not yet out in paperback, which will be cheaper)



- Angold, M. (1997), *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204. A Political History*. London. \$44.00 (Once again, sorry. This is \$10 more than last year!)
- 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. \$20.
- Kazhdan, A. & G. Constable (1982) *People and Power in Byzantium. An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies*. Washington D.C. \$15 (currently on offer at \$12)
- Mango, C. (1980) *Byzantium. The Empire of the New Rome*. London & New York. Out of Print.
- Obolensky, D. (1971, but recently reprinted) *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe 500-1500*. London. \$24.95
- Ostrogorsky, G. (1968, but recently reprinted) *History of the Byzantine State*, trans. J. Hussey. Oxford. \$27
- Vasiliev, A. A. (1952, but recently reprinted), *History of the Byzantine Empire, 325-1453; vol. 1, 325-1081*. Madison. \$18.95
- Stephenson, P. (2000), *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204*. Cambridge. \$75, but you will not need to buy this overpriced book. You may read it for free, courtesy of the UW Library, at: <http://www.Netlibrary.com>
- Whittow, M. (1996), *The Making of Byzantium, 600-1025*. Berkeley. \$24.95

A fuller on-line bibliography is provided separately.

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 Tuesday, February 10th, and collected on Thursday, February 19th. There will be no class on Thursday, February 12th.

The Second Major Paper (50% of final grade) will be set formally on Tuesday, April 13th, and collected on Thursday, April 29th. Both papers will be 4-5 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.

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*

For next week complete the following reading:

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 2

From Constantine to Justinian

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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 3

The Sixth Century

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

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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;

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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 submitted on Thursday, February 19th. Question will be set on Tuesday February 10th.

There will be no class on Thursday, February 12th. Complete reading for next week, and for your paper.

Week 5

The Eighth Century

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

Complete the First Major Paper. Submit it on Thursday, February 19th.

For next week complete the following reading:

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 6

The Ninth Century

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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 7

The Tenth Century

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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 8

The Eleventh Century, I

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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)

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

Constantinople: City and Court

The emperor and ceremonial; coronation; medieval Constantinople and the

Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai

For next week complete the following reading:

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 10

The Eleventh Century, II

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

For next week complete the following reading:

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 11

The Twelfth Century I: Byzantium and the West

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

Begin to think about your Second Major Paper. I will distribute a list of questions on Thursday. This will require additional reading from the full [bibliography](#).

For next week complete the following reading:

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 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.

For next week complete the following reading:

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 13

Economic life in Byzantium

The economy and the state economy

For next week complete the following reading:

S: Choniates

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

SR: Brand 1968; Wolff, 1949 (download from JSTOR); Stephenson, c. 8, conclusion

Week 14

The Twilight of Byzantium

The final centuries to 1453: a Christian empire?

Complete your Second Major Paper, to be submitted on Thursday, April 29th. There will be no required reading for the final week, but do look at the following sources, and suggested reading is highly recommended:

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)

Week 15

The end of things: Death in Byzantium

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

Paul Stephenson, January 2004