

**History 500-001 Byzantine Empresses and their Men:
Gender and Historical Memory in the Byzantine Empire**

Tuesdays 3:30-5:30 Greek and Latin Reading Room, Memorial Library

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:30, or by appointment

The ideal of dynastic succession in the Roman Empire—the idea that an emperor should be succeeded by his son—gave the wives and mothers of emperors significant roles as guarantors of political stability. In the medieval Roman Empire (the Byzantine Empire) these roles not infrequently allowed the imperial women to become de facto rulers. Our understanding of this phenomenon of female rule is complicated by the nature of our source material. Our surviving histories of the empresses were created by authors engaged in the usually contested construction of historical memory, often with strongly partisan political intentions. The medieval historians aimed to be persuasive, not impartial. One of the key tools used by the historians to craft morally coded portraits was the manipulation of cultural ideas of proper gender: disparaging men by making them look like women, for example. We therefore must understand how medieval Romans thought about gender in order to understand what their historians were saying about politics and about the women and men who ruled the empire. This course will study medieval Roman gender with a view to attaining the culturally-contextualized reading necessary for understanding our surviving portraits of empresses and emperors.

Graduate assessment:

Graduate students will produce a 25-30 page paper of original research, suitable for presentation at academic conferences and eventual publication.

Research Paper, Due 12/21 noon 75%
Presentation of research results: 10%
Weekly participation in class discussion: 15%

Undergraduate assessment:

Undergraduate students will learn about the process of conducting academic research in history and writing original research papers. They will complete several short writing assignments and a 10-15 page research paper.

Consistent participation in class discussion 20%

Read and think about all assigned readings prior to class. Come prepared to participate in a discussion of those readings. Try not to drag the class into irrelevant digressions.

Article style review, due 9/28 10%

Take any two of the five articles assigned for 9/21 and 9/28 and compare the effectiveness of the presentation and writing. In this assignment you are not assessing the content or the argument of the article, but the writing style and exposition. Compare the introductions and conclusions. Compare the structure of the articles' organization. Compare the prose style. Assess which article is better written based on clarity of prose, clarity of exposition, interest, aesthetic appeal and reading pleasure. 3-4 pages

Historiographic essay, due 10/19 15%

Read the five articles assigned for 10/12. Write an historiographic essay (defined in Rampolla pg 32-34) on the 9th century imperial bride-shows. 5-7 pages.

Research topic and question, due 11/9 5%

Choose a topic for your research paper and a fundamental question your thesis will address. You will develop your thesis (answer) in the course of doing your research in subsequent weeks. One page.

Revised topic, question and thesis, due 11/23 5%

In light of the research you have done, refine the topic and question you developed earlier and briefly explain the thesis of your research paper. 1-2 pages.

Presentation of Research results, due 12/14 5%

Research paper, Due 12/21 noon. 40%

Write a 10-15 page paper of original research arguing for your thesis.

NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GIVEN. NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE. HAND IN WHATEVER YOU HAVE FINISHED BY NOON ON TUESDAY DECEMBER 21.

Books you are requested to purchase:

Kaldellis, Anthony, ed. *Prokopios: The secret history, with related texts*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010

Rampolla, Mary Lynn *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 6th ed. Bedford, St. Martin's, 2009 (5th edition is also OK, not optimum).

Psellos *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* trans.

E.R.A.Sewter Penguin Classics. (available online)
Anne Komnene *Alexiad* translated by Peter Frankopan and E.R.A. Sewter, Penguin 2009.
Please use the new translation revised by Peter Frankopan.

1) 9/7 Introduction & background

2) 9/14 Theodora and Justinian: Sources

Kaldellis, Anthony, ed. *Prokopios: The secret history, with related texts*.
Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010. Read only the primary sources translated. **Do not read the introduction.**

3) 9/21 Attempts at understanding Theodora & Justinian

Kaldellis, Anthony, introduction to *Prokopios: The secret history, with related texts*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010.

Foss, Clive. "The Empress Theodora." *Byzantion* 72, no. 1 (2002): 141-76.

Brubaker, Leslie. "Sex, lies and textuality: the *Secret History* of Prokopios and the rhetoric of gender in sixth-century Byzantium." In *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and west, 300-900*, edited by Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, 83-101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

4) 9/28 Attempts at understanding Theodora & Justinian

Brubaker, Leslie. "The Age of Justinian: Gender and Society." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, edited by Michael Maas, 427-47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Evans, J.A.S. "The 'Nika' Rebellion and the Empress Theodora." *Byzantion* 54, (1984): 381-3.

Fisher, Elizabeth. "Theodora and Antonia." In *Women in the Ancient World. The Arethusa Papers*, edited by J. Peradoto and J.P. Sullivan, 287-313. Albany, 1984.

Article review assignment due

5) 10/5 Approaches

Kaldellis, Anthony. "The corpus of Byzantine historiography: an interpretive essay." In *The Byzantine World*, edited by Paul Stephenson, 211-22. London: Routledge, 2010.

James, Liz. "Introduction: Women's studies, gender studies, Byzantine studies." In *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, xi-xxiv. London: Routledge, 1997.

Clark, Elizabeth. "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'." *Church History* 67, (1998): 1-31.

Woodman, A. J. *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* Croom Helm, 1988, reissued Routledge, 2004. Chapter 1

Rampolla, Mary Lynn *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History* chapters 2, 3, 4, & 5

6) 10/12 Bride Shows

Treadgold, Warren. "The bride-shows of the Byzantine emperors." *Byzantion* 49, (1979): 395-413.

Rydén, Lennert "The bride shows at the Byzantine court -- history or fiction?" *Eranos* 83, (1985): 175-91.

Vinson, Martha. "The Life of Theodora and the rhetoric of the Byzantine bride show." *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 49, (1999): 31-60.

Treadgold, Warren. "The historicity of imperial bride-shows." *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 54, (2004): 39-52.

Vinson, Martha. "Romance and reality in the Byzantine bride shows." In *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and west, 300-900*, edited by Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, 102-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

7) 10/19 Narratives of Medieval Empresses

Connor, Carolyn L. *Women of Byzantium*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004; chapters 10 & 11

Garland, Lynda. *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium AD 527-1204*. London: Routledge, 1999, chapters 9, 10 & 11

Historiographic Essay due

8)10/26 Sources for Medieval Empresses I

Psellos *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* trans. E.R.A.Sewter Penguin Classics.

9) 11/2 Sources for Medieval Empresses II

Anne Komnene *Alexiad* translated by Peter Frankopan and E.R.A. Sewter, Penguin 2009. Please use the new translation revised by Peter Frankopan.

Magoulias, Harry J., ed. *O city of Byzantium : annals of Niketas Choniates*,

Byzantine texts in translation. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984.

10) 11/9 Authorship of Alexiad

Howard-Johnston, James. "Anna Komnene and the Alexiad." In *Alexios I Komnenos*, edited by Margaret Mullett and Dion Smythe, 232-302. Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1996.

Macrides, Ruth. "The pen and the sword: who wrote the Alexiad?" In *Anna Komnene and her times*, edited by Thalia Gouma-Peterson, 63-81. New York: Garland, 2000.

Reinsch, Diether Roderich. "Women's literature in Byzantium? The case of Anna Komnene." In *Anna Komnene and her times*, edited by Thalia Gouma-Peterson. New York: Garland, 2000.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn *Pocket Guide*, chapters 5, 6 & 7

Topic & Question due

11) 11/16 Anna Komnene & Imperial Power

Hill, Barbara. "A Vindiction of the rights of Women to Power by Anna Komnene." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 23, (1996): 45-53.

Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. "Gender and Power: Passage to the Maternal in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*." In *Anna Komnene and her times*, edited by Thalia Gouma-Peterson, 107-24. London: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Hill, Barbara. "Actions Speak Louder than Words: Anna Komnene's Attempted Usurpation." In *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, edited by Thalia Gouma-Peterson, 45-62. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Neville, Leonora. "Strong Women and their Husbands in Byzantine Historiography." In *The Byzantine World*, edited by Paul Stephenson, 72-82. London: Routledge, 2010.

12) 11/23 Eunuchs

Ringrose, Katharine. "Living in the Shadows: Eunuchs and Gender in Byzantium." In *Third sex, third gender: beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history*, edited by Gilbert Herdt, 85-109. New York, 1994.

Ringrose, Katharine. "Reconfiguring the Prophet Daniel: Gender, Sanctity, and Castration in Byzantium." In *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages*, edited by Sharon Farmer and Carol Braun Pasternack, 73-106. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Tougher, Shaun. "Byzantine Eunuchs: An overview, with special reference to their creation and origin." In *Women, Men and Eunuchs: Gender in Byzantium*, edited by Liz James, 168-84. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Revised topic, question & thesis due

13) 11/30 A Woman's voice?

Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. "Engendered Category or Recognizable Life: Anna Komnene and her Alexiad." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 23, (1996): 25-34.

Mullett, Margaret. "Bohemond's biceps: male beauty and the female gaze in the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene." In *Byzantine Masculinities*, edited by Dion Smythe, forthcoming.

Magdalino, Paul. "The pen of the aunt : echoes of the mid-twelfth century in the *Alexiad*." In *Anna Komnene and her times*, edited by Thalia Gouma-Peterson. New York: Garland, 2000.

Quandahl, Ellen, and Susan C. Jarratt. "'To recall Him...Will be a Subject of Lamentation": Anna Comnena as Rhetorical Historiographer." *Rhetorica* 26, no. 3 (2008): 301-35.

14) 12/7 Graduate Research Paper presentations

15) 12/14 Undergraduate Research paper presentations

Research Paper Due Tuesday, December 21 at noon. Please bring a paper copy of your paper to my office.

Class policies:

You are expected to be women and men of honor and integrity. It is both assumed and required that all work you represent as yours is your own original work. We will discuss plagiarism and techniques for avoiding it in class. Anyone who does cheat will fail the class.

Participation in class discussion is a significant part of your performance in class. You are expected to attend and participate in all classes. If missing class is absolutely unavoidable, let me know why in advance of the class.

Research Paper Grading Criteria

Your paper will be judged on the quality of its writing, research and historical

argumentation; as defined below:

Quality of Writing

- The introduction explains what the paper will be about and why it is worth reading.
- The organization of the paper is indicated so that the reader always knows how each section pertains to the argument.
- The prose is clear and accurate. (The sentences mean what you want them to).
- There are no errors in grammar or proofreading.
- Citations to primary and secondary material are adequate.
- The style and format of the footnotes and bibliography is correct.

Quality of Research

- The research presented is sufficient to support the argument. (You did enough research to prove your point).
- The paper displays a thorough understanding of the topic's background and scholarship surrounding the issue. (You read enough to understand the topic).
- The paper displays nuanced understanding of the primary and secondary sources read. (You understood what you read).
- The paper uses the most pertinent and appropriate primary and secondary literature. (You read the right things).
- The argument is grounded in primary historical documentation.

Quality of Argumentation and Historical Thought

- The paper has a clear thesis that motivates the content of the paper.
- The argument of the paper is coherent and internally consistent.
- The thesis is proven by the argument of the paper. The argument is ultimately convincing.
- The argument of the paper is the most sensible possible interpretation of the evidence. (You did not ignore other obvious explanations or evidence).
- The paper displays historical insight and perception.
- The paper displays creativity of thought and original ideas.