

## **History 600.008 Byzantine Empresses and their Men: Gender and Historical Memory in the Byzantine Empire**

Thursdays 11-12:50  
Humanities 5245

Dr. Leonora Neville  
Department of History

[LNeville@wisc.edu](mailto:LNeville@wisc.edu)

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3pm, or by appointment

This 600 Seminar will explore conceptions of gender in the Medieval Roman Empire from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Medieval ideas about proper behavior for men and women differed significantly from those of our society. Understanding the constructions of gender in the Byzantine world therefore can provide a highly illuminating contrast. Byzantine constructions of gender are particularly interesting because of the lasting influence of ancient Greek culture on medieval thought and society. Medieval authors interacted constantly and unpredictably with their classical heritage, particularly when attempting to valorize or castigate the behavior of contemporary women and men. The practice of voluntary eunuchism further complicates Byzantine conceptions of gender. Scholarly opinion is divided about whether eunuchs constituted a third gender or were a special case of maleness in Byzantium. What is clear is that correct performance of gender roles was considered as a key indicator of an individual's virtue in Byzantine society.

Students will learn about the process of conducting academic research in history and writing original research papers. They will complete a 15-20 page research paper.

### **Assessment:**

Reading Preparation & Class discussion 30%

Research Paper Project: 70% total, broken down into:

Research topic and question, 6%	== Will become approximately pages 1-2
Secondary Source Paper 6%	== Will become approximately pages 2-5
Primary Source Description 6%	== Will become approximately pages 6-7
Source Analysis Essay I 6%	== Will become approximately pages 8-12
Source Analysis Essay II 6%	== Will become approximately pages 13-17
Draft Paper 10%	== Will add the conclusion, ~ pages 18-19
Presentation of Research results 6%	
Final Research paper, 24%	

Week	Topic	Assignments	Reading
1) 1/24	Byzantine History Introduction / Argumentative Writing		
2) 1/31	Justinian & Theodora		Prokopios: <i>The Secret History</i> ; Neville, <i>Byzantine Gender</i> chpt 1
3) 2/7	Understanding Justinian & Theodora		Brubaker, Leslie, "The Age of Justinian: Gender and Society." Evans, J.A.S. "The 'Nika' Rebellion and the Empress Theodora." Neville <i>Gender</i> chapters 2-3; Kaldellis' Introduction;
4) 2/14	topic exploration		Mary of Egypt; Christian Novels; Digenis Akritis, Psellos, <i>Chronographia</i> ; Neville <i>Gender</i> chapters 4-5
5) 2/21	topic exploration		Psellos <i>Chronographia</i> ; Neville <i>Gender</i> chapter 6
6) 2/28	topic exploration	Topic Question	Anna Komnene <i>Alexiad</i> ;
7) 3/7	Secondary source reading	Article reviews in class	Individual readings
8) 3/14	Secondary source reading	Secondary source essay (Pages 2-5 of paper)	Individual readings
9) 3/21	<b>SPRING BREAK!!!</b>		
9) 3/28	Primary source exploration	Primary Source description (Pages 6-7 of paper)	Primary source reading
10) 4/4	Reading Day	prep for writing	Primary source reading
11) 4/11		Source Analysis Essay I (pages 8-12)	
12) 4/18		Source analysis Essay II (pages 12-16)	

13) 4/25	Draft Peer Review	Draft	
14) 5/2	Research Presentations	Research Presentations	

Research Paper Final version Due: **Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>**. No late papers will be read. Hand in whatever you have by 11:59 pm on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

## Research Paper Grading Criteria

### Quality of Writing

1 The introduction explains what the paper will be about and why it is worth reading.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

2 The organization of the paper is indicated so that the reader always knows how each section pertains to the argument.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

3 The prose is clear and accurate. (The sentences mean what you want them to).

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

4 There are no errors in grammar or proofreading.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

5 Citations to primary and secondary material are adequate.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

6 The style and format of the footnotes and bibliography is correct.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

### Quality of Research

7 The research presented is sufficient to support the argument. (You did enough research to prove your point).

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

8 The paper displays a thorough understanding of the topic's background and scholarship surrounding the issue. (You read enough to understand the topic).

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

9 The paper displays nuanced understanding of the primary and secondary sources read. (You understood what you read).

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

10 The paper uses the most pertinent and appropriate primary and secondary literature. (You read the right things).

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

11 The argument is grounded in primary historical documentation.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

### **Quality of Argumentation and Historical Thought**

12 The paper has a clear thesis that motivates the content of the paper.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

13 The argument of the paper is coherent and internally consistent.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

14 The thesis is proven by the argument of the paper. The argument is ultimately convincing.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

15 The argument of the paper is the most sensible possible interpretation of the evidence. (You did not ignore other obvious explanations or evidence).

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

16 The paper displays historical insight and perception.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

17 The paper displays creativity of thought and original ideas.

Not at all 1            2            3            4            5 Very much

Each criterion is worth 5 points, except #7, 12, 13, and 14 which count twice because they are more important. The maximum score is 105.

### **Credit Hours**

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

## Communication

Please feel free to contact me to discuss this class, or any of the challenges life and college may throw at you. I can help you find the right resources or people to talk to if I can't help directly. I am one of many people at UW who want you to be successful.

The best way to contact me is by email. We can then set up an appointment to meet in person.

## Class Policies

### Act Honorably

When you lie or cheat for any reason you turn yourself into a liar and a cheater. Cheaters are dishonorable and untrustworthy people. If you hand in someone else's work or copy someone else's work you are cheating and turning yourself into a lousy person. No grade in any class is worth becoming a bad person.

When you cheat on quizzes or copy someone else's work you are not learning. Yet, you still pay tuition. Paying tuition without learning is burning money.

Those who are not persuaded by either moral exhortation or financial logic and are caught cheating in any way **will fail this class**.

### Respect Each Other

Do nothing that could distract a fellow student from learning. In your behavior and conversation, treat others with respect and dignity.

## Goals of the History Major

The goal of the history major is to offer students both deep and broad knowledge of the past. In studying history, students can develop skills that enable them to define important historical questions, analyze the relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. History, like all humanistic disciplines, also demands habits of persistent effort, resourceful inquiry, careful reading, repeated revision, and critical engagement.

To ensure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers depth, breadth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. An understanding in depth of one of the main geographic regions of the world or areas of thematic coverage studied in the department.
2. Broad acquaintance with the other geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
3. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of

- expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

#### Skills Developed in the Major

##### *Define Important Historical Questions*

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

##### *Collect and Analyze Evidence*

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

##### *Present Original Conclusions*

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Be aware of, and able to use, appropriate venues and formats of presentation for sharing information with academic and public audiences.

##### *Contribute to Ongoing Discussions*

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical pitfalls.