

Understanding Historical Change: Rome

HIST 1220.R21, Summer 2016

Adjunct Professor Matthew Keil, PhD

TWR 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Dealy Hall 202, Rose Hill

Email: Mkeil@fordham.edu

MatthewAdamKeil@gmail.com (preferred)

Web: MagisterKeil.com

Office Hours by appointment in Faculty Memorial Hall , 428D

Course Overview and Scope

Within the ever-fractious saga of European history, ancient Rome looms unchallenged as the continent's greatest period of unity and stability. At its zenith in the second century AD, the Roman Empire stretched from Hadrian's Wall in Northern England to the Euphrates River in Syria, and from the Black Sea in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. So tremendous in fact was the achievement of Rome in creating and sustaining this enormous empire that the very notion of Rome has left an indelible mark on all subsequent nations which are bearers of Western civilization. European rulers as far apart in time as Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Hitler have all consciously sought to position their respective dominions in relation to the Roman exemplar, and indeed the historical precedent for this positioning was first laid by the immediate successors to Rome's empire, the "barbarian" tribes who laid it waste, yet who nevertheless often called themselves Romans; after them, and for most of its subsequent history, Europe has seen some form of the Holy Roman Empire. It was not just in Europe, however, but also on the continents of Africa and Asia that Roman subjects swore their obedience to a single political system, acquiesced to the jurisprudence of a single law-code, and sought entrance into a single, distinct cultural community, despite their own often deep linguistic, religious, and regional diversity. As comparison with the current crisis within the European Union vividly elucidates, ancient Rome's centuries-long ability to unify the same geographical space under a single currency and a single guiding bureaucracy was truly an achievement for the ages. Moreover, equally significant to the political is the cultural debt which Europe and the world owe to Rome in so many fields of human endeavor, such as art, architecture, engineering, language, literature, law, and theology. In this course, we shall examine how it was that a small village "on seven hills," comprised of mere shepherds and farmers, ultimately rose to become the colossus which bestrode the narrow world then known, and left all subsequent ages to walk about beneath its vast shadow.

Week 1

Tuesday July 5th. Introduction. Why study Roman history? Chronological and geographic delineations. The nature of our source materials. The Etruscans. Mythological traditions about the founding of Rome.

Read for next class: pages 8-41.

Wednesday July 6th. The Regal period: 753 BC – 509 BC. Archaeological evidence and the problems of our literary sources. The beginning of the Republic, and its political institutions.

Read for next class: pages 41-65.

Thursday July 7th. The Early to Middle Republic: 509 BC – 264 BC. The Twelve Tables. The Struggle of the Orders. Roman expansion in Italy.

Read for next class: pages 65-82. **First paper due next class.**

Week 2

Tuesday July 12th. The First Punic War: 264 BC – 241 BC. The Second Punic War: 218 – 202 BC.

Read for next class: 82-104.

Wednesday July 13th. Rome enters the Greek East: 197 BC – 146 BC, and Greek Culture enters Rome: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*. The administrative structures of the High Republic and the strains put upon them by Rome's rapid expansion.

No readings for next class.

Thursday July 14th. The Roman Constitution: Senate and Magistrates, Popular Assemblies and Provincial Administration.

Read for next class: 105-135. **Second paper due next class.**

Week 3

Tuesday July 19th. The first two generations of the "Roman Revolution." The Gracchi brothers. Marius and Sulla, and the dismantling of Sulla's reforms.

Read for next class: 135-168.

Wednesday July 20th. The next generation: Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar: the First Triumvirate. Civil war, and the dictatorship of Caesar.

Read for next class: 168-193.

Thursday July 21st. The last generation: Antony and Octavian. The Second Triumvirate. The end of the Republic. The New Order of Augustus.

Read for next class: 193-203. **Third paper due next class.**

Week 4

Tuesday July 26th. The Julian-Claudian Dynasty: Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero.

Read for next class: 204-217.

Wednesday July 27th. The Flavian Dynasty: Vespasian, Titus, Domitian. Gladiatorial spectacles. Roman baths. Roman and Jewish interactions.

Read for next class: 217-244.

Thursday July 28th. The "Five Good Emperors." Third Century Crisis. Diocletian and the tetrarchs.

Read for next class: 245- 295. **Fourth paper due next class.**

Week 5

Tuesday August 2nd. The Rise of Christianity. Emperor Constantine. "Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety." The late empire.

Read for next class: 295-320.

Wednesday August 3rd. Crisis and transformation: the fall of Rome and the birth of Medieval Europe.

Thursday August 4th. Final Exam.

Required Text:

Potter, D. (2014) *Ancient Rome: A New History*. 2nd Edition. Thames and Hudson. Available in the campus bookstore, and from Amazon.

Grading Rubric:

Papers: 40%

Quizzes and Attendance: 20%

Final Exam: 40%

****The lowest *two* quiz grades will be dropped, but quizzes cannot be made up because of lateness or absence.**

Topics for the First Paper, **Due Tuesday, July 12th**. Five Pages

- 1) To what extent does the study of ancient history differ in its objectives and methods from the study of modern history? How can you account for these differences? What peculiar pressures does the nature of the evidence for Roman history put on the modern student?
- 2) What were some of the major areas of Etruscan influence on Roman culture? Cite and discuss some specific examples.
- 3) In what precise respects do the archaeological and written sources converge or diverge in their reconstruction of Rome's founding and the Regal period? Additionally, what methods are available to us for checking the facts about early Rome against the legends about this time?
- 4) On what principles was power sharing in the early Roman Republic based? What similarities do you see between these principles and our own, American system of government.
- 5) To what degree were the original goals of the struggle of the orders subverted by the selfish demands of the non-patrician upper classes for access to government?

Topics for the second paper, **Due Tuesday, July 19th**. Five Pages.

- 1) What advantages did Carthage have over Rome as it entered the First Punic War?
- 2) How do you explain the Carthaginian failure in the First Punic War? Can you identify any single turning point in the war and argue why it was decisive?
- 3) Despite his early successes, why did Hannibal ultimately fail in his invasion of Italy?
- 4) Which explanation of Roman imperialism do you find most convincing? Why?
- 5) Was the Roman system of office-holding in the Republic efficient? Was efficiency its goal?

Topics for the third paper, **Due Tuesday, July 26th**. Five Pages.

- 1) What motivated Tiberius Gracchus to act as he did? Was he a revolutionary at heart? Additionally, Was the use of violence against the Gracchi justified? If not, what other avenues of opposition were open to the Senate?
- 2) What motivations can you discern for the actions of Marius and Sulla? How different or similar were they? Was Sulla a revolutionary at heart, or a conservative? Could Sulla's restoration have been successful, or was the old Republic already too far gone?
- 3) What benefits were there in alliance for Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar? Could the Senate have prevented the formation of the First Triumvirate? Was the breakdown of the First Triumvirate inevitable? If so, why?
- 4) What does Octavian's rise to prominence tell us about Roman society and the politics of the Late Republic? What features of Roman republican politics strike you as the most important for understanding why the system collapsed and led to the institution of monarchy?
- 5) What were the essential characteristics of the Augustan Principate? Despite being a sham, how did Augustus sell his position to the Roman nobility and populace? Why did these parties buy into the fabrications of the Principate?

Topics for the Fourth paper, **Due Tuesday, August 2nd**. Five Pages.

- 1) Was Augustus's solution to the succession problem viable and successful? What other options did he have?
- 2) What do you make of the conflict between Piso and Germanicus? Do you think there is any substance to suspicions that Tiberius orchestrated it to ruin or even kill Germanicus? What is the evidence for your position?
- 3) What, in your opinion, best accounts for Caligula's behavior: illness (physical or mental), insanity, circumstances, a hostile tradition, or systemic failings in the Principate?
- 4) What evidence is there that Hadrian's elevation was a fraud? Why did Trajan leave the succession issue largely unaddressed?
- 5) What were Marcus's options in dealing with the northern barbarians? What do you think was the ultimate goal of his campaigns of 169 – 180?