

CLST 277: *The World of Late Antiquity*

John Felice Rome Center

SPRING 2026

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 3:45-5:00 pm | Room: TBD

Dr. Valentina Follo

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Office Hours:

Office Hours: Tue 01:00-02:00pm, or by appointment

Course Description

This course surveys the transformation of the Roman world between the 3rd and 7th centuries AD, when the Classical heritage of Europe and the Mediterranean basin, carefully constructed over centuries by the Romans on Greek foundations, fragmented and evolved into the governmental, religious, socio-economic, and cultural framework characteristic of the Medieval world. This period has traditionally been undervalued and even ignored in historical studies and university curricula, considered either a debased epilogue of decline following on the lofty heights of Classical antiquity or a long and desultory prelude to the ignorance and stagnation of the Dark Ages. In reality, Late Antiquity was a complex, fascinating, and vibrant age, with a large and varied cast of characters, a rich and sophisticated culture, a huge theater of activity, and an endless series of exciting twists and turns on a par with the most significant periods of European history. The course considers all major aspects of the human experience in this broad period—internal administration, foreign policy, religion, economy, military activity, education, social and daily life, and art and architecture—as they played out across the Roman world, from Spain to Mesopotamia, from Britain to North Africa.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Develop a deeper knowledge of the use of primary and secondary sources
- Identify the main phases of Late Antiquity and its chief features
- Link historical events to relevant works of art, sites and monuments.
- Recognize the interrelationships between the historical development and the political and religious organization of Late Antique society.
- Assess the relevance of historical events and figures to their own lives and contemporary society
- Develop skills in critical thinking, and the ability to properly express ideas and opinions
- Read, analyze, and interpret secondary literature and scholarly debate, and then present the full spectrum of ideas and opinions, including their own, either in written or spoken word

Required Text/Materials

The weekly reading assignments for this class will be posted on SAKAI, where access will be provided through permalinks to the LUC online library or uploaded PDFs. The reading assignments should be done prior to each class session to enable full participation in class discussions. Students are to read the pages that have been specified for each text in the syllabus below.

All historical texts, especially those related to ancient civilizations, make references to terminology, concepts and authors that might be unfamiliar. Processing these texts is fundamental to the learning process. A useful tool to help “decipher” said references while reading the assigned texts is the [Nicholson, Oliver, editor. *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*. Oxford University Press, 2018.](#) available online via LUC library and on SAKAI for this course.

Selected Bibliography

- Boatwright, Mary Taliaferro, et al. *The Romans, from Village to Empire*. 1st ed., Oxford University Press, 2004: https://luc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma9910476523402506&context=L&vid=01LUC_INST:01LUC&search_scope=MyInst_and_CI&tab=Everything&lang=en
- Boatwright, Mary Taliaferro, et al. “A Brief History of the Romans: <https://archive.org/details/briefhistoryofro0000boat/page/n8/mode/1up>
- Cameron, Averil. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395-600*. Routledge, 1993.
- Rousseau, Philip, and Jutta Raithel. *A Companion to Late Antiquity*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Available on Reserve at the JFRC library
- Brown, Peter. *Late Antiquity*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. Available on Reserve at the JFRC library
- *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*. 2018.
- Mitchell S., *A History of the Later roman Empire (AD284-641)*, Blackwell, 2007

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy.

Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor’s discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Once-a-week classes:

- After 1 absence, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 3 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Twice-a-week classes:

- **After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.**
- **Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).**

Three-times-a week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Tardiness/early departure: Punctuality is essential, both as a form of respect for your fellow students as well as for the professor. Given the length of each lesson, more than 15 minutes late (i.e. 20% of the class time) will count as an unexcused absence, and the class will commence without the student. The same rule applies for leaving the class early, without previous authorization from the professor. Early departures might be granted for exceptional circumstances, personal travel does not count as such. Punctuality is particularly important for our on-site classes as we might be using timed tickets for our visits to archaeological sites and museums. Said tickets enable us to enter during narrowly defined time slots. In such cases, if you are not present at the time of our reservation, you will not be able to participate in that given class session. Consistent tardiness, i.e. arriving constantly 5/10 minutes late or leaving early, will impact the participation grade.

Assessment Components

- Participation 10%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Oral Report 15%
- Written Report 25%
- Final Exam 30%

PARTICIPATION constitutes a significant proportion of the final grade and does NOT refer solely to consistent attendance and punctuality, but rather to regular class interaction, entailing both questions and thoughtful responses, see rubric below.

	Exemplary (90%-100%)	Proficient (80%-90%)	Developing (70%-80%)	Unsatisfactory (>70%)
Frequency of participation in class	Student initiates contributions more than once in each session.	Student initiates contribution once in each session.	Student initiates contribution at least in half of the sessions	Student does not initiate contribution & needs instructor to solicit input.
Quality of comments	Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments mostly insightful & constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion.	Comments are uninformative, lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion & personal taste, e.g., “I love it”, “I hate it”, “It’s bad” etc.
Listening Skills	Student listens attentively when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that build on others’	Student is mostly attentive when others present ideas, materials, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others’ remarks. Occasionally needs encouragement or	Student is often inattentive and needs reminder of focus of class. Occasionally makes	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; detracts from discussion; sleeps, etc.

remarks, i.e., student hears what others say & contributes to the dialogue.	reminder from faculty of focus of comment.	disruptive comments while others are speaking.	
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INDIVIDUAL ORAL REPORT:

For the individual oral report, each student will choose a topic from a list. Each topic is slated for a specific date which cannot be changed. Once all the topics have been selected, each student will be assigned a scholarly article or book chapter on their topic.

While reading their assigned text, students must take into consideration the following prompts:

- **Style:** Is the author’s writing effective in communicating their ideas to the reader or not? How would you describe the author’s style? Is it accessible to all readers or only the initiated? Similarly, does the text presuppose or require extensive prior knowledge of the topic?
- **Argument:** How is the work’s main argument set up? How does the author support their findings? Does the work successfully demonstrate and prove its argument?
- **Key Ideas:** What is the main thrust of the text? What makes it good, different, or groundbreaking?
- **Quotes:** What quotes/examples stand out to you? How might you point to the author’s communicative ability or the overall feel of the book through the use of quotes/examples/case studies?

On the day of a given student’s oral delivery, the student will provide a thorough summary highlighting important passages and concepts of the assigned article or chapter. The student is also expected to provide drawings, maps or other pertinent visual material in the form of a short PPT to be presented to the class. The presentation will be followed by a short Q&A session. Students should be prepared to field questions from their peers and the professor.

- Students are required to formulate three (3) listening comprehension questions pertaining to the most significant aspects that are developed and discussed at length during their oral presentations. Said questions are to be included at the beginning of the mandatory outline. After having listened carefully to a given talk, student peers should be prepared to answer these comprehension questions.
- Upon completion of their oral presentations, students are required to upload their PPT onto Sakai by going to Assignments and creating a submission for the file entitled Individual Oral report

Students should make certain they know how to pronounce technical and/or foreign words in the assigned text. To discover the correct pronunciation, students can avail themselves of the [Nicholson, Oliver, editor. *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*. Oxford University Press, 2018.](#) The presentation should last a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 minutes.

The report will be evaluated using the following rubric:

- **Information/Content (30 points)**
- **Organization/Clarity (15 points)**
- **Completeness (30 points)**
- **Documentation/Visual/Graphics (10 points)**
- **Delivery (15 points)**



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	Exemplary (90%- 100%)	Proficient (80%-90%)	Developing (70%-80%)	Unsatisfactory (>70%)
Information/content Importance of topic, relevance, accuracy of facts, overall treatment of topic	Well-versed in subject, responds to questions with further explanation presentation contains accurate information with no fact errors	Overall command of subject matter, responds to questions on a basic level major facts are accurate and generally complete	Generally comfortable with material, able to answer most questions presentation contains some fact errors or omissions	Basic understanding of material, but mastery not evident contains multiple fact errors
Organization/Clarity Appropriate introduction, body, and conclusions; logical ordering of ideas; transitions between major points	Ideas are presented in logical order with effective transitions between major ideas; presentation is clear and concise	Most ideas are in logical order with adequate transitions between most major ideas; presentation is generally clear and understandable overall easy for audience to follow	Some ideas not presented in proper order; transitions are needed between some ideas; some parts of presentation may be wordy or unclear Overall organized but sequence is difficult to follow	Ideas are not presented in proper order; transition are lacking between major ideas; several parts of presentation are wordy or unclear Difficult to follow, confusing sequence of information
Completeness Level of detail, depth, appropriate length, adequate background of information	Presentation provides good depth and detail; ideas well developed; facts have adequate background; presentation is within specified length	Presentation provides adequate depth; few needed details are omitted; major ideas adequately developed; presentation is within specified length	Additional depth needed in places; important information omitted or not fully developed; presentation is too short or too long	Presentation does not provide adequate depth; key details are omitted or undeveloped; presentation is too short or too long
Documentation/Visual/graphics Proper support and sourcing for major ideas, inclusion of visual aids that support message	Easy to read, additive to presentation	Easy to read, reinforced presentation	Somewhat difficult to read audience questions	Hard to read, confusing or unclear
Delivery Adequate volume, appropriate pace, ability to listen to and/or answer questions	excellent listening skills; answers audience questions with authority and accuracy Good volume and energy; proper pace and diction	displays ability to listen; provides adequate answers to audience questions Adequate volume and energy; generally good pace and diction;	better listening skills needed; some difficulty answering audience questions More volume/energy needed at times; pace too slow or fast;	uneasiness or inability to answer audience questions Low volume or energy; pace too slow or fast; poor diction

Choose your oral report topic carefully as it will coincide with the subject matter for your written report.

WRITTEN REPORT:

- 6-7 pages of double-spaced text in Times New Roman 12-point font
- notes, bibliography, and illustrations do not count toward the 6-7 page minimum.
- Students are expected to adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped them with their work. For format style, students are to use the MLA format, the Chicago Manual of Style, a “quick guide” version of which is available online at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>, or a similar standard to be approved by the instructor.
- Students are expected to properly quote passages, if they are using someone else’s identical words in their paper, to avoid the risk of plagiarism. The following link contains guidelines on how to use quotations properly: <https://guides.library.jhu.edu/avoidingplagiarism/quoting>

- at least three (3) independent and scholarly sources should be consulted (e.g. books, articles from Jstor, and/or the Muse project). Online resources, such as Wikipedia are not permitted; online scholarly resources can be used, but they must be previously approved by the professor.
- The report must include an introduction with a clear thesis statement and a conclusion.
- The illustrations may be identical to the visual aids provided for the oral report.
- The report must be submitted through Sakai by the end of the semester, i.e. on Friday, APRIL 25, 2025.

Student term papers for this course will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- 1) **content**, especially with regard to accuracy, as well as the level of detail in your descriptions and explanations; (10 points)
- 2) **organization**, particularly the logical progression of your arguments as they flow from your introduction/thesis statement to your supporting paragraphs in the body of your paper and end in your final conclusion; (5 points)
- 3) **documentation**, as it pertains to your use of sources in support of your arguments; (5 points)
- 4) **style**, including grammar and spelling. (5 points)

AI usage:

All assignments should be your own original work, created for this class. Written work created by generative AI tools is not original work. You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor).

Any plagiarism or other form of cheating will be dealt with severely under relevant JFRC policies.

MIDTERM and FINAL examinations will share a mixture of multiple choice, true/false and short answer questions in addition to picture identifications (including maps).

MIDTERM and FINAL examinations WILL BE A PAPER-BASED TEST

- NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES WILL BE PERMITTED
- NO PENCILS-ONLY BLUE OR BLACK PENS

Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the professor. *As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.*

SAC/Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes. Faculty cannot provide Academic accommodation, without the proper documentation, i.e. the official letter received from the Loyola SAC service

For Title IX see: <https://www.luc.edu/equity/otherresources/resourcesforfacultystaff/syllabuslanguage/>

Names and Pronouns

Addressing one another at all times by using one's chosen modes of address (including preferred names and gender pronouns) honors and affirms individuals of all gender identities and gender expressions. Misgendering and heteronormative language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit within a gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.

If you wish, please share your gender pronouns with me and the class when you introduce yourself, on your name placard, and/or on your Zoom profile. If you do not wish to be called by the name that appears on the class roster or attendance sheet, please let me know privately and I will work diligently to honor your wishes.

My goal is to create an affirming environment for all students so that everyone can learn and engage as our full and true selves.

Classroom Etiquette:

- Turn your phone off in class, or at the very least turn the ringer completely off and put your phone away.
- While beverages are permitted, food and snacks are not.
- The classroom should be a place where students can share ideas and different points of view. It is not necessary to agree, but it is necessary to listen respectfully.
- Debate is healthy. State your viewpoint and back it up with evidence. Be respectful of fellow students' views. Focus your disagreements on the merits of the ideas rather than on the people putting them forth.
- Do not hesitate to bring up with your professor any concerns or questions you may have. If you do not want to ask during the lecture, see your professor after class or in office hours. You can always email your professor.
- Do not listen to music during class.
- If you use a laptop in class, only use it for class, i.e. do not surf the Web, play video games or use social media during class time as they can become a distraction for your fellow classmates and the instructor.
- If you know you have to leave early, let your professor know before class begins, or send them an email ahead of time if you know in advance that you will have to exit prematurely.

Subject to Change Statement

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to check for announcements on Sakai and those made during their absence.

Course Schedule

WEEK ONE: Let's Roll!

Tuesday, JANUARY 20: introduction

Thursday, JANUARY 22: How do we read the past? Terminology, sources & dating

Readings:

- Mayer, W. (2009). Approaching Late Antiquity. In *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, P. Rousseau (Ed.), chap.1

WEEK TWO: From Village to Empire

Tuesday, JANUARY 27: Brief history of Rome from the foundation up to the Republic (509 BCE)

Readings:

- On Sakai

Thursday, JANUARY 29: Daily Life

Readings:

- A History of Rome

WEEK THREE: The Early Empire and the rise of Christianity

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 3: from Caesar to Trajan

Readings:

- Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola, & Richard J. A. Talbert. (2004). *The Romans: From Village to Empire*. Oxford University Press., Chap. 10 (PDF on Sakai)

Thursday, FEBRUARY 5: A difficult relationship

Readings:

- Pliny's letter to Trajan and his reply: <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/texts/pliny.html>
- Humphries, Mark, *Christianity and Paganism in the Roman Empire, 250–450 CE*, *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, edited by Josef Lössl, and Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2018 pp. 61-80
- A Stenger, Jan R. *The "Pagans" of Late Antiquity*, *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, edited by Josef Lössl, and Nicholas J. Baker-Brian, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2018, pp. 391-409
- WILKEN, ROBERT LOUIS. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them: Second Edition*. Yale University Press, 2003, Chap. 3 III THE PIETY OF THE PERSECUTORS, pp. 48-67

WEEK FOUR: Changing Perspective

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 10: The third Century crisis

Readings:

- The Romans, [Chap.13](#) from pp.446

Thursday, FEBRUARY 12: ORAL REPORTS

WEEK FIVE: A new star is born: Constantine

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 17: Diocletian

- A History of Rome Chap.15 (pp.477-484) & 16
- Christopher P. Jones , "[Constantine](#)", Between Pagan and Christian, Harvard University Press. (2014), chap.2

*Thursday, FEBRUARY 19: **ORAL REPORTS***

WEEK SIX: The new Rome

Tuesday FEBRUARY 24: Rome and Constantinople

- Holloway, R. Ross. "[The Tomb of St. Peter.](#)" *Constantine and Rome*, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 120–56.
- Cameron, [Chap.1](#) Constantinople

*Thursday FEBRUARY 26: **ORAL REPORTS***

WEEK SEVEN:

Tuesday, MARCH 3: REVIEW SESSION

*Thursday, MARCH 5: **MIDTERM EXAMS***

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 6-15

WEEK EIGHT:

Tuesday, MARCH 17: A new art?

Readings:

- Holloway, R. Ross. "[The Arches.](#)" *Constantine and Rome*, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 19–56.
- *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, edited by Robin M. Jensen, and Mark D. Ellison, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018., *chapter 1*.

Thursday, MARCH 19: from Theodosius to the end of the Western Roman Empire

Readings:

- The Romans (second edition) chap. 14, pp.465-486 (PDF will be provided, as this is a new edition not available online)
- Ferdinand Addis "[Under Siege](#)", *The Eternal City: A History of Rome, 2018* (PDF)
- Cameron, [Chap. 2](#)
- Mathisen, R. W. (2006). [Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire.](#) *The American Historical Review*, 111(4), 1011–1040.

WEEK NINE: The East

Tuesday, MARCH 24 *The archenemies of Rome, from the Parthians to the Sassanid*

Readings:

- Cameron, Hamish . "The Parthian Empire". In *obo* in Classics.
- Drijvers, Jan Willem, Rome and the Sasanid Empire: Confrontation and Coexistence, 2009, A Companion to Late Antiquity.

Thursday, MARCH 26: **ORAL REPORTS**

WEEK TEN: The Reign of Justinian

Tuesday, MARCH 31: *Justinian and the reconquest*

Readings:

- Cameron, [chap.5](#)
- A History of Rome, chap. 17 "A different Socio-Economic World" (PDF)

Thursday, APRIL 2: **ORAL REPORTS**

WEEK ELEVEN: A Changed World

Tuesday, APRIL 7: **ORAL REPORTS**

Thursday, APRIL 9: *A new lifestyle*

- Cameron, chap.7
- Stefan Rebenich, Late Antiquity in Modern Eyes, in A companion to Late Antiquity, Editor(s):Philip Rousseau (ed.), 2009, pp.77-92

WEEK TWELVE:

Tuesday, APRIL 14: Transforming the city's image

Readings:

- Lançon, Bertrand. "10. Transforming the calendar". *Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change, AD 312-609*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, pp. 146-156

Thursday, APRIL 16:

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Tuesday, APRIL 21:

ORAL REPORTS

Thursday, APRIL 23: REVIEW SESSION

EXAM WEEK (27-30 APRIL)

THE DATE OF THE EXAM IS SCHEDULED BY LOYOLA AND WILL BE COMMUNICATED LATER IN THE SEMESTER