

Part II – The So-Called Middle Ages
Unit IV – The Byzantine Empire

Assignments, Engagement, and Evaluation

Review the questions on this unit syllabus before reading each session's materials. Those questions function to guide your understanding and to orient your note-taking; addressing them will deepen your comprehension and prepare you for written work, class discussions, and quizzes. Take notes if necessary, but annotate the primary sources in particular. They will often be central to our seminars. In general, however, do what you think will help bring clarity to the content.

For each session, you are expected to offer ideas; to present arguments; to ask and answer questions; and to respond to classmates' comments. You will fully engage with others by listening critically and by finding your voice. To succeed, you must massage the text, looking for strengths and tensions in language, patterns and trends, tone and voice, and connections to historical moments we have covered.

Individual and collective evaluations will be determined by (1) class engagement, (2) in- and out-of-class writing assignments, and (3) other assessments.

Session 1 – As Rome Falls, Byzantium Rises

Materials

- Secondary – Bentley, 246-250
- Primary – Eusebius of Caesarea, Selections from *The Life of Constantine*; Focus → Language/Word Choice

As You Read

- What is Bentley's argument about the real cause on the fall of the Roman Empire?
- How did Diocletian and Constantine each manage the empire as in steadily fell?

As We Discuss

- Why does Constantine's conversion mark a significant historical moment?
- Your contributions and [open-ended] questions to discuss

Session 2 – A Geographical Overview of Constantinople and its Defenses

Materials

- Secondary – Bentley, 328-330, 332
- Primary – Constantinople Map and Images

As You Read

- What natural and geographical advantages benefited Byzantium?
- Why does Constantine designate Byzantium the site of a new imperial capital?

As We Discuss

- Looking strictly at the images, why might Constantinople be an ideal capital city?
- Your contributions and [open-ended] questions to discuss

Session 3 – Justinian and Theodora Strengthen an Empire

Materials

- Secondary – Bentley, 330-332
- Primary – Skim "Justinian's Code—529-565CE"

As You Read

- What advantages and challenges might exist with a caesaropapist political society?
- How or in what way does the Hagia Sophia represent the triumph of Christianity?
- What external threat did the Byzantines face? How did they defend themselves?

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As We Discuss

- What conclusions might we draw about women’s rights and roles from the code?
- Your contributions and [open-ended] questions to discuss

Session 4 – The Hagia Sophia

Materials

- Hagia Sophia Secondary, Images – see website for additional images (in color)

In-Class Image Analysis

- What differences exist between eastern and western architecture?
- Your contributions and [open-ended] questions to discuss

Session 5 – Challenges to Justinian’s Empire

Materials

- Secondary – Beck et al., 303-304
- Primary – Procopius in *History of the Wars* re: Nika Rebellion
- Primary – Procopius in *Secret History*

As You Read

- How did Justinian’s city programs reflect a preservation of Greco-Roman culture?
- What internal and external threats the empire face before, during, and after Justinian?

As We Discuss

- How might we best understand the “shift” in Procopius’s writing, from *History of the Wars* to *Secret History*? What might this shift tell us about Justinian or about the Byzantine Empire?
- Your contributions and [open-ended] questions to discuss

Session 6 – Religious Challenges in the Byzantine Empire

Materials

- Secondary – Strayer, 472-474
- Secondary – Skim Strayer, 507-511 on Byzantine Icons (See site for color images)

As You Read

- How or in what way did Orthodox Christians regard icons?
- Where did Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman (“Latin”) Christianity diverge most theologically? In other words, what were the Churches’ major differences?

In-Class Art Analysis

Session 7 – The Ottoman Siege of Constantinople and Byzantine Decline

Materials

- Secondary – Decline and Fall of the Byzantine Empire
- Primary – “Address of Sultan Mehmed before the Battle of Constantinople – 1453 CE”; Focus → Tone and Voice; Patterns in Ideas/Concepts`

As You Read

- What caused the broader decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire?

As We Discuss

- What does Mehmed’s speech to his troops tell us about what would happen to the inhabitants of Constantinople if his army were successful?
- Your contributions and [open-ended] questions to discuss