

**History 209: The Byzantine Empire**  
**Fall 2020**



Location: Synchronous Online  
Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45

Instructor: Professor Young Kim  
E-mail: [yrmkim@uic.edu](mailto:yrmkim@uic.edu)  
Office Location: 1800 UH  
Office Phone: 312-996-2291  
Student Drop-In Hours: Zoom sessions, M/T 1:00-2:00, or anytime by appointment

**Course Description**

Did you know that the Roman Empire lasted for a thousand years longer than is often assumed? After the establishment of “New Rome”—Constantinople—in the fourth century CE, Roman identity, culture, and politics began a long, steady transition and transformation into what scholars call the Byzantine Empire. All this time, the people who lived in this polity understood themselves to be Romans. Of course, Christianity was a central feature of these developments, but equally important were interactions and conflicts with the peoples of Near and Middle East, north Africa, western Asia, medieval Europe, the Balkans, and the Islamic Caliphates. This course will explore these complex and fascinating processes, with a focus on how the developing institutions of the

Byzantines exhibited both continuity with and change from the ancient Mediterranean world.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Understand the Greco-Roman foundations of Byzantine history and culture, but also the importance and influence of surrounding regions and their peoples, including the Balkans, North Africa, the Near and Middle East, and western Asia;
- Acquire a basic knowledge of Byzantine political, social, and cultural history;
- Critically read, analyze, discuss, and write about a wide variety of written sources to understand the culture that produced them and why they are significant to historians;
- Examine, analyze, and discuss material culture produced by Byzantine society (and its neighbors) and explain how representative objects connect to and reflect social, religious, and political beliefs and practices;
- Identify and discuss how readers and scholars have constructed narratives of Byzantine history through the centuries and how different academic disciplines have produced varied and sometimes opposing interpretations;
- Explore and explain how contemporary historiographical issues including gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nationalism reflect particular perspectives on who the “Byzantines” were and how they fit into broader narratives of cultural and intellectual history, and on how popular treatments reflect ongoing questions, concerns, and uncertainties about the human experience.

### **Student Learning Assessment**

Your final grade in the course will be determined by the assessment methods explained below. The percentage breakdown of each is as follows:

- ◆ 25% attendance and participation
- ◆ 20% reading quizzes
- ◆ 40% response papers (10% per)
- ◆ 15% final project

Grading scale:

- ◆ 100-90%      A
- ◆ 89-80%        B
- ◆ 79-70%        C
- ◆ 69-60%        D
- ◆ 59% or lower   F

### **Attendance and Participation**

Tuesday sessions will be synchronous lectures on Collaborate that will focus on providing a diachronic narrative of Byzantine history. All of these sessions will be recorded and available for you to access at any time. I will not be taking attendance, so if you are absent it is imperative that you watch the recorded session. The advantage of consistently joining the synchronous sessions is that it keeps you accountable each week to complete the reading assignments and follow a set schedule. You are also able to ask

questions in real time, as well as see what other questions your classmates might have. In addition, synchronous lecture sessions will also include small group discussions in breakout sessions, which will enhance not only your learning experience but also your sense of course community. Whether you join the synchronous sessions or not, you must complete the week's reading quiz by 3:00 PM each Tuesday.

Thursday sessions will be synchronous discussion sessions on Collaborate, that will focus on a course theme and the reading assignments. These sessions will also be recorded and viewable at any time after each session. I will not be taking attendance, so if you are absent it is imperative that you watch the recorded session. Please be aware that breakout sessions are not recorded, so you may miss important course content if you are not online during the synchronous sessions. Furthermore, before each week's Thursday session, you must participate in the weekly Discussion Forums. On the course Blackboard page, each week I will open a new forum with a set of questions for you to consider and respond to within randomly assigned smaller discussion groups. Look for your name in each group, which will change each week. Rather than simply answering the questions asked of you, I would also like to interact with and respond to the points raised by your classmates. I will frequently respond to comments in your group discussions, and I will monitor your participation each week. This will count for the 25% "attendance and participation" component of your overall grade.

Policy on video: during synchronous sessions, I encourage you to turn your cameras on, while keeping your microphone muted. When you have questions, you can ask them either by "raising" your hand and using the video/mic, or through the chat function. You may use a virtual or blurred background, but please be mindful that it is not distracting to others or inappropriate. Although my strong preference is for you to keep your cameras on, ultimately the choice is yours. The same applies for breakout sessions. Having your cameras on can help cultivate a sense of a learning community, but I understand if you would prefer not to.

We will practice both written and oral dialectic in this class, which means we will converse with one another and share our ideas. Differences of opinion, points of view, and perspectives are welcome. We will disagree with each other, but we will do so with respect. Furthermore, we will not tolerate any racist, sexist, classist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, anti-immigrant, or any other discriminatory and/or hateful language. In this class, we will model the ancient practice of *xenia*, hospitality and welcoming of the stranger, with our words and deeds.

### Reading Quizzes

Throughout the semester, you will be required to complete a weekly reading quiz posted on the Blackboard page. All reading assignments for a given week should be completed before you take the quiz. Each open-book quiz will consist of a series of multiple-choice questions based on the reading for the given week in which the quiz is scheduled. You will have 30 minutes and one attempt to complete the quizzes, so be sure you have read the assignments carefully. Each quiz must be finished by **3:00 PM** of the day the quiz is scheduled, and each new quiz will "open" on Blackboard on Tuesdays at 4:45 PM, one

week before the next quiz. There are thirteen quizzes scheduled for this semester, and for your final course grade I will drop your lowest quiz score. The reading quizzes will count for 20% of your overall grade.

It is imperative that you complete the reading assignments each week before the Tuesday quiz, which will ensure that you are prepared to complete it and to follow both the lecture and any critical examinations of texts. The reading assignments for some weeks can be substantial, so please spend time each day (including weekends!) with the readings.

### Response Papers

In this course you will write a series of 900-word short response papers. Based on your careful reading of primary sources and secondary scholarship, as well as what you have learned in lecture, you must compose a concise, argumentative, and analytical essay in response to the prompt posted on the Blackboard. There are seven response papers scheduled in the syllabus, and you must write **four** (and only four). You are responsible to keep track of how many you have written and to ensure that by the end of the semester you have completed four.

I will provide further details about the response papers in a separate handout. All of the response papers are due on Thursdays, so you must upload your paper on Blackboard by **3:00 PM, the Thursday the assignment is due**. The prompt for each essay will be posted on the Blackboard page two weeks before it is due. All written assignments must be uploaded via the Blackboard page (which uses SafeAssign, a plagiarism detection program), and not sent as email attachments. Furthermore, when applicable, for each day a paper is submitted late, I will lower the grade one whole letter grade. Each response paper counts for 10% of your final grade, for a total of 40%.

### Final Project

We will not have a midterm exam, nor a final exam. Rather, the “final” 15% component of your course grade will consist of a project that you will design and propose to me. It may be an essay that explores a theme or idea we have studied the entire semester. It could be a series of blogs or curated tweets or Instagram posts, with additional commentary. It could be a study or creation of a work of art, digital or analog, or perhaps an exploration of a museum collection, musical tradition, or appropriate critical movie or book review. Creativity and your own interests are the key. You may also work with a classmate (or group), but the project must then be proportional to the size of the group. The final project is due on **December 11, 3:00 PM**, which is the end of the scheduled final exam slot for the course. I will provide further information on the final project in a separate handout.

### Books

There are no textbooks in this course, nor will you need to purchase any books. Rather, all reading assignments, of both primary sources and secondary scholarly works, will be available either as links to specific webpages, or as .pdf files. Please look carefully at the weekly modules of the course, where you will find information on all of the week’s topics, themes, and assignments.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Violations will result in an “F” (0%) on the given assignment/assessment and a filed report with the Office of the Dean of Students. Academic dishonesty can come in many forms, including plagiarism, improper or non-citation of sources, submitting the same work for different courses, and copying work that is not your own. If you are at all uncertain, please talk to me. All written assignments must be uploaded via the Blackboard page (which uses SafeAssign, a plagiarism detection program), and not sent as email attachments.

Also consult the information and resources here:

<https://dos.uic.edu/community-standards/academic-integrity/student-academic-resources/>

The assignments for this course are designed in such a way that no outside research is necessary, on the internet or elsewhere. However, I am happy to recommend to you sources and studies that can supplement your work, and I will encourage you to find them electronically through the Daley Library. Always err on the side of caution; always cite your work properly; always pursue what is true. Honesty is a virtue which we all should cultivate.

### **Disability Accommodation**

UIC is committed to a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. In order to provide accommodations for students with disabilities, please register at: <https://drc.uic.edu>. Students should notify me and provide a copy of their LOA during the first two weeks of class. All arrangements requests must be made through the Disability Resource Center.

### **Grievance Procedure**

UIC is committed to the most fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity involving students and employees. Freedom from discrimination is a foundation for all decision making at UIC. You are encouraged to study the University’s Nondiscrimination Statement and urged to read the document “Public Formal Grievance Procedures.” Information on these policies and procedures is available on the webpages of the Office of Access and Equity at <http://oae.uic.edu>.

### **Technology**

This course will be delivered entirely online, so you must have access to a reliable computer, tablet, or smart device and online access that will enable to you engage with and participate in all of the course activities including reading assignments, lectures and discussions, and the various forms of assessment.

You can check out a laptop, and if needed, a wireless hotspot, from ACCC:

<https://acc.uic.edu/forms/laptop-request/>.

For more information and answers to FAQ about technology and access, see

<https://answers.uillinois.edu/uic/>.

Visit <https://accu.uic.edu/online-learning/online-learning-students/> for more information on online learning.

DO NOT USE the Blackboard App to complete online homework, tests or quizzes in Blackboard. The app does not support all question types. INSTEAD, use the internet browser on your phone/tablet and log into [uic.blackboard.com](http://uic.blackboard.com) with your UIC Net ID and password.

### **Summary Schedule**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due</b>
<b>Part I. The Foundations of Byzantium</b>			
Week 1	08.25	Introduction: Byzantine Matters	
	08.27	A Crash Course in Roman History	
Week 2	09.01	Third-Century Chaos and the Rise of the Tetrarchy	Reading Quiz 1
	09.03	Thought and Belief in the Roman Empire	
Week 3	09.08	Constantine	Reading Quiz 2
	09.10	Old Rome, New Rome	Response Paper 1
Week 4	09.15	Late Ancient Christianity	Reading Quiz 3
	09.17	Everyday People, Daily Life	

<b>Part II. The Eastern Roman Empire</b>			
Week 5	09.22	The “Collapse” of the West	Reading Quiz 4
	09.24	<i>Agora</i>	Response Paper 2
Week 6	09.29	Justinian and the Reconquest	Reading Quiz 5
	10.01	Fleas and Disease, Pandemics and Plagues	
Week 7	10.06	Neighboring Peoples and Powers	Reading Quiz 6
	10.08	Strong Women: Theodora and Mary of Egypt	Response Paper 3

<b>Part III. Byzantium at a Crossroads</b>			
Week 8	10.13	The Prophet and the Pillars	Reading Quiz 7
	10.15	Clashes with the Caliphates	
Week 9	10.20	Leo III and Iconoclasm	Reading Quiz 8
	10.22	Hagia Sophia, Then and Now	Response Paper 4
Week 10	10.27	Byzantium in the Middle	Reading Quiz 9
	10.29	Race and Ethnicity in Byzantium	
Week 11	11.03	<b>No Class—Election Day</b>	
	11.05	Byzantine Art and Ceremony	Response Paper 5

<b>Part IV. The High Byzantine Empire</b>			
Week 12	11.10	The Macedonian Dynasty	Reading Quiz 10
	11.12	The Body, Gender, and Sexuality	
Week 13	11.17	The Komnenoi	Reading Quiz 11
	11.19	The Fourth Crusade as Colonization	Response Paper 6
Week 14	11.24	The Palaiologan Period	Reading Quiz 12

	11.26	<b>No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday</b>	
Week 15	12.01	To the Fall of Constantinople	Reading Quiz 13
	12.03	Conclusions	Response Paper 7
Week 16	12.11	<b>Finals Week</b>	Final Project