

**HISTORY 432.01E**  
**The Late Antique World**  
Course Syllabus, Spring 2024  
Tuesday, Thursday, 9:30-10:45 AM  
Sowers South Building (EDS) 129

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

I am: Andrew Donnelly, PhD  
Office Location: Ferguson 105  
Office Hours: TBD  
University Email Address: [andrew.donnelly@tamuc.edu](mailto:andrew.donnelly@tamuc.edu)  
Preferred Form of Communication: email  
Communication Response Time: as soon as I can (usually within 24 hours)

**COURSE INFORMATION**

This is the following book we will be using for the course. Note that it is not the only thing we will be reading. We will, in fact, be reading many things! The bulk of our reading will be distributed electronically.

Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*, ISBN 978-0691166834

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines Mediterranean society from roughly 200-650CE, a period of time once referred to as the "Dark Ages" but, more recently, "Late Antiquity." Students will learn the significant political, cultural, religious, and societal events of this period. Using a variety of primary sources and historical methodologies, students will attempt to determine if this era was one of collapse, disruption, and economic decay or a vibrant period of transformation of the old Roman world. Prerequisites: Non-majors may enroll with consent of department.

You will be expected to master the chronology of the period, including its significant, political, cultural, and societal events (e.g. The Crisis of the Third Century; the emergence of Christianity and the struggle to define the meaning of this word and faith; the rise of Byzantium; the origins of Islam), as well as the major figures and their significance (e.g., Constantine, Muhammad, Justinian, Clovis). This knowledge will allow you to trace the sequential developments in the systems and ideologies of the late antique world. The Late Antique period was home to many voices from many backgrounds, and our course will examine the diverse perspectives of the people that lived in and shaped the Mediterranean world.

Key to our study will be the inheritance and perception of Rome. Rome's legacy endured for centuries. Our course will examine the beginning of the appropriation of that legacy, and the shadow that Rome would cast for the next two millennia.

Central to our journey together this semester will be to assess how the time period in question has been perceived historically. Once seen as a cultural backwater, late antiquity has in recent decades become a period of much interest to scholars. This is in part due to the relative paucity of evidence: in the face of a dearth of textual sources, scholars have turned to other forms of evidence, including various types of material culture (e.g. pottery, shipwrecks, and human bones) as well as other disciplines and fields, including physical anthropology and climate science. This diversity of material and thought has contributed to and shaped our knowledge of the time period. Much of the current debate focuses on how to understand the Late Antique era: was it a period of collapse, disruption, and economic decay? Or was it rather a vibrant period of transformation for the old Roman world? You will leave this course with the intellectual material necessary to assess this debate and offer a well-grounded and reasoned opinion.

Most importantly, this course will improve your reading and communication skills, encourage you to examine primary sources, sharpen your mind, and make you a more informed (and interesting!) member of our world.

#### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Students will be comfortable contextualizing primary sources
- Students will be able to produce a well-written paper based on primary source reading
- Develop a solid understanding of European geography
- Students will develop a broad knowledge of some of the political, technological, historiographical, cultural, environmental, and religious developments in the Mediterranean World in the Late Antique period

#### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

##### **Instructional Methods**

This course is based on lectures, presentations, and discussion of the reading you have done and the material we are examining. Active participation, therefore, is important! You will learn a great deal by reading and participating in our discussions of the material; this in turn will make our time in our weekly meetings a good deal more fun. I love discussion and learning what you think, and believe that reading, thinking, and talking about history helps one lead a fulfilling adult life.

I encourage an open exchange of ideas between the class and myself. Please do not hesitate to ask questions. The only silly question is the one left unasked.

##### **Grading and assignments**

**Grades for the semester will be determined according to the following breakdown.**

Class participation:	20%
Midterm examination:	15%
Final exam:	15%
Map Assignment:	5%

Group Project Presentation:	10%
Short summary of book and goals:	5%
Primary source outline:	5%
Primary source paper:	15%
Reading quizzes	10%

Your grades for written work will be determined based on the following rubric:

- A: Mastery of reading and class material; factual accuracy; thoughtful, historical argumentation demonstrating ability to synthesize and/or some originality of thought; technically clean; proper citation format
- B: Good to excellent command of most reading and class material; accuracy; good level of historical argumentation; reasonable thesis statement; proper citation format
- C: Good command of class material; accuracy; ability to articulate a historical point of view, even if it is not compelling or is poorly reasoned; some errors in citation format
- D: Poor command of required assignments; errors; ahistorical or narrow reasoning; poor citation format

The grading scale used for this course is as follows:

- A: 90-100
- B: 80-89
- C: 70-79
- D: 60-69
- F: 59 or less

I am available, whether in person or via email, to help you with your work. Please seek me out. Students are often not aware that faculty members are here to help. My door is open. I very much enjoy getting to know and helping my students. Many of you already know this. For those who do not, I hope that you will.

### **Assignment breakdown**

We will spend a significant amount of each Thursday class involved in the **discussion** of historical material and reading. This course only works when there is free-flowing discussion of the material that you have read. Thus please come to class **ON TIME** having prepared this reading for our discussion. I will distribute this reading electronically well in advance of our meeting. The bulk of your class participation grade will come from your performance. This **participation** grade is calculated on your willingness and ability to contribute to our class discussion. Asking questions; contributing to the conversation; helping to discuss or explain the workings of a particular passage or source—all of these are what I hope to see from each of you over the course of this semester, and doing these is vital for your success in this portion of the course. Please note that discussion is more than a requirement: it makes the class enjoyable. No one likes a silent classroom. Many doubt, however, that their voice or contributions are the solution. I assure you this is not the case: your contributions will be an invaluable part of our experience this semester. Not only will your peers thank you, they will learn from you. So will I.

The **midterm examination** will include a discussion of a reading passage and a choice from among several general short answer questions. The final exam will also include a longer essay. You will not be examined on material not yet covered in lecture or the readings. You will be graded on your command of the material. While you are not graded on their writing for examinations, answers must be in essay form with complete paragraphs and sentences. Students who find themselves running out of time towards the end of an examination period may begin to outline the remainder of their answer.

The **map assignment** involves completing a map that I will provide. I realize this may seem mundane, but I will refer to a great number of places, rivers, cities, and geographic areas over the course of this semester. You will need to know them, and this assignment is designed to facilitate that. A knowledge of geography is one of the learning outcomes for this course and is a terrific thing to have in general. The map will be posted to our class website in the first week of the semester.

**Group Presentations** will occur almost every Thursday. These will consist of groups of 1-2 students and will involve a 15 (at minimum) minute presentation on a significant historical figure, event, textual source, or artistic achievement relevant to the material of the week. Presenters will provide an overview of the topic, pertinent information about the material, and ask questions of the class about it. We will then discuss these presentations in class. Presenters should also be prepared to answer questions about the material, and I expect audience members to ask questions (this is an excellent way to earn participation points); I will also ask questions of the presenters myself. We will form our groups in the first week of the semester. Each group will present once over the course of the semester. There are 10 total presentations this semester.

The **primary source paper** (8-10 pages) examines a key primary source. Each of you will select a primary source, in conjunction with a conversation with me, that you will read over the course of the first half of the semester. You will need to read this source in order to formulate your research question, or goal for writing your paper. Reading this source is the *\*starting point\** of this assignment. To better help you write this paper, it will be done in stages. This will allow me to offer you feedback and allow you to turn in the best possible version of your paper. You need to do each state in order to earn credit for the final paper (a total of 25% of your grade). First you will **select** your book. This choice is due to me by February 2, by email. Second, you will turn in a 2 page **summary** of your book with **suggested directions** you plan on taking your paper. This is due March 2, by email. Third, you turn in a **detailed outline** (NOT BULLET POINTS) of your paper. This is due April 13, by email. Finally, you will turn in a **finished version** of your paper on May 4, by email.

There will be several **quizzes** throughout the semester. They will be held on Thursdays, just before the presentations, and will consist of a short questions on the primary source readings I will assign. There will be 5 in total. There are NO make-up quizzes.

### **Attendance and Participation**

For all class meetings, students are expected to come prepared having done all the reading. I expect all students to participate actively in our class and to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and questions to our collective exploration. I especially encourage you to bring your questions to class. I will create, and expect you to uphold, an intellectual environment in the classroom where we can listen to and consider others' arguments and opinions with an open mind and where we respect viewpoints other than our own.

Your participation grade will be based on your engagement in our class discussions and be guided by the following rubric:

- A: Always prepared, frequently participates, not absent
- B: Always prepared, participates only when called on, rarely absent
- C: Usually prepared, rarely speaks, rarely absent
- D: Often unprepared, several absences
- F: Usually unprepared, frequent absences

### **COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR**

To be determined

### **TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS**

#### **LMS**

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

[https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser\\_support.htm](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

#### **ACCESS AND NAVIGATION**

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

**Note:** Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a

backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

### **COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT**

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

#### **Technical Support**

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

#### **Interaction with Instructor Statement**

Course communications will come through your university email account. Be sure to check it regularly. You should contact me through my email address ([andrew.donnelly@tamuc.edu](mailto:andrew.donnelly@tamuc.edu)).

#### **Statement on AI (ChatGPT)**

At A&M University-Commerce we recognize that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words. AI is a powerful tool for generating text and for consolidating information. As a tool it requires that both students and faculty think through how to use it wisely and responsibly to accomplish our goals. AI is also a powerful tool for gathering the work of others and combining it, without citation, into a polished product. In this it is morally dubious.

For this course our goals are to practice historical thinking, to interpret historical evidence, and to grow in our understanding of the past. As a tool AI does little to help us in these tasks. On the contrary, using AI for course assignments would undermine your learning in these areas—the learning you are paying for. For this reason, students and faculty are not authorized to use any AI software in this course. Any use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). As a student you are fully responsible for the content of any assignment you submit.

#### **Statement on Student Grievances**

Students who have questions or concerns about the Instructor's course policies or the conduct either of the Instructor or a classmate should first consult with the Instructor. In the event of a lack of resolution or satisfaction on the matter, the student may bring their concerns to the head of the History Department, Sharon Kowalsky ([Sharon.Kowalsky@tamuc.edu](mailto:Sharon.Kowalsky@tamuc.edu)). If this does not result in a satisfactory conclusion to the matter, students may bring the issue to the

attention of the Associate Dean of Students per procedures outlined on pp. 15-19 of the Student Guide Book.

### **Late Papers**

All written assignments are due as indicated in this syllabus. Late assignments may be accepted only with the advance approval of the professor and may be assessed a penalty of one letter grade per week. If you have a problem with a due date because of a specific emergency, please notify the professor in advance or plan to turn the assignment in early. *I can be very understanding and flexible with you, but only if you come to talk to me in advance.* To pass this class, all assignments must be completed. Any missing assignments at the end of the course will result in an overall course grade of F.

### **Your Mental Health**

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit [www.tamuc.edu/counsel](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)

## **COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

The syllabus is a guide, not a contract. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

### **Student Conduct**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

### **Academic Integrity**

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

#### **Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu)

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

#### **Nondiscrimination Notice**

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

#### **Campus Concealed Carry Statement**

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.