

WHO 3931:  
Empire in the First Millennium  
Spring 2021

Instructor: Robert E. Lierse

Email: faculty are required to communicate with students via the course CANVAS email tool, but I may also be reached at [Rlierse54@ufl.edu](mailto:Rlierse54@ufl.edu)

Office Hours (Virtual): Wednesdays 11 AM – 12:30 PM, Fridays, 1 PM – 2:30 PM, and by appointment.

Welcome to the Spring 2021 semester, and to WOH 3931: Empire in the First Millennium. Current circumstances have presented us with a unique challenge as we try to blend both in-person and distance learning into one course which may present some challenges. The success of the course dependent on all of us being committed, flexible, patient, persistent, and understanding. This course will be offered synchronously, meaning at the scheduled time listed in the Schedule of Courses, with some students present in the classroom, while others will be remote. Lectures will be Mondays Period 3 (9:35 AM – 10:25 AM) with discussion sessions on Wednesdays and Fridays, Period 3 (9:35 AM – 10:25 AM). Lecture power points will be linked to the title for each class in the schedule below. I will generally post these the morning of lecture, and they will remain active for the remainder of the semester. All readings will be available via a direct link to pdf files in canvas, and may also be found under the files section, categorized by week.

Participation in our class is fundamental since improving oral conversation skills is a key objective of the course. Thus, students are required to have their cameras on from start to finish during our classes on Zoom. A default setting for our sessions in Zoom is that participants will be muted when they enter, so you will unmute yourself when you comment orally during our whole-group conversations and when you are in small groups. Your instructor may also ask students to reply in the chat box for specific activities. Oral comments on camera and written comments in the chat box are considered activities for participation. If you have technical issues, please immediately consult UF IT Help to resolve them and then contact your instructor. Zoom sessions will not be recorded by the instructor and may not be recorded by students. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded material is prohibited.

### Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to expose students to aspects of history frequently neglected by general historical studies. The First Millennium is often portrayed as the “Dark Ages”, an era of violence, ignorance, and despair in which the apex of human civilization (the Roman Empire) collapsed, and the world fell into chaos. Utter nonsense. The term “Dark Ages” is an anachronistic misnomer for an era of history rich in culture and human progress; Europe was never ‘dark’ and even if it had been, numerous cultures outside of Europe remained vibrant and flourished. This

course is also designed to challenge student's conception of the term "Empire" as a socio-political entity, and the role "Empire" played in the shaping of the past. In doing so, students will also be called upon to reconceptualize their understanding of interconnectivity of the pre-modern world.

### Organization & Assignments

To accomplish the above objectives, I have organized the class around a mixture of lectures, readings, discussion sessions, other in-class activities, but the heart and soul of this course will be our weekly discussion sessions. You should therefore come to every class prepared to participate, and participation will in fact count for 20% of your overall grade. You will also write five (5) short primary source analysis papers (1-2 pages each), and each worth 10% of your grade. There are seven opportunities to submit a primary source analysis paper, meaning you may choose which five you wish to turn-in. Primary source analysis papers are due on the assigned dates listed in the weekly summary below. Please note that due dates are final and once the due date passes, students will not be allowed to make-up a previous week's analysis. A final paper, due at the end of the semester (7 -10 pages) will be worth 30% of your overall grade.

### Grading

Assignment	Percent of Overall Grade
Participation	20%
Short Primary Source Analysis # 1	10%
Short Primary Source Analysis # 2	10%
Short Primary Source Analysis # 3	10%
Short Primary Source Analysis # 4	10%
Short Primary Source Analysis # 5	10%
Final Paper	30%

Letter grades on papers will be based on three criteria:

**Evidence**—the quality of the student's command and deployment of the course materials as evidence, as well as quality of the evidence itself (i.e., is it the best/relevant evidence for making the argument?).

**Interpretation**—level of quality in the development of the student's argument or point of view that is pertinent to the issue at hand, and that has breadth, coherence, and insight.

**Expression (style)**—the prose (writing) clear, concise, and engaging?

These three criteria are weighed equally and factored into lettered grades as follows:

A—Excellent: Your work is outstanding in all three areas. It offers an integrated, insightful argument based on ample, sound evidence and is written in clear and engaging prose.

B—Good: Your work is strong in all three areas or is outstanding in one area while having significant weaknesses in another.

C—Average: Your performance is adequate in one or more areas, but also has significant weaknesses in others, leaving the presentation fragmented, murky, or narrow.

D—Poor: Your work demonstrates notable weaknesses in all three areas. Remedial work may be needed to improve substantive understanding or basic communication skills.

E—Unacceptable: Your work has serious flaws in all areas or, more likely, demonstrates limited engagement in the assignment.

Participation grades will rest on discussions of the relevant materials and engagement in class activities. Adequate participation will indicate that you completed the readings and actively engaged in discussion. If you have questions about how participation is being evaluated, or if you feel uncomfortable speaking in front of others, you should contact me as early in the semester as possible.

Letter grades for papers and for final course grades will be assigned according to the following numerical scales:

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalent (Paper and Final Grades)	GPA Equivalent (Final Grades)
A	93 and above	4.0
A-	90-92	3.67
B+	87-89	3.33
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.67
C+	77-79	2.33
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.67

D+	67-69	1.33
D	63-66	1.0
D-	60-62	0.67
E	Below 60	0.0
E1	Stopped attending or participating prior to the end of class	0.0
I	Incomplete	0.0

### Policies and Expectations

You are expected to attend all class sessions and to be respectful of yourselves, your peers, and me at all times. Life happens though and I expect that there will be times when circumstances beyond your control may prevent you from attending class or completing an assignment on time. If so, it is extremely important that you reach out to me and I will do my best to make any reasonable accommodations appropriate to the circumstances. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you find yourself struggling for whatever reason. I want to see all my students succeed in this course and I am more than willing to work with you, so long as you yourself are willing to put in the necessary effort. On the more mundane level of our day-to-day class interactions, please keep your microphone muted when others are speaking so as to minimize background noise. Please also utilize the “raise hand” function in Zoom, and feel free to add appropriate comments in the chat section as well. Requirements for class attendance and make-up assignments in this course are consistent with university policies, which you can review at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

You will submit all written assignments electronically through the CANVAS class portal. If you encounter technical problems while submitting assignments, please email the paper to me by the appropriate due date and time. I will consider requests for extensions on a case-by-case basis. Late papers will be accepted up to 3 days after the due date but a late penalty (typically 1/3 of a letter grade per day late) will be applied unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Cheating in any form undermines the integrity and mutual trust essential to a community of learning and places at a comparative disadvantage those of you who respect and work by the rules of that community. It is understood that any work you submit is indeed your own. Plagiarism— that is, lifting without giving credit from something someone else has written such as a published book, article, or even a student paper—is forbidden and is, in most cases, fairly easily detected.

There are other, more obvious forms of academic dishonesty, such as turning in work completed by someone else, bringing inappropriate notes into an exam, and offering or receiving whispered, signaled, or other forms of assistance during an exam. Working with your fellow students in study groups or having someone else read a draft of your paper is not only acceptable but also encouraged, as long as you are refining ideas that are essentially your own. Included within this definition of academic integrity is the assumption that all documents and excuses provided as explanations for late or missed assignments have not been falsified. Please review the University's policies regarding student conduct and conflict resolution, available through the Dean of Students Office website.

If you require classroom accommodations, you must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to you, which you must then provide to me when requesting accommodation. For more information regarding University policies on this issue, please visit the Disability Resource Center's website.

You are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. You will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email you receive from GatorEvals, in your Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any point during the semester with any individual concerns or issues you may need to discuss. It is best for all parties if this happens as early in the semester as possible. Problems are much easier for us to address if I know about them sooner rather than later and can be particularly difficult to handle if left until exam week or after final grades have been submitted.

## Course Schedule

Week Of:

1/11 Week 1: What is Empire?

1/18 Week 2: All That Glitters is Rome: The Height of Power in the Roman Empire

1/25 Week 3: What are Neighbors for: Parthian and Sasanian Empires.

Response Paper # 1 Due

2/1 Week 4: Han Not-so-Solo: Imperial China & The Han Dynasty

2/8 Week 5: Empire Between Empires: Kushan, Gupta and Vakataka, the Empires of India

Response Paper # 2 Due

2/15 Week 6: Noisome Neighbors: Atilla and the Hunnic Empire

2/22 Week 7: Lombards and Vandals and Goths, Oh my: The “collapse” of the Roman Empire.

Final Paper Topics Due

Individual Meetings Week

Response Paper # 3 Due

3/1 Week 8: I’m Not Dead Yet! : The Eastern Roman/Byzantine Empire

3/8 Week 9: Let Me Be Frank: Germanic Kingdoms and Roman Rubble

Response Paper # 4 Due

3/15 Week 10: Rockin the Casbah: Islam, The Rashidun, and Umayyad Caliphate 3/15

3/22 Week 11: *Karolus Magnus, Pater Europae* (Or K-Mag as I call him): The Carolingian Empire.

Response Paper # 5 Due

3/29 Week 12: The House of Wisdom: the Abbasid Caliphate and Islamic Golden Age

4/5 Week 13: Khaaaaaaaaaaan! : The Bulgar and Khazar Khaganate’s

Response Paper # 6 Due

4/12 Week 14: Tang: The “Golden Age” of Imperial China...not a powder drink mix.

4/19 Week 15: Kinda Holy, Definitely not Roman, and Questionably Empire: Back Where We Started?

Response Paper # 7 Due

**Final Paper: due 4/27**