

# Pagans, Christians, and barbarians: the world of Late Antiquity

Time and location: online, MTWRF 12:30 to 1:45

## Description

Late Antiquity is a period in history that has attracted much attention recently. In part, that is because of an old, 19<sup>th</sup>-century preoccupation with demarcating the clear chronological boundaries between Antiquity and the Middle Ages. An older generation of historians used to believe that once the Western Roman Empire disappeared in 476, the medieval world began. By now, scholarly opinions have shifted towards the model of a “transformation of the Roman world,” gradually leading to a new type of society, with different values and rules. Since that transformation took a long time, from ca. 300 to ca. 600, a new name was chosen to describe that period—Late Antiquity—to cover the history of the Old World “between Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad,” as Peter Brown put it half-a-century ago in the subtitle of his famous book (the title of which was the inspiration for the subtitle of this course). The course consists of a survey of all aspects of the transformation, from political developments in the Late Roman Empire to the economic and social changes, both inside and outside the empire that marked Late Antiquity. Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of religion, especially the rise of Christianity, and the fundamental innovations in art and architecture epitomized by the great church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

## Textbooks

- Stephen Mitchell. *A History of the Later Roman Empire, AD 284-641*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015 [hereafter *Mitchell*]
- Michael Maas. *Readings in Late Antiquity. A Sourcebook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2010 [hereafter *Maas*]

## Assignments and grading policies

There is no attendance policy, but you are responsible for attending all lectures and reading the required texts. Class participation may be taken into account to determine the overall grade. The basis for evaluation of performance will be four quizzes and two exams (Midterm and Final). The unannounced quizzes are exclusively based on primary source readings from your *Maas* book and will consist only of multiple-choice questions (no essay). A careful study of these texts is necessary for a good performance at the quiz. The Midterm and Final exams will cover everything from lectures and readings. Both Midterm and Final will consist of two parts: an identification and/or multiple-choice part, and a short essay, in which you will be asked to synthesize your knowledge of the topic, dropping in facts to show that you understand the concrete aspects of that topic. Only the Midterm will be cumulative. In other words, the Final examination will cover only the material since the Midterm examination. Make-up Midterm and Final exam will be given for very serious reasons, in which case you will have to produce some official proof. There is no make-up for quizzes. Extra-credit work will be accepted only for students with active participation in class discussions. The format of the extra-credit option shall be discussed with the instructor during regular office hours. The following point system will be used in determining the final grade:

Quizzes: 40 points

Midterm: 30 points

Final exam: 30 points

Total: 100 points

The following scale will be used in determining your final grade.

<b>Points</b>	<b>Grade</b>
97-100	A
93-96	A-

88-92	B+
81-87	B
75-80	B-
68-74	C+
61-67	C
55-60	C-
48-54	D+
41-47	D
35-40	D-
under 30	E

## Weekly Topics

- June 28: Introduction. What is Late Antiquity? Sources and definitions [Mitchell 15-50]**
- June 29: Late Roman Empire and the Tetrarchy [Mitchell 51-66; Maas 11-12, 20-22, 105-106]**
- June 30: Constantine the Great and his successors [Mitchell 66-78; Maas 8, 9, 44, 59-60, 79-80, 111-112, 117-119, 120, 131-132, 224-225]**
- July 1: From Julian to Theodosius [Mitchell 78-89; Maas 2-3, 68-69, 80-81, 85, 87-88, 196, 207-208, 314, 346-348]**
- July 2: Theodosius I [Mitchell 90-107; Maas 7-8, 96-97, 120]**
- July 6: The Western Empire [Mitchell 108-125; Maas 48-49, 56-59, 349-353, 371-378]**
- July 7: The Eastern Empire, from Zeno to Justinian [Mitchell 125-133; Maas 41, 126-129, 132-135, 137-139]**
- July 8: Justinian [Mitchell 133-164; Maas 9-11, 17-18, 41-42, 45, 61-66, 140-142, 307-308, 340-341]**
- July 9: How did the empire work? Ideology, administration, government structure [Mitchell 165-175 and 185-201; Maas 14-15]**
- July 12: Roman army [Mitchell 176-185; Maas 81-85, 86-87, 90-94, 101-104]**
- July 13: Visigoths and Huns [Mitchell 206-223]**
- July 14: Burgundians, Franks and Ostrogoths [Mitchell 223-241; Maas 115, 354-356, 361-363]**
- July 15: Christianity before the Church: persecutions, saints, early organization [Mitchell 242-276; Maas 142-146, 163-164]**
- July 16: Midterm. Christianity within and with the Roman Empire [Mitchell 277-299; Maas 113-114, 121-123]**
- July 19: Christological debates and monasticism [Mitchell 299-324; Maas 152-161]**
- July 20: Economy, taxation, cities [Mitchell 325-354; Maas 22-28]**
- July 21: Society and law [Mitchell 355-407; Maas 285-288 and 291-296]**
- July 22: House and household [Maas 259-270]**
- July 23: Marriage and family [Maas 248-259]**
- July 26: From cradle to grave [Maas 240-248 and 270-284]**
- July 27: Women [Maas 227-239]**
- July 28: Jews [Maas 201-207, 208-212, and 216-222]**
- July 29: Education and philosophy [Maas 66-68 and 69-73]**
- July 30: Art and architecture**
- August 2: The year 536 and the plague: catastrophism or real challenges? [Mitchell 408-425; Maas 307-309]**
- August 3: Sassanian Persia [Mitchell 425-438; Maas 327-340]**
- August 4: From Justinian to Heraclius [Mitchell 441-455; Maas 380-386]**
- August 5: Heraclius and rise of Islam [Mitchell 455-463; Maas 390-406]**
- August 6: Final. Late Antiquity between the “fall” and the “transformation” of the Roman Empire [Mitchell 466-492]**