

ARTH 333: Early Christian & Byzantine Art
Tuesdays/Thursdays 12:00-1:15

Lawrence Butler
Fall 2016

The Byzantine Empire, New Rome, the Eastern Roman Empire, the medieval Greek empire, or just Byzantium—there are many different names for the same magnificent civilization that dominated the Eastern Mediterranean in for a thousand years. This class will explore the art, archeology and culture of the Eastern Mediterranean during late antiquity and the Middle Ages, with an emphasis on the city of Constantinople. We will also consider the legacy of Byzantine culture in the later Greek and Slavic world. Coursework will include extensive readings in primary sources, research, and self-guided visits to local collections of Byzantine art. This course fulfills the three-hour University General Education requirement in the Arts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class attendance
- Assigned readings in textbooks and on reserve.
- One or two ungraded (but obligatory) map exercises
- One self-propelled visit to the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore
- Two short (4-5 pp. papers) based on your museum visit and background on-line research.
- Two midterm tests
- A final exam.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

- John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*. Phaidon/Hachette, 1997. ISBN 9780714831688.
- Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312-1453*. Univ. of Toronto Press, 1986, reprinted 2000. ISBN 0-8020-6627-5.
- Supplementary readings will be posted on Blackboard.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:

- Ability to use and check your **GMU email** account regularly.
- Ability to access **Blackboard** for assigned readings and review powerpoints.

HOW TO REACH ME:

- Email: lbutler@gmu.edu
- Call the Department office at (703) 993-1250, and leave a message. I'll get it eventually.
- Office: **Robinson B340**, deep inside the History and Art History Department.
- Office hours: **Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays 1:30-2:45**, or by appointment.



TENTATIVE CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

- Classes will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:00 to 1:15 in Art and Design 2026.
- The two papers and due dates will be assigned in class.
- “Lowden” and “Mango” refer to readings in the textbooks by those authors.
- Readings that are not in the two textbooks are to be found on the Blackboard website.

PART ONE: THE WORLD OF LATE ANTIQUITY

WEEK 1: Introduction: The World of Late Antiquity

Themes:

Mediterranean geography, the late Roman Empire and the Sasanian Empire of Iran.

Reading:

- Peter Brown, “The boundaries of the Classical World,” from his incomparable *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750*.
- Review The Bible, especially: *Genesis, Gospel of Matthew, Gospel of John, Revelation*.

First map exercise assigned.

WEEK 2: Earliest Christian art

Themes: Roman catacombs, review of Christian theology.

Reading:

- Stokstad *Art History*, on late Roman, Jewish and Early Christian art, pp. 302-331.
- Robin M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 2: “Non-narrative images: Christian use of classical symbols and popular motifs,” pp. 32-63.
- My “Christianity for Students of Medieval Art” handout

WEEK 3: Early Christian churches and monasteries

Themes: Dura Europos, Syria; Early monasteries of Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia, UNESCO’s World Heritage sites and programs.

Reading:

- Lowden, 1: “God and Salvation: The Formation of a Christian Art.”
- Jennifer Chi, *Edge of Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians at Roman Dura Europos (Princeton, 2011)*, excerpt on Blackboard.
- On Coptic Egypt: TBA.

WEEK 4: Emperor Constantine

Themes: The Christian basilica, conversion of Rome, founding of Constantinople

Reading:

- Mango, part 1: “Constantine (312-37),” pp. 3-18.
- Richard Krautheimer, “Constantinople,” from *Three Christian Capitals*, pp. 41-67.
- Jaś Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* 8: “Art and Religion,” 199-235.

WEEK 5: Review and first test

- Catch-up and review
- **Thursday, Sept. First test, on Early Christian Art**

PART II: BYZANTINE ART, THE CLASSIC PERIODS

WEEK 6: Early Byzantine luxury arts

Themes: Manuscripts. Luxury arts: ivories, jewelry, textiles, and silver. Classical tradition.

Reading:

- Lowden, 2: "Emperors and Holy Men: Constantinople and the East."
- Thelma Thomas, "Ornaments of Excellence...Luxury Art and Byzantine Culture"
- *Textiles, 5000 Years*, excerpts on Mediterranean, Sassanian and Byzantine silks.
- Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art & Architecture*, 18: "Writings & illustrated books."

WEEK 7: Constantinople in the Sixth Century

No class on Tuesday, October 11. Columbus Day schedule.

Themes: Women's patronage in the arts, the domed basilica, Juliana Anicia, Prokopios.

Reading:

- Mango, part 3: "Justinian (527-565)" pp. 108-113 on monuments of Constantinople.
- Ioli Kalavrezou, "Women in the Visual Record of Byzantium, from *Byzantine Women and their World*
- Prokopios, excerpts from *The Secret History* on Justinian and Theodora.

WEEK 8: The Hagia Sophia

Design, construction and ideology of the Hagia Sophia. Archeology of standing structures. Interpreting the primary sources.

Reading:

- Mango, part 3: "Justinian" on the Hagia Sophia and the Gaza churches, pp. 60-102.
- Richard Krautheimer, "Hagia Sophia," from *Early Christian and Byz. Architecture*
- Lawrence Butler, "Nave cornices of Hagia Sophia as elements of its structure" from Mark & Çakmak, *Hagia Sophia*.

WEEK 9: Ravenna and Rome in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries.

Themes: Byzantine rule in Italy. The Justinianic architectural revolution. The mosaics of Ravenna. Use of images in sacred space.

Reading:

- Lowden, 3: "Heretics and Bankers: Ravenna and the West"
- Mango, part 3, pp. 104-108, on Ravenna. Part 4, pp. 133-45, on use of religious images.
- Joseph Alchermes, "Art and Architecture in the Age of Justinian," from *Age of Justinian*

WEEK 10: Icons and Iconoclasm

Themes: Use of images. Iconoclasm. Icons and orthodoxy. Early Islam and Byzantium.

Reading:

- Lowden, 4: Icon or Idol? The Iconoclast Controversy.
- Mango, part 5: "The Period of Iconoclasm, 726-843" pp. 149-177.
- Romanos the Melodist, "The Akathistos Hymn"

WEEK 11: Review and test

Catch-up and review, Tuesday November 8.

Test 2 on Early Byzantine Art, Thursday November 10.

PART III: THE LATER BYZANTINE EMPIRE

WEEK 12: The “Macedonian Renaissance” of the 9th-10th Centuries

Themes: Courtly arts and patronage. The Middle Byzantine church and its decoration.

Readings:

- Lowden, 5: “Orthodoxy and Innovation: Byzantine Art c.860-c.960”
- Lowden, 6: “Sacred Spaces: Decorated Churches c.960-c.1100”
- Mango, part 6: “The Middle Byzantine Period,” pp. 181-190, 207-216 on court arts

WEEK 13: Byzantine monasteries

Tuesday only! No class on Thursday November 24: Thanksgiving.

Themes: Monastic arts and architecture. The place of monasteries in Orthodox society.

Reading:

- Lowden, 7: “Holy Books: Illuminated Manuscripts c.976-c.1100”
- Mango, 237-240, on monastic inventories.
- Alice-Mary Talbot, “Byzantine Monasticism and the Liturgical Arts”

WEEK 14: Byzantium and Italy in the time of the Crusades

Themes: The last Byzantine classical revival. Intellectual activity at Mistra. The Church of the Chora (Kariye Camii) and its mosaics. Impact on the Italian Renaissance.

Reading:

- Lowden, 8: “Perception and Reception: Art in Twelfth-Century Italy”
- Lowden, 9: “Crisis and Continuity: The Sack of Constantinople”
- Ioli Kalavrezou, “The Cup of San Marco and the “Classical” in Byzantium”

WEEK 15: Late Byzantium and its legacy

Themes: The Palaiologan Dynasty. Church of the Chora (Kariye Camii). Greece and the Balkans after Byzantium. Art and architecture of Orthodox Imperial Russia.

Reading:

- Lowden, 10: “The End of an Era? Constantinople regained and Lost 1261-1453”
- Mango, pp. 221-24 and 255-259, on Byzantine artists in Russia.
- Dmitri Obolensky, “Byzantium and the Slavs,” from *Byzantium: A World Empire*

Final exam: Thursday, December 15, 10:30 to 1:15, in the usual room.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

Due dates for the two papers and second map will be set in class.

Last day to add classes: Tuesday, September 6.

Last day to drop classes without a tuition penalty: Tuesday, Sept 6.

First test: Thursday, September 29.

Last day to drop classes: Friday September 30,

Selective withdrawal period, October 3-28.

No class on Tuesday, October 11 or Thursday, October 13: Columbus Day break.

Second test: Thursday, November 10.

No class on Thursday, November 24: Thanksgiving recess.

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 15, 10:30 to 1:15 PM. Note the early time!

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance is necessary; much of the material will only be covered in our slide lectures. You are responsible for getting notes, and for all consequences of missed classes. **Class participation will affect your grade, if it is conspicuously good, conspicuously lacking, or continually disruptive.** I will be making spot checks of attendance—they're not perfect, but they help us both recognize a pattern.

Classroom atmosphere. Courtesy and common sense, please. We're all adults; sometimes emergencies come up. However, talking to friends during lectures, wandering in and out, cell phones, and eating food are all badly distracting to everyone else. **Chronic chatterers and latecomers are disruptive, and will be asked to leave the classroom** (Oh yes I can do that—University policy.).

Written work is a major part of the course, and will count heavily towards your final grade. Please study the explanation of my writing standards, attached to this syllabus. In short: **Papers must be written in good formal English, with full documentation** in a standard format such as MLA or Chicago. **All students are expected to use word-processors with spell-checkers. Spelling and grammar count.** Please submit papers typed, double-spaced, and PROOFREAD. **Badly written work will be downgraded, returned for a rewrite, or flunked,** as I see most appropriate.

No email submissions of papers, except in special cases with my prior permission. Sorry—I've tried—it causes too many problems. **Written work is due in hard copy in class on the due date.** Papers will not be considered "on time" unless and until I receive them in hard copy. **Unauthorized email submissions will earn a ten-point penalty.**

Laptop computers are fine for taking notes in class. No Facebook, Solitaire, etc. No computers or telephones may be used during tests. Phones will be turned off at all times, of course, as a courtesy to all.

Late work will be graded down five points per day and ten points over a weekend. Plan ahead--last-minute hard-disk and printer failures are your problem, and do not constitute legitimate excuses. **By the final exam, all missing work becomes F work.** Make-up tests and elaborate medical excuses will require verification with a physician's or associate dean's excuse. There will be no make-up final exams.

English as a Second Language: If English is not your first language, I will be happy to help you do your best in the writing assignments--by previewing papers, offering extra help, that sort of thing. But the final result must be written in good standard English. Please work with **The Writing Center** in Robinson I, Room A116. Call them at (703) 993-1200, or see their web page for English language help, at: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>. Look for the ESL (English as Second Language) tab.

Learning disabilities. If you are a student with disabilities, and you need academic accommodations, please see me *and* contact the Office of Disabilities Services (ODS) or 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Visit their website: <http://ods.gmu.edu>.

Religious holidays. I have planned this course according to the George Mason University calendar. If you observe a religious holiday that the University does not, please let me know and I will make necessary accommodations for you (but not for the whole class).

Auditors are welcome to sit and listen, if there is room. If you would like to participate more actively, that's fine with me *if* (!!) you are keeping up with the assigned class reading. Otherwise, please be quiet.

Academic honesty is expected in all tests and writing, according to the GMU Honor Code. "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work," according to the official website, <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>. Please respect the Honor Code, our classroom standards, your fellow students, and yourself. Please report violations to the Honor Committee, using the procedures explained in the website. See the explanation of plagiarism, and how to avoid it, in the guidelines for writing.

GRADING POLICIES

WRITTEN WORK will be graded according to the following criteria:

A = Startlingly good, exceeding expectations, and well-written. Must be imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions.

B = Good effort with a good result.

C = Perfunctory; or, tried but missed the point; or, did something well but it wasn't the assignment; or, good idea but careless or sloppy.

D = Warning: accepted under protest.

F = Unacceptable as college-level work.

Paper grades will be lowered for lateness, sloppiness, lack of proofreading, bad English, lack of necessary documentation, faulty logic, or failure to follow directions for the assignment. Please study the directions for writing assignments, elsewhere in this syllabus.

Late written work: Papers are due in class, in hard copy, on the day specified. After that, late papers will be lowered five points a day, half a grade. This makes even the best work “F” work after about ten days. **If you need an extension, you must ask for it before the due date, not on or after**, if you want to avoid a penalty.

Unauthorized email submissions will be penalized ten points—a whole grade. Don't do this.

Ungraded assigned work is important, and will figure into the “class participation” grade. **Any missing ungraded work will result in the lowering of your final course grade by 5 points!**

FINAL GRADES will be based on the average of your class, writing and test grades, as follows:

Test 1:	10 %	Paper 1	15%
Test 2:	20%	Paper 2:	20%
Final exam:	25%	Class participation	10%

Class participation grade: Normal class participation—showing up on time, keeping up with classwork, participating in group activities, not causing problems--will be figured as “B” level. Great class participation will be graded “A”. Problematic behavior will be graded “C” or lower.

Final grades may be raised or lowered from strict average in the following circumstances:

- A pattern of pluses or minuses on the ungraded assignments; or missing ungraded work. I will lower your final grade 5 points for each piece of missing ungraded work.
- I may raise or lower your grade in recognition of significant change over the course of the semester.
- TWO PIECES OF GRADED WORK MISSING AT THE END OF THE COURSE WILL BE GROUNDS FOR FAILING THE COURSE REGARDLESS OF YOUR PRECISE AVERAGE.
- IF YOU FLUNK THE FINAL EXAM, WITH AN F ON ANOTHER MAJOR (20%) PIECE OF WORK, YOU ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE FOR THE WHOLE COURSE. You must demonstrate some mastery of the course material to pass the course.
- You will not pass the course if you hand in no assigned written work. You must do the written work, and not just pass tests.

DIRECTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There will be two short papers required for this class. Specific directions will be handed out when the papers are assigned. In general, all written work for me, or for Art History in general, should be finished, professional-looking, and must observe the following rules:

Organization: College-level essays are to be carefully constructed and presented as finished products. They are not just journal entries or stream-of-consciousness. This means they must have a thesis of some sort, and present reasoned arguments through the examination of evidence. There should be an introductory thesis statement and a conclusion. Paragraphs should be used as a way to structure the argument so a reader can follow your thinking. An interesting or informative title is expected.

Mechanics: All papers must be typed and double-spaced, using a standard font in 10 or 11-point size. Please stick to plain old white paper and standard fonts. Handwriting is *not* OK. Single-spacing is *not* OK. Triple-spacing is *not* OK. Writing the whole darned thing in *italics* or some cute font you like is *not* OK. Pictures are nice, but strictly optional. Pictures cannot be a substitute for writing. Nice presentation is always welcome, but please be clear that adding pictures will not affect your grade unless they are explicitly part of the assignment.

Spelling and grammar are expected to be excruciatingly correct. Use the spell-checker. I will mark down work for sloppy spelling and grammar. If the writing is really awful—ungrammatical, no evidence of proofreading, horrible spelling, or laughably short—I will not read it. I'll return it as unacceptable, with an F. I may allow rewrites, depending on the class, but the highest grade for a rewritten F paper is C.

Page limits should be observed, and should be your guide to the depth of writing: a one-to-two page paper is pretty much a quick observation, with thesis and conclusion. Three-to-five pages means there is time to develop a thesis and argue it through several paragraphs, considering several different questions, angles or pieces of evidence. An eight-to-ten page paper usually includes research, as will be made clear.

Citations. All papers, whatever length, must include the complete and correct citation of any sources of information to avoid the appearance of plagiarism. Generally-known facts are not normally cited. Anything else is, including a long summary of facts from one source, a single opinion stated by another author, and any direct quote. If you are using information from museum labels or pamphlets, cite that too.

When you do citations, please use one of these two standard forms, as you have learned here in college:

- **MLA style**, using parenthetical page references and list of works cited at the end of the paper.
- **Chicago style**, using correctly-done footnotes and a bibliography.

Both of these are explained in detail in the Infoguides available on the University Libraries website:

<http://infoguides.gmu.edu/humcites>

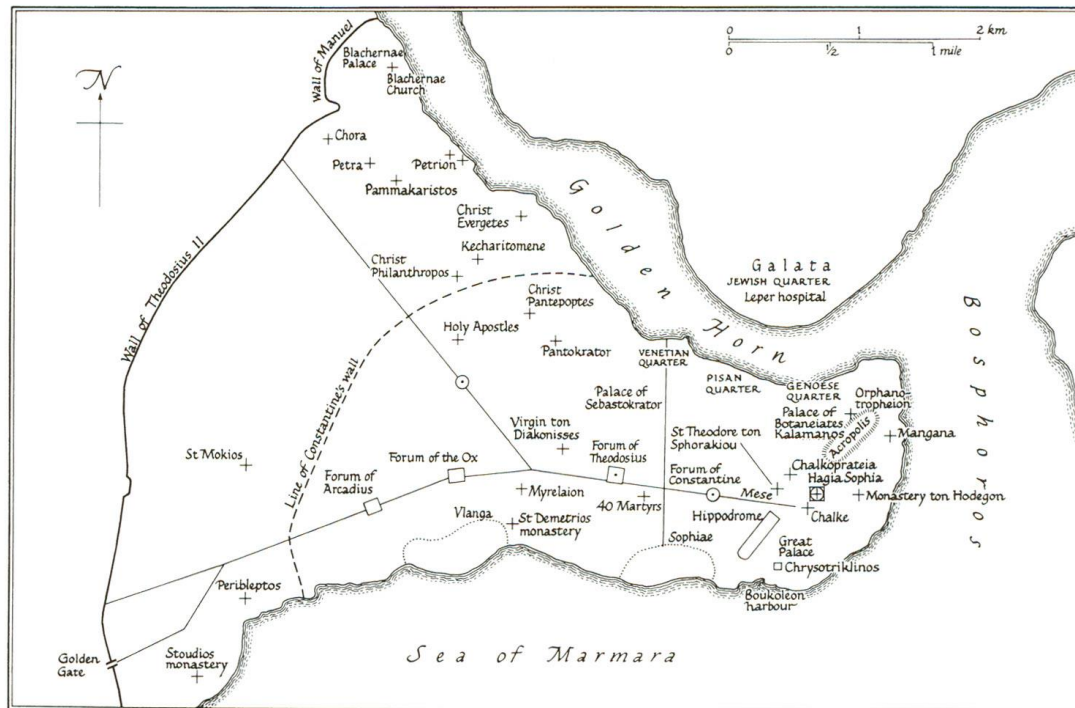
Do citations carefully and correctly! Points will be deducted for missing citations of information, missing page numbers, missing list of "works cited" at the end, or just messed up mechanics.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Here is how the **GMU Honor Code** defines it, as quoted from the University Catalog, <http://www.gmu.edu/academics/catalog/0203/apolicies/honor.html>:

B. Plagiarism encompasses the following:

1. Presenting as one's own the works, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.
2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement.

That means **you must acknowledge your source of information**. Museum labels, anonymous pamphlets, and websites all count as sources, and must be acknowledged—even if you are summarizing them with word changes. **Plagiarism is cheating, and will be reported to the Honor Committee for action.** For more on the procedures, see <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>



Plan of Constantinople during the Middle Byzantine period. From Magdalino 1993

