

**HIST 388: FAITH, POLITICS & CULTURE
IN THE EASTERN MEDIEVAL WORLD
FALL 2021
TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS 10:30-11:45 A.M.
ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS**

INSTRUCTOR: Andrew Walker White, Ph.D.
Email Address: awhite45@gmu.edu
Text/Phone: 571-730-8326 (Questions/absences, etc.)
Office Hours: Online & by appointment

REQUIRED READING: PRIMARY SOURCES (ON BLACKBOARD, EVERY WEEK):

All of your required readings are on Blackboard, either in the form of PDF documents or as links to the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, operated by Fordham University.

COURSE SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES: This course will explore key events, personalities and cultural moments, as well as the fierce competitions among faiths and dynasties in the Eastern Mediterranean world, during the Middle Ages.

Because the period is usually studied through a Western European lens, this semester we will shift our focus to the Eastern Roman Empire, based in its capital city Constantinople (aka, Byzantium). This empire was effectively the political center of Christendom from the 4th – 15th centuries CE, and many of the tensions in our world today have their roots in the events surrounding the Eastern Empire’s rich, complex history—as well as the history of its immediate neighbors and competitors.

Our shift eastward will enable us to define the Middle Ages through the rise of Islam and the efforts of Byzantine emperors and European monarchs to contend directly with the new faith, as well as the leaders of the Caliphate, in the theological, military, political, and cultural arenas. As other communities—the Slavs and Kievan Rus’ especially—enter the arena, we will discuss the responses to their arrival as well.

Our questions, our provisional answers and our discussions will be geared towards answering much more than the traditional “who, what, where and why?” We will also be asking ourselves at a deeper level, “what did they know?”, “what on earth were they thinking?” and, perhaps more importantly, “what does it have to do with me?”

COURSEWORK & TEACHING METHOD:

Each week, I will give you two live lectures, Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 10:30 AM to 11:45 AM, to provide the context for your assigned reading. When we meet, you should use the “Chat” feature in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to raise questions about the material. You will post your Brief Notes, after I have given both my lectures and you have completed all the assigned readings (plan on submitting Friday!). Then you will participate in your Required Discussion Forum, in the Discussion Group you are assigned to. The ultimate goal is to understand the mindset of the people we encounter, and through our discussions try to understand how and why events in and around the Eastern Roman Empire take a certain course.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Here is a summary of the written work I will expect from each of you during the semester:

#1: Introductory Essay: The best way for me to get to know you is for you to write a brief essay, 1+ pages (double-spaced) will do, about your background, and what interests you about the Middle Ages and Byzantium. [NOTE: I grade this assignment mainly for completion; speak freely!] Upload your essay onto Blackboard, under the “Writing Assignments” tab, as a Word or PDF file. *Be sure to look for my comments!* 100 Points—think of it as your first “A”.

#2: Brief Notes for Each Week’s Work, Submitted on Blackboard: Each week I will expect you to write—briefly—about our lectures and assigned readings. [NOTE: I grade these assignments mainly for completion, you’re free to respond to the material as you see fit.] This is your chance to start thinking independently about these sources, to help you raise questions about them, and try out your ideas, your own interpretations. For full credit, your notes must include commentary about both the lecture and our readings. 20 points each week, 300 pts. total.

Write, in complete sentences, about the following:

- For each reading—the important points, what the writer is trying to say;
 - For each reading—consider writer’s point of view: what they know (or *think* they know), as well as when and where they are writing;
 - What is the writer’s audience, and what effect do they hope to have? To inform? To entertain? To inspire? To change hearts and minds? To set the record straight?
 - How does this source affect your understanding of the writer, their milieu, their ideas, the events they were a part of?
 - For the lecture: what points were especially interesting or concerning?
- Remember: Your Brief Notes are graded for completion.

#3: Mid-Term & Final Essays (4-6 pages): Because I’m not a fan of traditional exams (and because every time I write, I keep my sources handy), I will give you two opportunities—at the mid-point and the end of our semester—to write a series of brief essays that compare, contrast and critique the primary sources we are reading. I will give you a menu of possible topics to choose from – you will write about what interests or concerns you the most. *Make sure your answers are based on specific citations from our readings*, and use these essays to think further about what we are reading, and what those readings say about the culture of the Medieval world and its relevance to current events. For each of the Mid-Term and Final essays, I will expect you to look up at least one peer-reviewed source from the JSTOR database (available online through GMU’s library site) to complement the primary sources you are examining. *Mid-Term Essays are due October 15, Final Essays are due December 17. 150 points each 300 points total.*

#4: Research Paper: (10-15 pages, Uploaded on Blackboard). Within the first 2 weeks, you and I will agree on a full-length work—either a book-length translation of a primary source, or a book that deals with a *specific* subject from Eastern Roman/Byzantine politics, religion or culture. I will expect you to read the whole book, and then conduct supplementary research—brief articles on the same subject, by the same or different scholars. Are there reviews for this book? What do the reviewers have to say? Is there any controversy with the author’s findings? What primary sources/events seem to be the focus of the argument?

Try to get a sense of the ongoing conversation about the subject. Then offer your own insights – what does the author seem to get right? What do his colleagues agree or disagree with? Where do you stand on the questions raised by the book and its reviewers?

Seek out key passages from the primary sources the author refers to: read these relevant passages closely (especially if separate from the book itself), and tell me whether you think the author makes good use of them, or whether they missed anything.

Your Research Paper process will occur in Three (3) stages:

- ✓ Stage 1 – Select the Book by September 9. 20 points.
- ✓ Stage 2 – Hand in an Annotated Bibliography by October 7. 20 points.
- ✓ Stage 3 – Final Draft, is due Tuesday, November 23. 160 points.

The resulting paper should consist of: Title page; 10-15 pages of text, double-spaced, and a bibliography.

HONOR CODE:

A reminder about George Mason's Honor Code: you can't copy and paste anyone else's work and call it your own. Quotations and paraphrases are OK but must be in quotation marks and come with citations to tell me where the quote comes from.

GRADING ELEMENTS:

<u>Task or Assignment</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Introductory Essay:	100
Brief Notes	300 (20/Week)
Required Discussion Forum	90 (6/Week)
Mid-Term Essays	150
Final Essays	150
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>200 (20 + 20 + 160)</u>
Total:	990 Points

GRADING SCALE:

90-100%	A	Outstanding
	A+	97 – 100 (960--990 points)
	A	93-96.9 (920-959 points)
	A-	90-92.9 (891-919 points)
80-89%	B	Above Average
	B+	87-89.9 (861-890 points)
	B	83-86.9 (821-860 points)
	B-	80-82.9 (792-820 points)
70-79%	C	Average
	C+	77-79.9 (762-791 points)
	C	73-76.9 (722-761 points)
	C-	70-72.9 (693-721 points)
60-69%	D	Below Average (594-692 points)
59%-Below	F	Failure (no credit for the course) (593 points & Below)

HIST 388 - WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK & DATE	TOPICS	Readings:
Week 1: 8/24 & 8/26/21	From Polytheism to Judaism and Christianity: The Mediterranean from the 300's – 600's	Septuagint, Eusebius, Paul the Silentiary, etc. INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
Week 2: 8/31 & 9/2/21	The Rise of Islam & the Caliphate	Quran, Hadith, Sirat, Theophanes, etc.
Week 3: 9/7 & 9/9/21	Iconoclasm in The East, Charlemagne in the West	Theophanes, Einhard, etc. ** SELECT BOOK **
Week 4: 9/14 & 9/16/21	On Themes, Macedonians, KIEVAN Rus' & the "Photian Schism"	Skylitzes, Photios
Week 5: 9/21 & 9/23/21	Kievan Rus' to the East, "Fake" Emperors to the West	De Administrando, De Ceremoniis, Tales of Bygone Days, Liutprand etc.
Week 6: 9/28 & 9/30/21	Education & Erudition in the Medieval Greek World	Dionysius Thrax, Aphthonius, etc.
Week 7: 10/5 & 10/7/21	From the Khazars to The Komnenoi To The First Crusade	Psellos, Anna Komnene, etc. **ANNOTATED BIB**
Week 8: 10/14/21 ONLY	Poetry and Storytelling	Digenes Akritis, etc
Week 9: 10/19 & 10/21/21	More Crusades, Hybridity & Norman Sicily	** MID-TERM ESSAYS DUE **
Week 10: 10/26 & 10/28/21	The Fourth Crusade & The Ear of Two Kingdoms	Choniates, Villehardouin
Week 11: 11/2 & 11/4/21	Monastic Life, Chant, & Hesychasm	Assorted <i>Typika</i>, Gregory Palamas, etc.
Week 12: 11/9 & 11/11/21	The House of Palaeologi & The Rise of Tamerlane	Ibn Batuta, Ignatius of Smolensk, etc.
Week 13: 11/16 & 11/13/21	Manuel Palaeologos' Western Tour & Aesop's Medieval Twin	Magna Carta, Froissart, Joan of Arc, Tale of Quadrapeds

Week 14: 11/23/21 ONLY	St. Symeon of Thessalonica & The Council of Florence	Dialogue in Christ, Council Papers, etc. RESEARCH PAPER DUE
Week 15: 11/30 & 12/2/21	The Rise of Mehmet the Conqueror & the Fall of Constantinople	Tursun Beg, Sphrantzes, Pope Pius, etc.
FINAL ESSAYS	DUE 5:00 PM, 12/14/21	

HONOR CODE:

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

LEARNING DISABILITIES:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodation, please see me and contact the office of Disability Services (DS) at 703-993-2474, or online at: <https://ds.gmu.edu/>. *All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.* Students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester, and DS will make arrangements for the specific accommodations you need.

A STATEMENT ON ANTI-RACISM:

As a member of the Department of History and Art History, I will always work to create an educational environment that is committed to anti-racism and inclusive standards of excellence. An anti-racist approach to higher education acknowledges the often-subtle ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural expressions of racism contribute to inequality and injustice, against Black individuals, indigenous people, and other people of color—in our classrooms, on our campuses, and in our communities.

Although we are online this semester, I want this to be a place where we can still break bread together, and work in the spirit of mutual respect and openness to new ideas, new experiences. I believe that the work of anti-racism, of creating a truly civil society, starts with each of us. I sincerely hope that together, we will build a body of knowledge which will empower all of us to take actions rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that we will carry with us throughout our lives.