

COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES
GREEK & ROMAN STUDIES PROGRAM

CLCV-HIST 4210A

**THE TURBULENT SEVENTH CENTURY: ROME, PERSIA,
AND ISLAM**

Professor: Greg Fisher
Office: PA 2A54
Office Hours: M 1235-1405
Phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 8425
E-mail: greg_fisher@carleton.ca
Seminar: W 0835-1125 --- 0.5 credits

Overview

The so-called ‘Muslim conquests’ of the seventh century ushered in a series of profound changes in the geopolitical map of the area we now call the ‘Middle’ East. Muslim armies defeated the forces of the Roman and Persian empires, truncating the former state around the Balkans and Anatolia, and utterly conquering the latter. Prior to these stunning events, though, occurred one of the most intriguing conflicts in world history: the generational war between Rome and Persia, which began in c. 602 with the overthrow of the Roman emperor Maurice, and the opportunistic quest for ‘vengeance’ by Maurice’s erstwhile friend and client, the Persian king Khusrau II.

This course is about the historiography of a crucial period in world history, as much as it is about ‘what happened’. Students will be encouraged to think about how a narrative of a poorly-understood period was constructed from a very diverse range of sources, how ancients explained the emergence of Islam, the life of the Prophet, and the last great war between classical antiquity’s two major adversaries.

We will begin with an overview of the relationship between Rome, Persia, and the Arabs in the pre-Islamic period, and then we will read relevant sections from our texts to gain a basic understanding of the ‘grand narrative’ of the period. We will then examine some ancient sources in detail, and read sections from the reconstructed history of Theophilus of Edessa, preserved in the *Chronicle to 1234*, the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian, the work of Theophanes, and the *Kitāb al-Unwan* of Agapius.

Readings

Required (at the bookstore, or purchase yourself via Amazon or other retailer)

G. Fisher, *Between Empires. Arabs, Romans, and Sasanians in Late Antiquity*. Oxford, 2013. Paperback. ISBN 978-0199679317.

J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century*. Oxford, 2010. Paperback. ISBN 978-0199694990.

R.G. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa's Chronicle*. Liverpool, 2011. Paperback. 978-1846316982.

H. Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests*. Da Capo, 2007. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-306-81740-3.

Course Evaluation/Important Dates

This course depends on your **consistent attendance, careful preparation, and participation**. You must do all the readings and arrive for class prepared and ready to discuss the course material and the essays provided by your peers. If you do not do this, the course will suffer as a result and you will receive a poor class citizenship grade (see below). ***Nobody likes an uncomfortable silence in the classroom!***

Oral presentation	25%	
Oral response	10%	
Chair of discussion	5%	
		Date to be determined in class for each student
Research Essay	35%	December 21, 2014 (last day of the exam period)
Participation & citizenship	25%	Throughout

Oral presentations

Each week we will be having class discussions based on the readings assigned for that class. Each student will, over the term, offer one formal essay and one formal response, and each student will also chair one essay/response session. See sheet on CU Learn in September for specifics. **NB: we will do our best to match the number of readings to the number of students in the course. The list of readings below, and the final schedule of essays, will be determined in September once final course enrollment is settled.**

Research Essay

Later in the term each student will complete a research essay of 12-17 pp. More details about the essay will be provided in class in due course.

Tentative Reading and Essay Schedule

- 10 September **Course introduction & general discussion**
- 17 September **One: Romans, Persians, and Arabs in the pre-Islamic period (1)**
- *everyone read *Between Empires* Ch. 1, 'Introduction'*
1. *Between Empires* Ch. 2, 'Arab Christianisation'
 2. *Arabs and Empires* Ch. 3, 'Himyar and Aksum in Late Antiquity', excerpt(provided) – focus on religious issues
 3. *Between Empires* Ch. 3, 'Empires, clients, and politics'
- 24 September **Two: Romans, Persians, and Arabs in the pre-Islamic period (2)**
4. *Between Empires* Ch. 4, 'Arabic, culture, and ethnicity'
 5. *Between Empires* Ch. 5, 'Jafnids, Nasrids, and Late Antiquity'
 6. *Between Empires* Ch. 6, 'Jafnids and History in East and West'
- 1 October **Three: The Seventh Century: background to sources and basic narrative (1)**
- *everyone read *Witnesses*, 'Introduction'*
7. *Great Arab Conquests* Preface & Foreword; *Witnesses* Ch. 13, 'Historians of the Middle East in the Seventh Century'
 8. *Witnesses* Ch. 14, 'The Middle East in the Seventh Century' (1) Rome and Persia at War, and *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 1, 'The Foundations of Conquest'
 9. *Witnesses* Ch. 15, 'The Middle East in the Seventh Century' (2) – the Arab Conquests, down to 661
- 8 October **Four: The Seventh Century: background to sources and basic narrative (2), introduction to detailed examination of select sources**
- *Everyone read *Witnesses* Chs. 1 and 5*
10. *Witnesses*, Ch. 16, 'The Middle East in the Seventh Century' (3) – the Arab conquests down to 718
 11. *Witnesses*, Ch. 2, 'Two Universal Chronicles'
 12. *Witnesses*, Chs. 3 and 4, 'Seventh-Century Eastern Sources I', and 'Seventh-Century Eastern Sources II'
- 15 October **Five: The Seventh Century: detailed examination of select sources (2)**
- *Everyone read *Witnesses* Ch. 8*

- 13. *Witnesses*, Ch. 7, ‘Later historians – the west Syrian tradition’ (on Theophilus of Edessa’ and Hoyland, *Theophilus*, introduction
- 14. *Witnesses*, Ch. 9, ‘Later historians – Theophanes’
- 15. *Witnesses*, Ch. 10, ‘Later Historians’

22 October

Six: The Seventh Century: detailed examination of select sources (3)

- 16. *Witnesses*, Ch. 11, ‘Early Islamic Historical Writing’
- 17. *Witnesses*, Ch. 12, ‘The Life of the Prophet’

With:

Arabs and Empires, Ch. 8, Islamic traditions on pre-Islamic Arabia, excerpts (provided)

29 October

Fall break, no classes

5 November

Seven: Theophilus of Edessa, detailed narrative of the conquests (1)

- 18. *Theophilus*, pp. 45–85 – Rome and Persia at War, 590–628 (with recourse to *Witnesses*, Ch. 14)
- 19. *Theophilus*, pp. 86–104, 114–119, 126, and *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 2, ‘The Conquest of Syria and Palestine’
- 20. *Theophilus*, pp. 104–109, 120–22, and *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 3, ‘The Conquest of Iraq’

12 November

Eight: Theophilus of Edessa, detailed narrative of the conquests (2)

- 21. *Theophilus*, pp. 109–114, and *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 4, ‘The Conquest of Egypt’
- 22. *Theophilus*, pp. 136–137, *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 5, ‘The Conquest of Iran’
- 23. *Theophilus*, pp. 130–136, 139, 141–144, 166–8, 209–15, *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 10, ‘The War At Sea’

19 November

Nine: Theophilus of Edessa, detailed narrative of the conquests (3)

- 24. *Theophilus*, pp. 144–152, 175–179, 182–185, 190, 192, 193, 207–208; Arab civil wars (1st and 2nd *fitna*), Roman civil strife

25. *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 6, 'Into the Maghreb'
26. *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 7, 'Crossing the Oxus'

26 November

Ten: detailed narrative of the conquests (4)

27. *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 8, 'The Road to Samarqand'
28. *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 9, 'Furthest East and Furthest West'
29. *Great Arab Conquests*, Ch. 11, 'Voices of the Conquered'

3 December

Eleven: The end of all things

30. *Great Arab Conquests*, Conclusion; *Witnesses*, Conclusion

Conquest-themed *Secret Santa* and conquest-themed haiku competition
(with prizes!)

Participation

You are expected to arrive for class ready and prepared for a lively discussion. I will be carefully noting contributions in discussion and these will form the basis of your participation grade.

Note that your participation mark includes a class citizenship component. Good citizenship includes regular reading, participation, and collegial interaction with your peers. Poor citizenship is manifested by only appearing in class when you have an essay due! Don't be a poor citizen.

Note: standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Other Notes

1. Please see the final page, "Regulations common to all Humanities courses", for information on plagiarism, requests for academic accommodation, etc.
 2. If you cannot complete an assignment due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, it is your responsibility to inform me so that alternative arrangements can be made. Documentary evidence of your reason for missing an assignment must be provided.
 3. It is your responsibility to come to class prepared. This includes doing the readings.
 4. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. There are NO exceptions, unless you have a compelling reason why you cannot submit your paper on time (illness, emergency etc.), in which case it is YOUR responsibility to inform me so alternative arrangements can be made.
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REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 8, 2014**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2015**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 7, 2014** for the Fall term and **March 6, 2015** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of assignments must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library