

Visions of Byzantium
Christian Raffensperger
History 204H – 1W
Fall Semester 2016
MWF 2:15–3:20 P.M.
Hollenbeck 313

History 204 is the sophomore-level methods class required of all History majors at Wittenberg. The primary goal of the class is to teach students the core skills required for a historian – chiefly how to write and understand historiography and how to organize, plan, research and write a research paper. We will do this all arranged around a particular topic, in this case – “Visions of Byzantium.” The class will read numerous primary and secondary sources to explore different visions of Byzantium, you will analyze those sources, compare the secondary sources for historiography papers, and then write a research paper of your own, in which you situate yourself within the historiography. Clearly, this is a writing and reading intensive class that will demand a good portion of your time and attention during the semester. Completing it successfully will be an important step on the road to being an active critical thinker and a practicing historian.

*Prerequisites: Engl 101; Sophomore Standing; History Major
Writing intensive
This course counts toward the PAST minor*

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Assignments and Deadlines

This class is required for all History majors with the goal of working on research and writing skills and learning historiography. The assignments will build to those goals with the culmination being the completion of your own research paper. Specifics about the many assignments in the class are on the additional assignments sheet, but here I will go through some of the basic ideas behind our assignments.

Your knowledge of historiography will be built throughout the class with readings from various authors compared and contrasted. I encourage you to also look at the readings in Rampolla to understand some of the basics of what we will be discussing from the point of view of writing and citing and then Gregory to understand the background of some of the readings on Byzantium. You will have to write three historiography papers, one for each section of the class. Each paper will cover the specific articles we have read and put them in conversation with one another. Please remember that historiography is the study of how history is written, it is not the writing of history itself. Do not tell me the story of Byzantine women – that is history. Tell me, instead, what historian “X” has to say about Byzantine women, and then what historian “Y” has to say about Byzantine women and how the two are similar and different – that is historiography. If you have questions about this concept, please ask.

Discussion Topics: Center-Periphery Relations; Roman and non-Romans in Constantinople and the Empire; Appropriation of Roman/Byzantine Identity

Week 5 (September 21, 23, No class September 22): Byzantine Identity 3

Reading: Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015)

Discussion Topics: Terms – Ideology, politeia, republic; How does Kaldellis differ from the field and what we have read? (historiography)

Assignment: Research Proposals due in class on Friday, September 23; Historiography paper 1 (Byzantine Identity) due Monday, September 26.

Week 6 (September 26, 30, No Class Wednesday September 27): Michael Psellus and his times

Reading: Michael Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers: The Chronographia of Michael Psellus*, transl. E.R.A. Sewter (New York: Penguin, 1966); Gregory, chs. 10 and 11.

Discussion Topics: Basil II as ideal ruler? What is Psellus's relationship to power? Does this affect his writing? Consider ideas of influence and authorship

Assignment: Primary Source Analysis paper on Psellus due Monday, October 3.

(Extra Credit Opportunity – Wednesday, September 28) No class Wednesday – Dr. Raffensperger will be presenting work at OSU. If you would like to attend, you are welcome and I will give you extra credit. It will be an example of how scholars do work, interact, and especially get and give feedback.

Week 7 (October 3, 5, No class October 4): Religion in Byzantium 1

Reading: Cyril Mango, "New Religion, Old Culture," in *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ed. Cyril Mango (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Week 9 (October 19, 21, No Class October 20): Religion in Byzantium 3

Reading: Andrew Louth, "The Emergence of Byzantine Orthodoxy, 600-1095" in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: volume 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600-c.1100*

Discussion Topics: The city as center; Changes in construction and definition of identity; Material culture as a way to understand the past and identity; Clothing, diet and culture; literature and what it can tell us about Byzantium

Week 14 (November 28, 30, December 2, No Class November): Daily Life in Byzantium 3

Reading: Nicolas Oikonomides, "Entrepreneurs," in *The Byzantines*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo, transl. Thomas Dunlap, Teresa Lavender Fagan and Charles Lambert (Chicago: The

