

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF ROMAN FRONTIERS: COLONIALISM AND CULTURAL CONTACT

Course description:

The course provides an introduction to the archaeology of Roman frontiers, borders, boundaries, and their role in cultural encounters. Students will gain familiarity with archaeological sites and artifacts from the Roman Empire's peripheral territories in both the east and west. In doing so, students will examine both the cultures that existed beyond Rome's borders and the nature of cross-cultural interaction across physical, political, economic, social, religious, and military boundaries in the ancient Mediterranean region. Students will become familiar with the major themes of Roman frontier studies as well as a wide variety of comparative archaeological perspectives on borderlands throughout the world.

Course requirements:

1. **Attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend every class session, to complete the assigned reading every week, and to be prepared to participate in discussion on a regular basis. Absences must be excused in advance. Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's grade.
2. **Term paper.** Each student is required to submit a research paper addressing a narrow topic of special interest in Roman frontier studies. Possible topics will be suggested by the instructor, but students are encouraged to develop their own. It is strongly suggested that students discuss their papers with the instructor independently during office hours. A relevant abstract, outline, and bibliography must be submitted in advance of the term paper no later than four weeks before the paper deadline. Papers should be between 10-12 pages in length, not including bibliography, appendices, and figures.
3. **Exams.** The midterm exam will deal with material covered in lectures, discussions, and assigned readings. The final exam will include material drawn from the entire course, but with a greater emphasis on those subjects covered after the midterm exam.

Grading:

To receive full credit, assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will be accepted only under extreme circumstances and must be arranged in advance with the instructor. No make-up exams will be given without official authorization. Letter grades follow the university's published guidelines.

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| 1. Attendance and participation (10%) | 4. Term paper (30%) |
| 2. Midterm exam (25%) | 5. Final exam (25%) |
| 3. Abstract, outline, and bibliography (10%) | |

Required texts:

Whittaker, C.R. 2004. *Rome and its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire*.

N.b.: Additional readings will be assigned in the form of articles and book chapters. These will be made available to students via the course website.

Schedule:

This course is divided into themed weeks. Each week of the class consists of two days of lecture on Monday and Wednesday followed by a day of seminar-style discussion on Friday. The readings for each week follow the theme, and students are expected to have completed all of the readings prior to Friday in order that they might contribute to the discussion.

Week 1. 1. Introduction to Roman Frontiers: the meaning of *limes* and the history of their study.

2. Imperial Frontiers and Foreign Relations. (Read: Isaac 1988: 125-147)

Discussion: Do Roman frontiers represent a “Grand Strategy?”

(Read: Whittaker 2004, chapters 1 & 2)

Week 2. 3. Borders, Fortifications, and Built Frontiers in the Roman West (Read: Hingley & Hartis 2011: 79-95)

4. Borders, Fortifications, and Built Frontiers in the Roman East (Read: Potter 1996: 49-66)

Discussion: How and why do ancient frontier systems differ across time and space?

(Read: Whittaker 2004, chapter 4)

Week 3. 5. Exploration and Geographic Knowledge (Read: Sherk 1974: 534-562)

6. Ancient Cartography and Frontiers (Read Talbert 2008: 9-29)

Discussion: How do ideas of space, territory, and geography shape frontiers?

(Read: Dilke 1987: 234-279)

Week 4. 7. Natural Boundaries: Rivers of the Roman Empire. (Read: Braund 1997: 43-47)

8. Natural Boundaries: the Atlantic Coast (Read: Salway 2004: 43-110)

Discussion: How do natural geographic features shape Roman frontiers?

(Read: Hodgson 1997: 61-66.)

Schedule individual meetings to discuss term paper topics

Week 5. 9. Empire without Limits: the *Limes Arabicus*. (Read: Alston 2007: 1-32)

10. Borderlands and Other “Fuzzy” Boundaries. (Read: Mattingly 1998: 135-153)

Discussion: What are the implications for the lack of established borders on some frontiers?

(Read: Downs 2000: 197-210; Isaac 1993: 105-114)

Week 6. 11. Interaction across Frontiers. (Read: Wells 1992: 175-188)

12. Roman Frontiers as Zones of Cultural Contact (Read: Chappell 1993: 267-275)

Discussion: Is there a “borderlands process” on the Roman colonial frontiers?

(Read: Parker 2006: 77-100; Lightfoot & Martinez 1994: 471-492)

Week 7. 13. Midterm Exam Review.

14. MIDTERM EXAM.

Week 8. 15. Frontier Settlements and Communities. (Gardner 2007: 43-60)

16. Roman Forts and their Inhabitants. (Whittaker 2004, chapter 5; Allison 2006: 1-20)

Discussion: How do frontiers impact the communities that live near them?

(Read: Mattingly 2008: 128-198.)

Abstracts, Outlines, and Bibliographies Due

Week 9. 17. Ethnic Identity on Empire's Margins. (Read: Woolf 1997: 339-350; Mattingly 2004: 5-25)

18. The Invention of Barbarism. (Read: Ferris 2011: 185-201)

Discussion: In what ways do Romans portray frontiers and their inhabitants? Why?

(Read: Scott & Webster 2003, chapter 1 & 3.)

Week 10. 19. Colonial Encounters in World Archaeology. (Sillman 2005: 55-74)

20. Comparative Archaeology of Frontiers. (Read: Dyson 1993: 149-157; Dietler 2005: 32-68)

Discussion: Are frontier systems similar throughout the world?

(Read: Naum 2010: 101-131)

Week 11. 21. Ancient Influence on Modern Borders. (Read: Woolf 1993: 13-20; Mattingly 1996: 49-69)

22. Roman Colonialism's Descendants. (Read: Luper 2006, chapter 1; Whittaker 2004, chapter 9)

Discussion: How are ancient frontiers incorporated into modern discourse?

(Read: Adler 2008: 587-610)

Week 12. 23. The Imperial Panopticon and the Frontier (Read: Austin and Rankov 1995, chapters 7 & 8)

24. Boundaries of the Body and Identity (Whittaker 2009: 189-205; Emberling 1997: 295-344)

Term Papers Due

Week 13. 25. The Changing Borders of Late Antiquity (Swift 2006: 97-111)

26. The End of Frontiers and the Decolonization of Peripheries (Ellis 1996: 220-237)

Discussion: What are some of the practical, methodological, and theoretical problems in frontier studies? How might they be addressed?

Week 14: 27. Final Exam Review.

28. Term Papers Returned.

Assigned readings:

Adler, Eric (2008). "Post-9/11 Views of Rome and the Nature of 'Defensive Imperialism.'" *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 15(4): 587-610.

Allison, Penelope M. (2006). "Mapping for Gender: Interpreting Artefact Distribution inside 1st and 2nd Century AD Forts in Roman Germany." *Archaeological Dialogues* 13(1): 1-20.

Alston, Richard (2007). "Fraying Round the Edges: Models of Change on the Margins." *Aspects of the Roman East I. R.* Alston and S. N. C. Lieu. Turnhout, Brepols: 1-32.

Austin, N.J.E., and N. B. Rankov (1995). *Exploratio: Military and Political Intelligence in the Roman World from the Second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople*. New York: Routledge.

- Braund, David (1996). "River Frontiers in the Environmental Psychology of the Roman World." *The Roman Army in the East*. D. Kennedy. Ann Arbor, Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplemental Series. 18: 43-47.
- Chappell, David A. (1993). "Ethnogenesis and Frontiers." *Journal of World History* 4.2: 267-275.
- Dietler, Michael (2005). "The Archaeology of Colonization and the Colonization of Archaeology: Theoretical Challenges from an Ancient Mediterranean Colonial Encounter". *The Archaeology of Colonial Encounters*. G. J. Stein. Sante Fe, School of American Research Press: 32-68.
- Dilke, O. A. W. (1987). "Itineraries and Geographical Maps in the Early and Late Roman Empires." *The History of Cartography*. J. B. Harley and D. Woodward. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. 1: 234-257.
- Downs, Mary E. (2000). "Re-Figuring Colonial Categories on the Roman Frontier in Southern Spain." *Romanization and the City: Creation, Transformations, Failures*. E. Fentress. Portsmouth, Journal of Roman Archaeology supplementary series number 38: 197-210.
- Dyson, Stephen L. (1993). "The Roman Frontier in Comparative Perspective: The View from North America". *Frontières d'empire. Nature et signification des frontières Romaines*. P. Brun, S. van der Leeuw and C. R. Whittaker. Nemours, Mémoires du musée de préhistoire d'Ile-de-France no 5: 149-157.
- Ellis, L. (1998). "'Terra Deserta': Population, Politics, and the [de]Colonization of Dacia." *World Archaeology* 30.2: 220-237.
- Emberling, Geoff (1997). "Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives." *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5: 295-344.
- Ferris, I. (2011). "The Pity of War. Representations of Gauls and Germans in Roman Art." *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*. E. S. Gruen. Los Angeles, Getty Publications: 185-201.
- Gardner, A. (2007a). "Fluid Frontiers: Cultural Interaction on the Edge of Empire." *Stanford Journal of Archaeology*: 43-60.
- Hingley, Richard and Rich Hartis (2011). "Contextualizing Hadrian's Wall: The Wall as 'Debatable Lands'." *Frontiers in the Roman World. Proceedings of the Ninth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Durham, 16-19 April 2009)*. O. Hekster and T. Kaizer. Leiden, Brill: 79-95.
- Hodgson, N. (1997). "Relationships between Roman River Frontiers and Artificial Frontiers." *Roman Frontier Studies 1995*. W. Groenman-van Waateringe, B. L. van Beek, W. J. H. Willems and S. L. Wynia. Oxford, Oxbow: 61-66.
- Issac, Benjamin (1988). "The Meaning of the Terms *Limes* and *Limitanei*." *Journal of Roman Studies* 78: 125-147.
- Isaac, Benjamin (1993). "An Open Frontier." *Frontières d'empire. Nature et signification des frontières Romaines*. P. Brun, S. van der Leeuw and C. R. Whittaker. Nemours, Mémoires du musée de préhistoire d'Ile-de-France no 5: 105-114.
- Lightfoot, Kent G., and Antoinette Martinez (1995). "Frontiers and Boundaries in Archaeological Perspective." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 471-492.
- Lupher, David A. (2006). *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth Century Spanish America*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Mattingly, D. J. (1998). "Farmers and Frontiers. Exploiting and Defending the Countryside of Roman Trioplitania." *Libyan Studies* 20: 135-153.
- Mattingly, D. J. (2004). "Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting." *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 17.1: 5-25.
- Mattingly, D. J. (2008). *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Naum, Magdalena (2010). "Re-Emerging Frontiers: Postcolonial Theory and Historical Archaeology of the Borderlands." *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 17: 101-131.
- Parker, Bradley J. (2006). "Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes." *American Antiquity* 71.1: 77-100.
- Potter, David (1996). *The Roman Army in the East*. D. L. Kennedy. Ann Arbor, Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplemental Series. 18.

- Salway, Benet (2004). "Sea and River Travel in the Roman Itinerary Literature." *Space in the Roman World. Its Perception and Presentation*. R. J. A. Talbert and K. Brodersen. Münster, Die Deutsche Bibliothek: 43-110.
- Scott, Sarah, and Jane Webster (2003). *Roman Imperialism and Provincial Art*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Sherk, Robert K. (1974). "Roman Geographical Exploration and Military Maps." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II.1: 534-562.
- Sillman, Stephen W. (2005). "Cultural Contact or Colonialism? Challenges in the Archaeology of Native North America." *American Antiquity* 70.1: 55-74.
- Swift, Ellen (2006). "Constructing Roman Identities in Late Antiquity? Material Culture on the Western Frontier." *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*. W. Bowden, A. Gutteridge and C. Machado. Leiden, Brill: 97-111.
- Talbert, Richard J. A. (2008). "Greek and Roman Mapping: Twenty-First Century Perspectives." *Cartography in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Fresh Perspectives, New Methods*. R. Talbert and R. W. Unger. Leiden, Brill: 9-28.
- Wells, Peter S. (1992). "Tradition, Identity, and Change beyond the Roman Frontier." *Resources, Power, and Interregional Interaction*, Edward M. Schortman, Patricia Ann Urban. New York, Plenum Press: 175-188
- Whittaker, C. R. (2004). *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire*. London, Routledge.
- Whittaker, C. R. (2009). "Ethnic Discourses on the Frontiers of Roman Africa". *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity. The Role of Power and Tradition*. T. Derks and N. Roymans. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press: 189-205.
- Woolf, Greg (1993). "European Social Development and Roman Imperialism". *Frontières D'empire. Nature et Signification des Frontières Romaines*. P. Brun, S. van der Leeuw and C. R. Whittaker. Nemours, Mémoires du musée de préhistoire d'Ile-de-France no 5: 13-20.
- Woolf, Greg (1997). "Beyond Romans and Natives." *World Archaeology* 28(3): 339-350.