HIST 525- THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE
(3 credit hours- Online)

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Course description

It has been two hundred years since Edward Gibbon spoke so eloquently of the "decline and fall of the Roman Empire" and the "triumph of barbarism and religion." The course will focus on the Roman Empire and its neighbors in the Mediterranean world from the first through eighth centuries AD. Topics will include the conflict between paganism and Christianity; Constantine’s conversion; the transformation of classical culture; Rome and the barbarians; the military collapse of the western empire; asceticism and monasticism; women in late antiquity; the origins of Islam. All of these topics will be considered within the framework of the end of the Roman empire, though students will have great latitude to develop research projects covering any topic within the period and scope of the course.

Textbooks

The following texts are required, with supplementary readings to be provided by the instructor.

Peter Heather, The Fall of the Roman Empire (Oxford University Press, 2006)- 9780195325416
Bryan Ward-Perkins, The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization (Oxford University Press, 2006)- 9780192807281
Peter Brown, The World of Late Antiquity (W.W Norton and Co, 1989)- 9780393958034
Michael Maas, Readings in Late Antiquity (Routledge, 2010)- 9780415473378

Student Learner Outcomes

1) Students will analyze the “decline” and collapse of the Roman empire.

2) Students will synthesize primary and secondary evidence related to the topics of the course into original insights.

3) Students will create, present, and defend arguments related to the topics.
Assessment/Requirements

Reports [20% of course grade; 20 points total]
Each student will be required to lead a discussion over designated materials designated on the syllabus. The student will generate questions for his/her peers to consider, and will lead the online discussion. I will assign each student a reading at the beginning of the semester.

Final Paper [60% of course grade; 60 points]
This will be a comprehensive research/historiography paper that will allow you to engage with the materials through the prism of an analytical topic of your choice. I will expect the paper to be about twelve pages.

Class Participation [20% of course grade; 20 points]
Discussion is vitally important. Course readings are indicated on the weeks they are due on the syllabus. Blackboard will contain a folder for each week, and subfolders for each topic. READ EVERYTHING ASSIGNED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEK. I am teaching the course on the basis that you will have read everything assigned during the week in question. The sooner you read the materials, the sooner you can participate in the discussions and prepare for the examinations.

Forum- Forum is a method by which you reply to question(s) regarding your analysis/review/comment on a selected reading, usually a primary source. Forum opens on Monday, is available any time of day, and closes the following Sunday. You should check the forum EVERY DAY and participate. We will have a graded discussion each week, and each discussion will be worth two points. I will award points to those students who actively contribute to the forum discussions and come prepared to offer useful comments on a regular basis. Meaningful contributions to the discussion will be rewarded. Pithy, insulting, or otherwise unhelpful additions will be either ignored or punished.

Grading Scheme [100 points total]
My grading system is designed to put you in control of your final grade. For each assignment you complete you will accumulate points. The more points you accumulate, the higher your grade becomes. You can always tell how you are doing by comparing your point total to the scale below. The only way to lose points is by missing class.

A = 90 -100  B = 80 -89  C= 70 -79  D= 60 -69  F= 59 and less

Disability Accommodations:
Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.

Academic Integrity
Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of ‘F’ in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

A&M-Texarkana Email Address
Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is
expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

**Drop Policy**

To drop this course after the census date, a student must complete the Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, located on the University website (http://tamut.edu/Student-Support/Registrar/Dropping.html) or obtained in the Registrar’s Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an “approval” to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar’s office for processing in person, email Registrar@tamut.edu, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar’s Office for processing. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.

**Class Participation**

Students are responsible for beginning their participation on the FIRST CLASS DAY by logging on and completing assignments according to the COURSE CALENDAR. Failure to submit online assignments between the first day of classes and the University census date (according to the University schedule) will result in an ADMINISTRATIVE DROP from the course.

**Student Technical Assistance**

- Solutions to common problems and FAQ’s for your web-enhanced and web courses are found at this link: http://www.tamut.edu/Training/Student%20Training/index.html
- If you cannot find your resolution there, you can send in a support request detailing your specific problem here: http://www.tamut.edu/techde/support.htm
- Blackboard Helpdesk contacts (office hours are: Monday - Friday, 8:00a to 5:00p)
  Julia Allen (main contact) 903-223-3154 julia.allen@tamut.edu
  Nikki Thomson (alternate) 903-223-3083 nikki.thomson@tamut.edu
  Jayson Ferguson (alternate) 903-223-3105 jayson.ferguson@tamut.edu
Essay Grading

Thesis
- Does the essay have a clear thesis? You should be able to summarize the main point of your essay in one or two sentences; the whole purpose of the essay is to convince the reader of that main point. Be clear about what you are trying to prove, and let your reader know.
- Is it a strong thesis? I am looking for interesting, original explanations of why things happen in history; avoid weak topics that focus on insignificant points or ones that are so obvious that they do not require detailed proof.

Arguments
- Is the thesis supported by a sufficient number of logical arguments and sub-arguments? In order to convince the reader that your thesis is correct you will need to present several supporting arguments; some of those arguments may in turn require support of their own.
- Does each argument contribute directly to your thesis? An essay this brief needs to remain sharply focused on your thesis; don’t wander off into other topics.

Evidence
- Is each argument or sub-argument supported by convincing evidence? Remember that primary evidence is generally more convincing than secondary, and that the most convincing way to use primary evidence is to quote it directly. Be sure to explain all primary evidence as well.
- Is all evidence correctly quoted and cited? If you paraphrase from any source, you must give the original author credit. If you copy from any source, you must use quotation marks and give a brief citation, either in parentheses after the quote [(Esler, Western World, p. 9); (Tacitus in Discovering..., p. 55)] or in a footnote. If you quote from a source that is not among the course readings, you must also give a complete citation in a bibliography.

Clarity/Organization
- Is the essay clearly organized and easy to follow? Does support for your thesis proceed logically from point to point, and is each point presented in a separate paragraph? Often the only way to keep a complex structure of arguments and sub-arguments organized is to outline it first.
- Is the meaning of each sentence clear and easy to follow? When in doubt, keep it simple!

Writing Errors
- Is the essay free from embarrassing errors in spelling and punctuation? Mistakes make you look dumb, which makes the job of convincing your reader much more difficult. In particular, watch for mistakes caused by homonyms (easily confused words) and apostrophes. Proofread!
- Are all sentences grammatically correct? In particular, watch for sentence fragments, comma splices, fused sentences, and subject-verb disagreement.
Course Outline/Schedule of Readings and Assignments
The “DECLINE” (c.180-500 A.D.)

WEEK ONE (06/02-06/08)
The Late Republic/Roman Imperial Society
Who were the "Barbarians"?

Reading:
Heather, pp 1-35
Brown, pp 7-47
Ward-Perkins, pp. 1-10
Suetonius, Life of Augustus (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/suetonius-augustus.asp)
Augustus the Libertarian? (http://www.cato.org/pubs/journal/cjv14n2-7.html)

WEEK TWO (06/09-06/15)
Roman Religion and Christianity

Reading:
Brown, pp 49-113
Maas, Sections 1.3.1, 1.10.6, 1.11.4, 3.2.1-3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.4.6, 4-4.2.11
The Martyrdom of Perpetua (http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/perpetua.asp)
Letters of Pliny (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pliny1.asp)

WEEK THREE (06/16-06-22)
Rome and the Barbarians

Reading:
Ward-Perkins, pp 13-62
Heather, pp 36-150
Tacitus, Germania (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/tacitus-germanygord.asp)

WEEK FOUR (06/23-06/29)
The Enemy Within: Orthodoxy, Heresy, and Schism
Christians in and Against the World: Bishops, Monks, and Late Antique Society

Reading:
Maas, 4.4.1-4.4.5, 4.4.10-4.4.11, 4.8.1-4.8.9, Section 5
Online, Ambrose, Letter 40 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/340940.htm)
Augustine, Letter 29 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102029.htm)
Life of St. Anthony (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vita-antony.asp)

The “FALL” (c.500-800 A.D.)

WEEK FIVE (06/30-07/06)
The Sack of Rome and the End of the Western Empire
The 5th Century Thesis

Reading:
Brown, pp 115-135
Heather, pp 151-265
Bowersock, "The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome" (Blackboard)
Gibbon, General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West (Blackboard)

WEEK SIX (07/07-07/13)
Politics and Government in the 5th Century East
The Emperor and the Law
The Age of Justinian and Theodora
The “Other” Empire: Sasanian Persia

Reading:
Brown, pp 137-187
Procopius, The Secret History: (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/procop-anec.asp)
Priscus, Attila the Hun (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/priscus1.asp)
Augustine, The City of God (Blackboard)

WEEK SEVEN (07/14-07/20)
The End of the Western Empire & Early Medieval Society

Reading:
Ward-Perkins, pp 63-83
Rostovtzeff, The Decay of Ancient Civilization (Blackboard)
Salic Law (Blackboard)

WEEK EIGHT (07/21-07/27)
“End” of a Civilization?

Reading:
Ward-Perkins, pp 87-183

WEEK NINE (07/28-08/03)
A 7th Century “Fall”?- The Pirenne Thesis
Muhammad and Islam

Reading:
Brown, pp 189-208
Henri Pirenne, Mohammed and Charle Mage (Blackboard)

WEEK TEN (08/04-08/07)
Islamic, Byzantine, and Western Civilization to c. 800
Conclusion: Charlemagne and Medieval Europe

Reading:
Heather, 266-618

***FINAL PAPER***

Suggested Question- In which century did the crucial transition from Roman civilization to Medieval civilization take place? This question allows you to craft an argument based on not only the other historians that we have studied this semester, but also to analyze the evidence yourselves. Remember that much of your argument will center on how you define “civilization”, so be sure to define your terms well and convincingly.