

FW22 AP/HIST 4132 6.0A Caesar's Palace: A Social History of the Roman Imperial Court

Additional Contact Details: benkelly@yorku.ca

Expanded Course Description (expanded from course calendar description):

Roman emperors have traditionally been studied from the point of view of the political decisions that they made. Until recently, less emphasis has been given to the court of which they formed the centre. In this course, we examine the new contributions that the historical field of 'court studies' are making to our understanding of the Roman emperor and his court. Topics to be covered include: the roles of wives, concubines, freedmen, slaves, and performers at court; aristocrats at court; court rituals; the physical contexts of court life; and imperial journeys. Sources to be used include: Suetonius; Tacitus; and the *Historia Augusta*. A major goal of the course is to give students the opportunity to undertake an original research project on the court of a particular Roman emperor. Students are also introduced to the sociological and comparative methodologies used to study royal courts in a range of historical eras from the Ancient Near East to the Early Modern period, and we examine how these methodologies can be applied to the study of the Roman imperial court.

Required Course Text/Readings:

1. Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*. Trans. C. Edwards. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Tacitus, *The Annals*. Trans. J. Yardley. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. *The Lives of the Later Caesars*. Trans. A. Birley. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
4. B. Kelly and A. G. Hug (eds.) 2022. *The Roman Emperor and his Court, ca. 30 BC – ca. AD 300*: Vol. 1: *Historical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
5. B. Kelly and A. G. Hug (eds.) 2022. *The Roman Emperor and his Court, ca. 30 BC – ca. AD 300*: Vol. 2: *A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Weighting of Course: *Tentative*

Seminar Participation	- 15 %
Review Article	- 10 %
Artefact Analysis	- 15 %
Seminar Presentation	- 10 %
Essay Proposal	- 5 %
Research Essay	- 35 %
Job Application Assignment	- 10 %

Organization of the Course:

In the Fall Semester, students will be required to watch a lecture before each week's class. The lecture will relate to the emperor and court being studied that week. Class time will be devoted to analyzing particular artworks and archaeological sites relevant to the week's emperor and court. This will involve extensive groupwork.

The Winter Semester will be devoted to student presentations, which will be opportunities for students to discuss and develop their research essays. These essays will form the centrepiece of the course.

Course Learning Objectives:

As well as introducing students to a topic not covered in other Roman history courses – namely the court surrounding Roman emperors – the seminar aims to build students' skills in developing and writing essays based on original research. The Fall semester also aims to build students' skills in analyzing material culture, especially works of 'state art': coins, friezes, wall paintings, etc.

Additional Information/Notes:

Attendance of in-person classes on campus is required, and students will struggle to pass the course unless they attend all or almost all in-person classes.