

LIT342 "Making Love and War in the Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods"

Summer II, 2023

Course Instructor: Adam Goldwyn

CYA Email(s): adam.goldwyn@cyathens.org

Class Times (days, hours): M-F, 10:00-12:00 (and other times for excursions)

(Office) Hours Available: M-F 9-10:00 or by appointment

Course Description

This course will take a comparative approach to cross-cultural encounters in the Mediterranean from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries, combining readings in a variety of genres (historiography, romance, novel, saint's lives, crusader narratives, and others) alongside readings drawn from recent scholarship and complemented by site visits to help students understand the many ways in which rising and falling empires interacted with one another through war, travel, trade, and diplomacy. As narratives of cross-cultural encounters across space and social strata, readings in these genres allow for an exploration of a variety of central issues in considering the late Byzantine period, including political issues such as imperial conquest, social issues such as the rights of women, and more intimate issues, such as cross-cultural romance.

Course Approach

Key course topics will be explored primarily through analysis of primary source readings (in translation) from Greek and other eastern Mediterranean sources as well as site visits to locations that reflect the influence of cross-cultural interaction. Primary source readings and site visits will also be informed by selected articles from contemporary scholarship. Discussion of texts will be a central element of the learning experience, as will active participation in seminar discussion, group work, and field reports. Students will also develop the critical and analytical skills necessary for understanding these sources in both written and oral formats, with site reports, short writing assignments, and in-class presentations.

Learning Objectives

- Students will reflect on the different ways cultures engaged with one another in the medieval eastern Mediterranean, including through warfare, trade, romantic ties, and travel.
- Students will analyze the influence of different cultures and architectural styles in the built environment of Greece and the Aegean coast.
- Students will recognize how various social and state forms of power shaped how individuals and groups could engage with one another.
- Students will interpret primary sources texts to see how different forms of literature constructed the identities of self/other.
- Students will discuss the ways in which the cross-cultural encounters in the Middle Ages continue to shape modern Greece and the eastern Mediterranean as a whole.
- Students will explain in written and oral assignments the different forms of cross-cultural encounters that shaped the medieval eastern Mediterranean.
- Students will apply critical theories such as postcolonialism to understand the complexity and variety of ways in which cultures interacted with one another.

Course Requirements

Participation and attendance: 10%.
Reflection Paper and Photography Project: 20%
4 Quizzes (5% each): 20%
Take-home midterm exam: 25%
Final paper: 25%

Class Field Work and CYA Field Study

The successive centuries of occupation, colonization, and cross-cultural influence that defined the Middle Ages in the Aegean have left their mark on the landscapes of modern Greece. Through site visits, students will be able to recognize how successive waves of cultures used different architectural styles, reappropriated the structures of previous cultures, and shaped the natural and built environments. Intercultural encounters are thus still evident in the sites and monuments of the Greek landscape. Several of the medieval literary texts we will read, moreover, take place in the cities we will visit, where several of the important sites and monuments discussed still stand. By visiting these places, students will get a better sense of the lived experience of the historical figures and the times in which they live as represented in the texts.

Class Field Work

Site visits:

- (1) the Acropolis: to show how the Parthenon, the iconic monument of ancient Greece, was transformed into, first, a church by the Romans and Byzantines, then a mosque by the Ottomans, then a military headquarters by the Venetians. Each successive wave of colonization and occupation in Athens altered the landscape, and these transformations are still evident.
- (2) Platamon Castle: Medieval Crusader fortresses formed an essential element of the landscape of Greece from the twelfth century onward. As architecture, castles such as Platamon represent the layering of different cultural artifacts that defines intercultural exchange; as importantly, however, castles such as Platamon also became central elements of Byzantine fiction, and monumental fortifications also feature prominently in, for instance, late romances such as *Velthandros and Chrysandza*.
- (3) Thessaloniki: Both John Kaminates' *Sack of Thessaloniki* (906) and Eustathios of Thessaloniki's *Sack of Thessaloniki* (1185) will be central texts for the course, and both take place in the city, where several of the streets, churches, and other markers of the urban environment are still present. Students will walk the routes which these men describe in their captivity and conquest. Thessaloniki is also home to the National Museum of Byzantine Culture, which will give students insight into daily life in the Middle Ages.
- (4) Peloponnese: We will visit the Venetian fortress of the Palamidi in Nafplion, the hilltop fortress at Acrocorinth, the Byzantine cities of Monemvasia and Mystra, and other monuments in southern Greece.

Evaluation and Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

- 1) Participation and attendance: 10%.
- 2) Two-page reflection paper and photography project, 20%: Reflection paper on one or more photographs taken by the student during a site visit of their choice, discussing how the site visit engages with the themes of the course as presented in primary source readings.
- 3) 4 quizzes, 5% each: In-class reading quizzes
- 4) Midterm exam, 25%: In-class examination on subject matter covered in the first two weeks of the course.
- 5) Final Paper, 25%: a 3-page research paper on a subject of the students' choice relating to the work of the course, to be discussed in advance with the instructor.

Evaluation Criteria - Course Assignments

Assignment 1: Participation

Evaluation will be based on such factors as quality and quantity of contributions, relevance of contributions to discussions, active listening and participation with peers and in group work

Assignment 2: Two-page reflection and photography project

Evaluation will be based on how the photograph(s) demonstrate a site of intercultural encounter, and how effectively students are able to relate the subject of their photograph to other primary sources as an example of intercultural exchange.

Assignment 3: in-classes quizzes

Each quiz will consist of five questions (1% each) on a basic element of the assigned reading for that day.

Assignment 4: midterm exam

A series of short answer questions asking students to present basic information from texts and site visits and incorporate that information into the larger thematic, historical, and literary contexts of the course.

Assignment 5: Final paper

The final paper will be an argument/thesis-driven research paper on a subject of the student's choice, approved in advance by the instructor. Evaluation will be based on the following assessment categories: 1. Does the essay answer the question? 2. Is the argument clearly and logically structured? 3. Does the argument incorporate textual references (quotations, paraphrases, references) clearly, carefully and meaningfully? 4. Is the English clear and correct?

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office. After three absences, students will meet with the instructor to form an individualized attendance plan for the remainder of the course.

Academic Accommodations

If you are a registered (with your home institution) student with a disability and you are entitled to learning accommodation, please inform the Office of Academic Affairs and make sure that your school forwards the necessary documentation.

ePolicy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided (Check the Student Handbook, pg. 7).

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Class Schedule

Tues, June 27: **Byzantine Athens and the Legacy of Intercultural Exchange**

A site visit to the Acropolis and walking tour of Athens will emphasize the legacy of the Byzantines, the Ottomans, and other successive colonial states still visible in the modern city. Intercultural exchange was not a passing phenomenon, but one that left an enduring legacy in Athens as an urban space and on Byzantine and post-Byzantine Greek culture.

Kaldellis, Anthony. *The Christian Parthenon: Classicism and Pilgrimage in Athens*, 145-165

Optional Reading: Bouras, Charalambos, *Byzantine Athens: 10th to 12th Centuries*, 20-53.

Wed, June 28: **Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean by Land and Sea**

The introductory seminar will examine both the political context of military conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean by both land and sea as well as examining how historiographical texts reflect broad-scale military action and elite decision-making while simultaneously erasing the myriad experiences of these conflicts by individuals across the region.

Required Reading:

Niketas Choniates. *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*. Wayne State University Press: 1984, 8-15, 264-65.

Skylitzes, John. *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*. Trans. John Wortley. Cambridge University Press: 2010, 146-150.

Thurs, June 29: **Byzantines Being Conquered I: John Kaminates (904)**

The harbor of Thessaloniki has long been a place of grief and despair for conquered families, perhaps described in no more heartrending detail than in John Kaminates' first-person account of being conquered and sold into slavery by the Abassids in 904. Reading and discussing his account in the harbor itself will give historical detail to the fictional account described in *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*.

Friday, June 30: Platomon Castle

Saturday July 1: **Byzantines Being Conquered II: Eustathios of Thessaloniki**

In 1185, the Crusaders conquered Thessaloniki, an event recorded by the archbishop of the city, Eustathios. Eustathios' account begins with the conquest in the upper city and ends with his taking refuge in the Church of St. Demetrios. The class will follow his account through the city, beginning in the upper city and ending at the church, giving context to the atrocities and personal suffering he recounts.

Eustathios of Thessaloniki. *The Capture of Thessaloniki*. Trans. John Melville-Jones. Byzantine Australasia: 2006, 105-141.

Sunday, July 2: Walking Tour of Thessaloniki

Monday, July 3: Visit to Byzantine Museum

Tues July 4: **Intercultural Exchange and Medieval Greek Literature under the Komnenoi I: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles***

This seminar will be our close reading of the main work of the semester, the twelfth-century novel *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, which features two lovers whose adventures and courtship span not just much of

the Mediterranean, but also many social strata, from royalty to pirates, to laborers, including both men and women.

Prodromos, Theodore. "Rhodanthe and Dosikles" in Jeffreys, E. *Four Byzantine Romances*, 19-50.

Wed, July 5 **Intercultural Exchange and Medieval Greek Literature under the Komnenoi II: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles***

This session will continue on the major themes of the previous day, with continued reading of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, with particular attention on the depiction of their lives as slaves to pagan pirates.

Rhodanthe and Dosikles, 50-81

Thurs, July 6 **Intercultural Exchange and Medieval Greek Literature under the Komnenoi III: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles***

This session concludes the reading of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, showing the fates of the various social classes, professions, and religions presented in the novel, with particular attention to the reintegration of the protagonists back into society after their manumission.

Rhodanthe and Dosikles 126-156

Fri July 7 **Medieval Love Affairs: Greece in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron***

This session will examine interfaith and inter-ethnic love affairs as depicted in Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (1353). The story of the Carthaginian princess Alatiel's adventures after being shipwrecked in Greece and other stories from the *Decameron* foreground women's experiences, interfaith romance, and the limits of women's sexual agency in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Required Reading:

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Oxford's World's Classics: 2008, 112-132; 146-58.

Mon, July 10: Acrocorinth and Palamidi

Monumental fortifications became increasingly important in the medieval Mediterranean, and the Crusader fortress of Acrocorinth and the Venetian fortress in the Palamidi at Nafplio represent two sites of conquest in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine world.

Required reading: Choniates, 43-45.

Tues July 11: The Frankish Peloponnese

Wed July 12: **After Byzantium: The Chronicle of George Sphrantzes I**

This session will examine the *Chronicle* of George Sphrantzes, a high-ranking official who lived in the Peloponnese after the Fall of Constantinople. His *Chronicle* combines political and military descriptions with events in his own life, events which become increasingly tragic (a son executed by the sultan, a daughter sold into his harem) in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Constantinople.

Required Reading:

Sphrantzes, George. Trans. Mario Philippides. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*. University of Massachusetts Press: 1980, 34-45; 64-95.

Fri, July 14: **The Anakalema and Laments for the Fall of Constantinople (1453)**

This session will analyze the *Anakalema*, an anonymous poem lamenting the fall of Constantinople. Read in conjunction with the accounts of John Kaminiates and Eustathios, this text will show the ways in which Byzantine expressions of grief were articulated through various genres and persisted even after the end of the medieval Greek empire.

Required Reading:

Kefala, Eleni. *The Conquered: Byzantium and America on the Cusp of Modernity*. Dumbarton Oaks: 2020, 30-37.

Suggested Reading:

Kefala, *The Conquered*, 27-70.

Monday, July 17: The Palaiologan Romance I: *Velthandros and Chrysandza*.

This session will offer a primarily literary analysis of one of the romances written in the late Byzantine period. Unlike the earlier novels (such as *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*), which take place in a more recognizably "real" world, the novels take place in fantastic settings, replete with dragons, magic potions, and flying horses. The romances thus show the influence of the western chivalric tradition.

Required Reading:

Betts, Gavin. *Three Medieval Greek Romances*. Trans. Betts, Gavin. Garland Publishing: 1995, 5-32.

Tues July 18: The Palaiologan Romance II: *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï*.

This session will examine the significance of another Palaiologan romance, *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï*, as a document that reflects the cultural influences of late Byzantium; less a literary analysis than a cultural one, this session will use *K&C* to understand the circulation of ideas in the Mediterranean as forming one part of the broader exchange of people, ideas, and technologies that has been the major theme of the course.

Required Reading:

Betts, Gavin. *Three Medieval Greek Romances*. Trans. Betts, Gavin. Garland Publishing: 1995, 37-63.

Wed July 19: The Palaiologan Romance III: *Kallimachos and Chrysorroï*.

This session will conclude the discussion of *K&C* as a literary text in Greek but deeply connected to the cosmopolitan literary milieu, especially with the romance as genre influenced by French literature.

Thurs July 20 and Friday July 21: Student Research/Photography Project Reports

Students will have the opportunity to present their photography project and the research/essay that accompanied it.

Course Bibliography

Primary Sources

Betts, Gavin. *Three Medieval Greek Romances*. Trans. Betts, Gavin. Garland Publishing: 1995.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Oxford's World's Classics: 2008.

Eustathios of Thessaloniki. *The Capture of Thessaloniki*. Trans. John Melville-Jones. Byzantine Australasia: 2006.

Kaminiates, John. *The Capture of Thessaloniki*. Trans. D. Frendo. Byzantine Australasia: 2000.

Kefala, Eleni. *The Conquered: Byzantium and America on the Cusp of Modernity*. Dumbarton Oaks: 2020.

Niketas Choniates. *O City of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniates*. Wayne State University Press: 1984.

Prodromos, Theodore. "Rhodanthe and Dosikles" in Jeffreys, E. *Four Byzantine Romances*. Liverpool University Press: 2010.

Skylitzes, John. *A Synopsis of Byzantine History*. Trans. John Wortley. Cambridge University Press: 2010, 146-150.

Sphrantzes, George. Trans. Mario Philippides. *The Fall of the Byzantine Empire*. University of Massachusetts Press: 1980, 34-45.

Secondary Sources

Bouras, Charalambos. *Byzantine Athens: 10th to 12th Centuries*, 20-53.

Goldwyn, Adam J. *Witness Literature in Byzantium: Narrative Slaves, Prisoners, and Refugees*. Palgrave 2021.

Kaldellis, Anthony. *The Christian Parthenon: Classicism and Pilgrimage in Athens*, 145-165