

HIST | LIT 342 "Making Love and War in the Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Middle and Late Byzantine Periods"

Summer II: 17 June – 13 July 2024

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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, 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: 30%
Photography Project Presentation: 10%
4 Quizzes (5% each): 20%
4 Page Essay: 30%

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 Kaminiates' 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) Three-page reflection paper and photography project, 30%: 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) Oral presentation of reflection paper and photography project to the class: 10%
- 4) 4 quizzes, 5% each: In-class reading quizzes

5) Final Paper, 30%: a 4-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: Three-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: Oral presentation

Students will be evaluated on their ability to effectively convey the ideas conveyed in the photography project through a 10 minute in-class presentation.

Assignment 4: in-classes quizzes

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

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

Tuesday, June 18: Byzantine Athens and the Legacy of Intercultural Exchange

A 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.

Wednesday, June 19:

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.

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

Thursday, June 20: Guest Lecture by Stephanos Dimitriadis, PhD candidate in Byzantine History at the University of Münster (Germany): From the Ancient Roman Empire to Medieval Rhoania

An introduction to the Christian (Eastern) Roman Empire from the Antiquity to the Middle Ages (4th-11th c.). Focus will lie on the changing religious, socioeconomic, cultural and political structures in the period of transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages as well as on the medieval Roman state's interaction with the rising powers of Islam, the Slavic world and particularly the Latin West.

Friday, June 21: Guest Lecture by Stephanos Dimitriadis, PhD candidate in Byzantine History at the University of Münster (Germany): The Comnenian Empire, the Age of the Crusades and Latin Rhomania

A discussion of the politics and ideology of the medieval Roman state in the 12th century vis-a-vis the western crusading movement, which formed various Latin principalities in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as in the Aegean in the 13th century, significantly changing the cultural and political landscape of the region.

Saturday, June 22: No Class

Sunday, June 23 No Class

Monday, June 24: Intercultural Exchange and Medieval Greek Literature under the Komnenoi I: Rhodanthe and Dosikles (morning)

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 Jeffrey, E. *Four Byzantine Romances*, 19-50.

The Byzantine Acropolis (evening)

A site visit to the Acropolis will show students how the ancient structures were modified over time to accommodate the various periods of construction on them, in particular the Byzantine and Frankish fortifications and architectural additions and alterations, and how the changes were undone with the invention of the modern Greek state.

Tuesday, June 25: Intercultural Exchange and Medieval Greek Literature under the Komnenoi II: 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 Jeffrey, E. *Four Byzantine Romances*, 19-50, 125-56.

Wednesday, June 26: 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.

Thursday, June 27: The Palaiologan Romance II: Kallimachos and Chrysorroi.

This session will examine the significance of another Palaiologan romance, Kallimachos and Chrysorroi, 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, 126.

Friday, June 28: Acrocorinth and Kastro Larisa Argous (Depart Athens in the morning; arrive Nafplio in the evening)

Students will visit the remains of the Byzantine and Crusader fortresses at Acrocorinth and Kastro Larisa Argous, where several of the events recounted in Niketas Choniates' *History* take place. Additionally, the sites will be examined as reflections of the new monumental architecture that is evident in the medieval romances, where massive hilltop fortresses are a central locus of the action.

Saturday, June 29: Nafplio

Students will visit the city of Nafplio, an important site for several reasons. First, the Palamidi fortress offers another example of the monumental medieval and post-medieval fortifications built by Venetians and Ottomans; second, as the first capital of the modern Greek state, Nafplio represents the transition from medieval/Ottoman/Venetian/modern Greece in a way that other Greek cities cannot.

Sunday, June 30: Mystra

Mystra was the major capital city of the late Byzantine period, and a site visit will demonstrate the interlayering of Byzantine and Crusader architecture: the Villehardouin fortress at the top of the mountain and the best-preserved Byzantine remains stretching out below.

Monday, July 1: Monemvasia (return to Athens in the afternoon)

The island fortress of Monemvasia will give students a chance to understand the maritime conflicts that feature prominently in the literary texts we will read—kidnappings, pirate battles, and other literary elements that reflect the political environment of the middle and late Byzantine periods and the built environments represented in the texts the students will read.

Tuesday, July 2: Byzantine Museum in Athens

Students will take a guided tour of the Byzantine Museum in Athens and have the opportunity to explore intercultural exchange in the visual and material culture of medieval Athens.

Wednesday, July 3: The 1204 Fall of Constantinople: Niketas Choniates.

Niketas Choniates was one of the great writers of the middle Byzantine period, a high-ranking politician who was also an eyewitness to the 1204 Crusader conquest of Constantinople which brought about so many of the changes to the built environments that the students will have seen on their trips. Additionally, Choniates was in Constantinople when it fell, and his account of those events bears comparison with the fictional accounts of falling cities in the novels and romances we will read and in the accounts of other victims of city-sacking such as Eustathios and Kaminiates.

Thursday, July 4: Free Day (Athens)

Friday, July 5: Free Day (Athens)

Saturday, July 6: Platamon Castle (arrive Thessaloniki in the evening)

Platamon Castle, is a Crusader fortress built in the immediate aftermath of Crusader conquest of Constantinople in 1204. A massive fortification, the site demonstrates the changing landscapes of conquest and offers physical and material evidence of the horrors of conquest that will be seen in the ensuing days in Thessaloniki.

Sunday, July 7: Byzantines Being Conquered I: 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 in the harbor.

Monday, July 8: Byzantines Being Conquered II: John Kaminiates (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 Kaminiates' 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.

Tuesday, July 9: Walking tour of Thessaloniki, lower city

The lower city of Thessaloniki contains several of the most important architectural monuments of the Byzantine period, including numerous churches, as well as the city's iconic White Tower. Additionally, Thessaloniki contains some of the best preserved artifacts of the other cultures that inhabited Byzantine and Ottoman-era Greece, including mosques and synagogues. A tour of the lower city will also give students a chance to see the harbor, site of the mass deportations recounted in Kaminiates' eyewitness account of the conquest of Thessaloniki.

Wednesday, July 10: Byzantine Museum, Thessaloniki (leave for Athens around noon)

A visit to the Museum of Byzantine Culture will provide students with insight into the material culture of daily life in the period studied.

Thursday, July 11: Free Day in Athens

Friday, July 12: Photography Project Student Presentations

Students will present their projects and accompanying essays.

Course Bibliography

Primary Sources

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

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.

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