

**HIS 301.01: The Fall of Rome**  
**Fall 2021 3:00 - 4:20 p.m.**  
**Stony Brook Curriculum: ESI**

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Social and Behavioral Sciences N-301  
Office hours: TuTh 1:00 - 1:30; W 11 - 1  
[Office hours are on Zoom]

**Catalogue Description**

This course provides in-depth training course in the craft of history, with a systematic introduction to methods, analysis, synthesis, and writing. As the gateway course for the History major senior seminar, HIS 301 teaches students how to locate, organize, and analyze primary and secondary sources, distill the information in intelligible and meaningful writing, and convey one's findings in persuasive and articulate oral presentations. These skills are taught through a close analysis of a particular field or theme in history.

**Class Description**

What brought about the end of a nearly 500-year-old empire, and how did the end of centralized imperial rule affect inhabitants across the Roman world? Can we even talk about a "fall" of Rome? In this class we are going to read modern articles and book chapters that seek to explain the causes, nature, and effects of end of Rome, and also analyze primary sources dating from the last decades of the Roman Empire (including but not limited to chronicles, letters, poems, laws, religious texts, archaeological excavations, and works of art) to try to arrive at our own understanding of how society and culture changed from the late fourth through the early sixth centuries.

**Requirements:**

- 1) Requirements for the course include 1) class participation (this consists of completing the readings prior to the relevant lecture, contributing to discussions and group work either in person or virtually, via email, Blackboard discussions, Zoom, or other agreed upon virtual platforms) (about 25%)
- 2) Five short writing assignments (15% each)

Please note that attendance/participation either in person or virtually (as described above) is *mandatory*; failure to attend will seriously affect your grade. All assignments **MUST** be handed in for a passing grade.

## Assignments and Due Dates:

### 1) From Source to Argument (Due Sep. 14)

Select one primary source used by Peter Brown, and explain how he interpreted it, what ideas, facts, or observations he extracted from it, and how he moved from the source to an argument. (2 pages)

### 2) Primary Source Analysis (Due Oct. 5)

Provide a close reading of an image, object, text, or document relating to some aspect of late Roman history. You may locate a source by following secondary source footnotes, consulting an anthology of Roman sources, searching the library catalogue, or consulting with me. *You must get your primary source approved by me before you write the paper.* You should address the following questions: What is the nature/genre of the source? Why was it created? What information can be gleaned from it? What is its historical context? What is the perspective of the author and how does this affect their beliefs and rhetoric? Who is the intended audience for the source? How do secondary sources help you to contextualize this primary source? How does this primary source support or challenge the arguments of historians/scholars you have already read? (3 pages)

### 3) Research Paper Proposal (Due Oct. 26)

Propose a topic for a research paper. Explain why you chose this topic, what you find intriguing about it, list the questions you intend to ask and answer, and suggest possible primary sources you would analyze. (2-3 pages)

### 4) Historiographical Overview (Due Nov. 30)

Identify four recent (since ca. 1990) important secondary works that address your proposed topic. Identify their historiographical approaches, and if possible explain why the authors adopt their particular approaches. (3-4 pages)

### 5) Book review (Due Dec. 10)

A book review should discuss the book's sources, methods, arguments, scope, evidence, and style, and assess to what extent the author achieved their goal, and why. (More elaborate handout to come.) (500 words)

## Course Learning Objectives:

- 1.) Source analysis: Learn to interpret and critique primary and secondary sources;
- 2.) Writing and argumentation: Become proficient in the standards of writing in History;
- 3.) Historical research methods: Establish competency in library- and/or archival-based research.

## ESI Learning Outcomes:

- 1.) Locate and organize information from a variety of appropriate sources.
- 2.) Analyze the accuracy of information and the credibility of sources.

- 3.) Determine the relevance of information.
- 4.) Use information ethically and responsibly.

### **Books to Purchase:**

1. Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization* (Oxford University Press; New Ed ed., 2006) ISBN: 0192807281; 978-0192807281
2. Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton University Press; Repr. ed. 2019) ISBN: 0691192065; 978-0691192062
3. William Strunk, *Elements of Style* (Auroch Press, 2020). ISBN: 1989862004; 978-1989862001

### **For Further Writing Resources:**

<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/history/undergrad/style.html>

### **Course Communication**

I will be communicating to you via the Blackboard website. Please make sure that your correct e-mail address is registered with Blackboard, and check both the website and your e-mail regularly.

### **Student Accessibility Support Center Statement:**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Student Accessibility Support Center, 128 ECC Building, (631) 632-6748, or at [sasc@stonybrook.edu](mailto:sasc@stonybrook.edu). They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and the Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information go to the following website: <https://ehs.stonybrook.edu/programs/fire-safety/emergency-evacuation/evacuation-guide-people-physical-disabilities> and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

### **Academic Integrity Statement:**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at [http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic\\_integrity/index.html](http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html)

### **Critical Incident Management:**

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. **Until/unless the latest COVID guidance is explicitly amended by SBU, during Fall 2021 "disruptive behavior" will include refusal to wear a mask during classes.** [I will add that in a class of 90, it highly likely that some students will be immuno-compromised, so that their health will depend on all of us respecting the masking requirement. Thank you in advance for helping to keep our community safe!]

For the latest COVID guidance, please refer to: <https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/strongertogether/latest.php>

### **Title IX:**

A federal law known as Title IX protects all Stony Brook students, faculty and staff by prohibiting sexual or gender-based discrimination and harassment in all forms. If you wish to file a complaint of sexual misconduct, contact Stony Brook's Senior Director, Title IX and ADA Coordinator: Marjolie Leonard: 631-632-6380 (Administration Building Room 201); [marjolie.leonard@stonybrook.edu](mailto:marjolie.leonard@stonybrook.edu). The link to file a complaint is: [https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/oide-titleix/resources/titleix\\_initial\\_report.php](https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/oide-titleix/resources/titleix_initial_report.php)

Aug. 24 (Tu)

## **Introduction: Making History, Unmaking an Empire**

Aug. 26 (Th)

## **What Was the Roman Empire?**

*Readings:*

(1) Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, pp. 11- 22.

[Blackboard]

(2) Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire*, pp. 6-12.

*Group Project:* Make a list of the primary characteristics of the Roman Empire. Which ones, if lost, would constitute the end of the empire?

Aug. 31 (Tu)

## **Starting with a question: Did Rome Ever Fall?**

*Readings:*

(1) Glen W. Bowersock, " The Vanishing Paradigm of the Fall of Rome," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 49: 8 (1996): 29-43.

(2) Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome: And the End of Civilization*, pp. 1-10.

[Blackboard]

(3) Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, "A global view on Long Late Antiquity, 300-800 AD." [Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Make a list of questions/topics that could, if researched, help answer the question: Did Rome Ever Fall.

Sep. 2 (Th)

## **Historians Who Say YES: Proposed Causes of the Fall**

*Readings:*

(1) André Piganiol, "The Causes of the Fall of the Roman Empire," *The Journal of General Education*, 5:1 (1950): 62-69.

(2) Harper, *The Fate of Rome*, pp. 1-5.

[Blackboard]

*Group Project:* List all the causes of the Fall of Rome identified by the historians discussed in the Piganiol article and the Harper pages, AND note what primary sources were cited in support of each explanation.

Sep. 7 (Tu)

## **A Historian Who Says NO: Peter Brown's Creative New Era Assignment 1 assigned (due Sep. 14)**

*Readings:*

(1) Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, pp. 115-137.

[Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Make a list of objects, images, and texts that Brown uses as his primary sources. Use your group discussion to start thinking about Assignment 1.

Sep. 9 (Th)

**Back to the YES: Collapse of Material Comfort**

*Readings:*

(1) Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome*, pp. 87-121.

*Group Project:* Make a list of objects, images, and texts that Ward-Perkins uses as his primary sources. Use your group discussion to continue thinking about Assignment 1.

Sep. 14 (Tu)

**Primary Source Practice I: Life in Late Roman Gaul**

***Assignment 1 due.***

*Readings:*

(1) *Letters of Sidonius Apollonarius*, selections

[Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Each group takes two letters, and notes down in list form what can be learned from the letters about culture, society, politics, economics, climate, environment, technology, religion, learning, warfare in Roman Gaul in the last decades of Roman rule.

Sep. 16 (Th)

**NO Class: Yom Kippur**

Sep. 21 (Tu)

**Secondary Source Practice I: The Other Side of the Empire**

***Assignment 2 assigned (due Oct. 5)***

*Readings:*

(1) Louis H. Feldman, "Rabbinic Insights on the Decline and Forthcoming Fall of the Roman Empire," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, 31: 3 (2000): 275-297.

[Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Outline Feldman's article, noting the different parts, and subdivisions/topics within different parts. Pay attention to the kinds of sources Feldman uses, and how he uses them.

Sep. 23 (Th)

**Secondary Source Practice II: Winter is Coming**

*Readings:*

(1) Robin Fleming, "Recycling in Britain After the Fall of Rome's Metal Economy," *Past & Present* 217 (2012): 3-45.

[Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Outline Fleming's article, noting the different parts, and the subdivisions/topics within different parts. Pay attention to the kinds of sources Fleming uses, and how she uses them.

Sep. 28 (Tu)

**Primary Source Practice II: Sutton Hoo**

*Readings:*

(1) British Museum Sutton Hoo Galleries

"The Anglo-Saxon Ship Burial at Sutton Hoo"

(2) The Staffordshire Hoard

<http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk>

(3) Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome*, "Appendix: From Pothsherds to People," pp. 184-187.

*Group Project:* Select two objects from the Sutton Hoo and/or Staffordshire finds, and list what they can and cannot tell us about post-Roman Britain.

Sep. 30 (Th)

**Research Exercise: Finding Primary Sources**

*New groups are formed according to topics.*

*Readings:*

(1) "How to Find Primary Sources in Roman History"

[Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Choose a paper topic, and identify two primary sources that can be used to illuminate your question/topic.

Oct. 5 (Tu)

**What Is Civilization?**

**Assignment 2 due**

*Readings:*

(1) Ward-Perkins, "The Death of a Civilization?," pp. 138-168.

*Group Project:* List the types of sources Ward-Perkins uses, and then list the strengths and weaknesses of his argument.

Finally, make a list of questions you would like answered, in order to decide whether you agree or disagree with Ward-Perkins.

Oct. 7 (Th)

**Secondary Source Practice III: Learning From Lists**

**Assignment 3 assigned (due October 26)**

*Readings:*

(1) Anna Leone, "Bishops and Territory: The Case of Late Roman and Byzantine North Africa." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 65/66 (2011): 5-27. [Blackboard].

*Group Project:* Outline Leone's article, noting the different parts, and the subdivisions/topics within different parts. Pay attention to the kinds of sources Leone uses, and how she uses them. What does she add to debates about the fall of Rome?

Oct. 12 (Tu)

**Fall Break: No Class**

Oct. 14 (Th)

**A Vivid Person, An Idiosyncratic Take**

*Readings:*

(1) Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, "Salvian and His Gaul," pp. 433-453. [Blackboard]

*Group Project:* Summarize Brown's argument, and list passages from Salvian that he used to construct his argument.

- Oct. 19 (Tu) **New Methods: Disease and the Fall of Rome**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Harper, *The Fate of Rome*, pp. 65-118.  
*Group Project:* Summarize Harper's argument, and list pieces of evidence that he used to construct his argument.
- Oct. 21 (Th) **New Methods: Climate and Empire**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Harper, *The Fate of Rome*, pp. 166-175; 188-198.  
*Group Project:* Summarize Harper's argument, and list pieces of evidence that he used to construct his argument.
- Oct. 26 (Tu) **The Elements of Style**  
**Assignment 3 due**  
*Each student shares one paragraph from one of the readings that they particularly enjoyed, and explains why.*
- Oct. 28 (Th) **Presenting Your "Topics"**  
*Each student briefly presents their "topic" to the class.*
- Nov. 2 (Tu) **The Elements of Style**  
**Assignment 4 assigned (due Nov. 30)**  
*Each student shares one paragraph from one of the readings that they particularly disliked, and explains why.*  
*Group Project:* Identify what's wrong with the selected paragraphs, and rewrite them according to guidelines in *The Elements of Style*.
- Nov. 4 (Th) **Historiography: Who Argues What, and Why?**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome*, pp. 169-183.  
*Group Project:* List the various approaches to the fall of Rome discussed by Ward-Perkins, and note why, according to Ward-Perkins, their proponents espouse them.
- Nov. 9 (Tu) **Back to Rome: Another Economic Argument**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Antonio Paolilli, "Development and Crisis in Ancient Rome: The Role of Mediterranean Trade," *Historical Social Research* 33 (2008): 274-288. [Blackboard]  
*Group Project:* Summarize Paolilli's argument, and list pieces of evidence that he used to construct his argument.



- Nov. 11 (Th)                    **Sed Contra: Architectural Evidence**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Daniel Osland. "Abuse or Reuse? Public Space in Late Antique Emerita," *American Journal of Archaeology* 120 (2016): 67-97. [Blackboard]  
*Group Project:* Summarize Osland's argument, and list pieces of evidence that he used to construct his argument.
- Nov. 16 (Tu)                    **Where Are the Women?!**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Kate Cooper, *Fall of the Roman Household*, Preface; "The Battle of this Life," pp. TBA. [Blackboard]  
*Group Project:* Summarize Osland's argument, and list pieces of evidence that he used to construct his argument.  
*Group Project:* Summarize Cooper's argument, and list pieces of evidence that she used to construct her argument.
- Nov. 18 (Th)                    **Book Review Workshop: Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome***  
**Assignment 5 assigned (due Dec. 10)**  
*Readings:*  
(1) Pohl review in *English Historical Review* [Blackboard]  
(2) Wells review in *The Historian* [Blackboard]  
(3) Rutenburg and Eckstein review in *The International History Review* (mostly pp. 116-122). [Blackboard]  
*Group Project::* Compare and contrast the three reviews of Ward-Perkins's book.
- Nov. 23 (Tu)                    **No Class Meeting: Writing Period**  
**Assignment 4 due by 10:00 p.m., via Blackboard**
- Nov. 25 (Th)                    **Thanksgiving: No Class**
- Nov. 30 (Tu)                    **TBA**
- Dec. 2 (Th)                    **Last Class! Movie and Popcorn!**

***Reminder: Assignment 5 due December 10***