General History I c. 285-476

I. Ending the Third-Century Crisis

Did Diocletian and the Tetrarchy resolve the problems of the third-century Roman Empire?

Primary Texts

Secondary Literature

General

The “Third-Century Crisis”
R. Duncan-Jones, ‘Economic Change and the Transition to Late Antiquity’ in S. Swain and M. Edwards (edd.), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 20-52.

Restorers of the empire? Imperial reform from Aurelian to Constantine
*A. Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London, 1999), chaps. 4-6, 8-11.
II.  Constantine

Has the impact of Constantine’s conversion on the empire of the early fourth century been exaggerated?
OR
Can histories of Constantine’s reign be anything better than versions of Eusebius?

Primary Texts
*Panegyrici Latini VII, VI, XII and IV (trans.) C.E.V. Nixon and B.S. Rodgers, In Praise of Later Roman Emperors (Berkeley, CA, 1994). [Read at least one]
*Eusebius, Life of Constantine, (trans.) Av. Cameron and S.G. Hall, Life of Constantine: introduction, translation and commentary (Oxford, 1999). [As much as you can manage, but read at least one of the four books closely. Introduction excellent.]
Constantine, Oration to the assembly of the saints, trans. M. Edwards, Constantine and Christendom, TTH 39 (Liverpool, 2003). [Possibly for revision period; reading it will set you apart from the Constantinian crowd...]

Secondary Literature
General
*J. Harries, Imperial Rome AD284 to 363: the new empire (Edinburgh, 2012), chaps. 5-7.

Constantine the Emperor
N. Lenski (ed.) Cambridge companion to the age of Constantine (Cambridge, 2006), chaps. 8-10 and 14 [Kelly, Humfress, Depeyrot and Elton].
D. Potter, Constantine the emperor (Oxford, 2013)

Constantine and Christianity (and Eusebius)
*The Cambridge Companion to the age of Constantine, chaps. 5-6 [Drake, Edwards].

THE CLASSICS

CONSTANTINE, CHRISTIANITY AND EUSEBIUS


**Constantine and traditional cult**


**Constantine and Constantinople**


R. Van Dam, *Rome and Constantinople: rewriting Roman history during late antiquity* (Waco, TX, 2010), chap. 2.

Good luck!
Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
III. Imperial Power

‘Fourth-century Roman emperors were less powerful than they seemed.’ Discuss. OR
‘In the fourth-century Roman Empire, the representation of imperial power was vital for its exercise.’ Do you agree? OR
Was imperial panegyric just so much disingenuous flattery?

Primary Texts
Ammianus Marcellinus, Res Gestae, read a couple of books to get a sense of this important historical account; I’d advise picking an emperor, e.g. Julian or Valentinian I and looking at that section; for useful descriptions of ceremonial occasions, see 16.10, 22.2, 22.7, 26.6.

For any of the questions, useful to read a panegyric or two:
Pan Lat II: Pacatus to Theodosius I (trans.) Nixon and Rodgers, In praise of later Roman emperors (also trans. Nixon in Translated Texts for Historians 3, Liverpool).

Secondary Literature

Imperial Power
*C.M. Kelly, ‘Emperors, government and bureaucracy’, in Av. Cameron and P. Garnsey (edd.) CAH vol. 13: the late Empire, A.D. 337-425 (Cambridge, 1998), chap. 5; also *idem, Ruling the later Roman Empire (Cambridge, MA, 2004), esp. Part II.

Panegyric and Ceremonial
*S.G. MacCormack, Art and ceremony in late antiquity, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 1 (Berkeley, 1981), esp. ‘The world of the panegyrist’, then read about at least one type of ceremony (covers adventus, funerals and accessions).

M. McCormick, Eternal victory: triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium and the early medieval West (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 36-64.

Bureaucracy and Law

Good luck!
Robin Whelan (robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
III. Panegyric and Ceremonial

‘How unhappy I was... on that day when I was preparing to deliver a panegyric on the emperor! In the course of it I would tell numerous lies and for my mendacity would win the good opinion of people who knew it to be untrue.’
(Augustine, Confessions 6.9)

Was later Roman panegyric just so much disingenuous flattery?

OR

Should we evaluate the power of individual emperors by the performance and reception of their public ceremonial occasions?

Primary Texts

Some panegyrics: read a couple for this essay, and explore more when it comes to revision time.

1) Themistius, Orationes 14-16, trans. P. Heather and D. Moncur, Politics, philosophy and empire in the fourth century: select orations of Themistius, TTH 36 (Liverpool, 2001), pp. 199-283 (with helpful commentary). See too Heather’s introduction to the volume OR his paper on Themistius in Whitby (ed.) The propaganda of power (see below).

2) Pacatus on Theodosius I (trans.) Nixon and Rodgers, In praise of later Roman emperors, no. II (also trans. Nixon in Translated Texts for Historians series).


Notitia Dignitatum, ed. O. Seeck (Frankfurt, 1962) [Flick through for the pictures].

Emperors walking the walk (or not): Ammianus Marcellinus, Res Gestae, 16.10, 22.2, 22.7, 26.6 (ed. and trans. J.C. Rolfe in Loeb); Olympiodorus frag. 23 (ed. and trans. R.C. Blockley, Fragmentary classicising historians of the later Roman empire vol. 2 [Liverpool, 1982]). Socrates, Ecclesiastical History 7.10 (online at Tertullian.org).

Secondary Literature

The Imperial Image


Panegyric and Ceremonial

*S.G. MacCormack, Art and ceremony in late antiquity, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 1 (Berkeley, 1981), esp. ‘The world of the panegyrist’, then read about at least one type of ceremony (covers adventus, funerals and accessions).


M. Whitby (ed.) *The propaganda of power: the role of panegyric in late antiquity* (Leiden, 1998), papers by Heather (Themistius), James (Claudian) and Watson (Sidonius Apollinaris).


*C.M. Kelly (ed.) Theodosius II: rethinking the Roman Empire in late antiquity* (Cambridge, 2013) chaps. 9 and 10 [Kelly and Gardiner].


Good luck!
Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
IV. Julian

Could Julian’s restoration of traditional Roman religion have succeeded? Was Julian out of step with fourth-century Roman religion?

Primary Sources
Helpful excerpts in part II of Tougher, Julian the Apostate (below).


* Ammianus Marcellinus, Res Gestae, in W. Hamilton (tr.), The Later Roman Empire (London, 1986) [also available in Loeb], XV:8, XVI:1-12, XVII:1-3, 8-11, XVIII:1-2, XX:4-5, 8-10, all of books XXI-XXIV, XXV:1-5

Libanius, Oration 18, in A.F. Norman (tr.), Selected Works of Libanius I, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1969), particularly chapters 7-23 (pp. 283-93) on Julian’s learning and apostasy, and chapters 163-203 (pp. 387-415) on Julian’s time in Antioch.

C. Pharr (tr.), The Theodosian Code: and novels and the Sirmondian constitutions (Princeton, 1952); look through for legislation of Julian’s, such as 12.1.50-56 (pp. 349-50) on decurions, 13.3.5 (p. 388) on teaching, 11.12.1 (p. 304) and 11.30.29-31 (p. 326) on taxes.

Secondary Scholarship
General
*S. Tougher, Julian the Apostate (Edinburgh, 2007), part 1, especially chapters 4-5.
R. Browning, The Emperor Julian (London, 1975), chapters 6-9, OR

Julian and Ammianus

Julian and religion

“Paganism” in the fourth century
P. Chuvin, A Chronicle of the Last Pagans (Boston, MA, 1990), chaps. 4-5.
Cambridge Ancient History vol. 13 (Cambridge, 1998), chaps. 18 and 21 (Fowden, Brown).

The emperor as author
*N. Baker-Brian and S. Tougher (eds) Emperor and author: the writings of Julian ‘the apostate’ (Swansea, 2012), chs 1, 6, 8-9, 17.

Good luck!
Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
IV. Law and Government

Assess the value of the *Theodosian Code* as a source for law and government in the later Roman Empire.

**Primary Sources**


[Forbiddingly large, but dip in as much as you can; I’d suggest esp. the opening, the section on judges, and Book 16 (excellent work has been done on the religious legislation); worth also skimming to get a sense of structure and principles of organisation]

Also look (for comparison) at the *Novels* of Theodosius II (esp. *Nov.Th.* 1 on the project of the *Code*) trans. in the same volume, and the preface to the *Prices Edict* (available variously, recent trans. at http://orion.it.luc.edu/~jlong1/priceed.htm)

**Secondary Literature**

*Law, bureaucracy and government in late antiquity*


*C.M. Kelly, *Ruling the later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), esp. Part II.


*The Theodosian Code*


*J. Matthews, *Laying down the law: a study of the Theodosian Code* (New Haven, CT, 2000) [important, but not the most accessible; read with review articles]


*Law in action*


*Laying down the law (individual studies)*

S. McGill, C. Sogno and E. Watts (edd.) *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: later Roman history and culture, 284-450AD* (Cambridge, 2010), chaps. 4-5 [Harries and Connolly].


**On the religious legislation**


*Journal of Early Christian Studies* (2011) [special issue on law in late antiquity]

Good luck!

Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
VII. Slavery and the late Roman Economy

How significant a role did unfree labour play in the late Roman economy?

**Late Roman economy and society**


**Slavery, economy and society**


*P. Garnsey, Ideas of slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge, 1996), Part III.


**The rural economy**


*C. Wickham, Framing the early middle ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800,* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 259-80, 465-81, 519-35.

**Late Roman peasants and the colonate**


*C. Grey, Constructing communities in the late Roman countryside* (Cambridge, 2001), esp. introduction, chap. 6.


Good luck! Robin Whelan (robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
V. Cities

Did late antiquity see the decline and fall of the ancient city?

How useful are cities as an indicator of economic vitality in the later Roman Empire?

Account for the most significant changes in urban life in your period in any THREE cities of the Roman world.

General
*C. Wickham, Framing the early middle ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800 (Oxford, 2005), chap. 10 (Get the gist, and pick out the fourth and fifth century bits).

C. Rapp, Holy bishops in late antiquity: the nature of Christian leadership in an age of transition (Berkeley, CA, 2005), pp. 208-234. [Bishops and cities]

Regions and specific cities
There have been numerous recent conference volumes giving extensive geographical coverage of late-antique cities. Here are two of the best: explore one to avoid reduplication. J. Rich (ed.) The city in late antiquity, (London, 1992). (Papers by Liebeschuetz, Lepelley, Harris, Poulter and Dixon).


A. Leone, Changing townscapes in North Africa from late antiquity to the Arab conquest (Bari, 2007), chaps. 1 and 2. (Africa)
B. Ward-Perkins, From classical antiquity to the middle ages: urban public building in northern and central Italy (Oxford, 1984). (Italy)
M. Kulikowski, Late Roman Spain and its cities (Baltimore, MD, 2004), chap. 5. (Spain)
A. Poulter (ed.) The transition to late antiquity on the Danube and beyond (Oxford, 2008), esp. the section ‘The city in context’. (the Balkans)

C. Foss, Ephesus after antiquity: a late antique, Byzantine and Turkish city (Cambridge, 1979), 46-99. (Ephesus in Asia Minor)

Rome and Constantinople

**Longer-term change in the East**
H. Kennedy, ‘From *polis* to *madina*: urban change in late antique and early Islamic Syria’, *Past and Present* 106 (1985) 3-27.
*M. Whittow 'Ruling the late Roman and early Byzantine city: a continuous history', *Past and Present* 129 (1990) 3-29. (Two pointed articles on Eastern transformations through to the sixth and seventh centuries).

Good luck!
Robin Whelan (Balliol/SPC)
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
IV Christians, Jews, Pagans: Religious Diversity in the Later Roman Empire

What were the main challenges which John Chrysostom and Augustine faced in managing their Christian communities, and how did they tackle them?
Were anxieties about religious diversity solely a concern of religious authority figures in late antiquity?
Were the relations between late-antique religious communities shaped more by violence or coexistence?
To what extent does Christian polemic obscure the lives of EITHER Jews OR pagans in the later Roman Empire?

Chrysostom


Christians and Jews

Jewish communities in the later Roman Empire

Augustine
Augustine, *Sermons* 24, 62, 279, 301A, 198 = Dolbeau 26 (make sure to go to the new version—if it’s not ridiculously long, it’s the wrong one—but don’t worry about reading all of it! Get a flavour).
Augustine, *Letters* 50 (on Sufes), 90-93 (to and from Nectarius).
(All of these available in English translation by searching ‘Past Masters: Augustine’ on SOLO, which takes you through to an interface with all of A’s works in translation.)


Religious Violence in Augustine’s Africa
M. Gaddis, *There is no crime for those who have Christ: religious violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), ch. 4.

Christians and Pagans
Basic orientation: *Cambridge ancient history* vol. 13, chaps. 8, 21 (Hunt, Brown).

Useful (if somewhat hyperbolic) accounts of Christianisation and the end of paganism: R. MacMullen, *Christianity and paganism in the fourth to eighth centuries* (New Haven, CT, 1997).
P. Chuvin, *A chronicle of the last pagans* (Boston, MA, 1990), chaps 4-5.
Read the former (in particular) with critique of *R. A. Markus, The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), esp. chap. 1

For excellent revisionist takes on the ‘spaces’ available for pagans in the LRE and the transformation of Roman public life: *P. Rousseau (ed.) *A companion to late antiquity* (Chichester, 2009), chaps 38 and 39 (McLynn and Lim).


Good luck!
Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
V. The Arian Controversy

What made one an Arian in the fourth century?

Primary Texts
* Athanasius, First Oration against the Arians, esp. chaps. 1-7, but get sense of whole. (trans. at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/28161.htm)
* Ambrose of Milan, De fide I, II.129-143 (http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3404.htm).

Approaches to Heresy
E. Iricinschi and H. Zellentin (edd.) Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity (Tübingen, 2008). [Introduction and *Av. Cameron, ‘The violence of orthodoxy’].
* C. Humfress, Orthodoxy and the courts in late antiquity (Oxford, 2007), chap. 8. [Also available through Oxford Scholarship Online]
* P. Rousseau (ed.) A companion to late antiquity (Chichester, 2009), chaps. 34 and 36 [Gaddis, Graumann].

The Arian Controversy

* L. Ayres, Nicaea and its legacy: an approach to fourth-century Trinitarian theology (Oxford, 2004), Parts I and II. [Ditto]
M. Gaddis, There is no crime for those who have Christ: religious violence in the Christian Roman Empire (Berkeley, CA, 2005), chap. 2.
C. Galvao-Sobrinho, Doctrine and power: theological controversy and Christian leadership in the later Roman Empire, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 51 (Berkeley, CA, 2013), Parts II and III.

Athanasius
R. Flower, Emperors and bishops in late Roman invective (Cambridge, 2013), chap. 4.

Ambrose and his Arians
*N.B. McLynn, Ambrose of Milan: Church and court in a Christian capital (Berkeley, CA, 1994), chaps. 1, 3, 4 and 8.

Good luck!
Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
VI. Christological Controversies

‘Success in the Christological controversies of the fifth century was dependent on the favour of the imperial court.’ Discuss.

Primary Texts

Secondary Literature
*Cyril, Nestorius and Ephesus*
M. Gaddis, *There is no crime for those who have Christ: religious violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA, 2005), chaps. 7-8.
F. Millar, *A Greek Roman empire: power and belief under Theodosius II (408-450)*, Sather classical lectures 64 (Berkeley, CA, 2006), chaps. 4-6.
*P. Rousseau (ed.) A companion to late antiquity* (Chichester, 2009), chaps. 34 and 36 [Gaddis, Graumann].

*Theodoret and Chalcedon*

*A. Schor, Theodoret’s people: social networks and religious conflict in late Roman Syria, Transformation of the classical heritage 48* (Berkeley, CA, 2010), Part I and Epilogue.

*The view from Rome*

Good luck!
Robin Whelan
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
VI. Gender and Asceticism

Did the rise of the church have any impact on late Roman gender norms?
OR
To what extent did the adoption of ascetic modes of Christian behaviour disrupt aristocratic households?
OR
What can we conclude about gender roles from the experiences of elite ascetic women in the later Roman Empire?
OR
Did Christian ascetic lifestyles offer women new forms of agency in late antiquity?

Primary Texts
The Life of Melania the Younger, trans. E. Clark. [Or: how to leave Rome, give up your wealth (ish) and set up a monastery in the Holy Land in the C5—I can send PDF.] Jerome, Letters 22, 45, 107, 130. [Or: advice letters for various ascetic women from late antique Christianity’s creepy uncle. Available through SOLO—Loeb Library] Augustine, Ep. 262 to Ecdicia [Or: what to do when your husband breaks your joint vow of celibacy... Available through SOLO: type in Augustine: Past Masters;] For an intro to the Life of Melania, see the relevant chapter of Brown, Through the eye of a needle (Princeton, NJ, 2012) and now C. Chin and C. Schroeder (eds) Melania (Berkeley, CA, 2016).

Asceticism and Gender

Approaching late-antique women

Elite Families: Christianity and Gender Norms
Roman and Christian masculinities

Reading holy women


Writing (to) Demetrias

Good luck!
Robin Whelan (robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
VI. Vandal Africa

Was the Vandal kingdom simply Roman Africa ‘under new management’?
Is it fair to say that North Africa was the area of the Roman West which saw the greatest continuities through the fifth century?

Primary Texts


Secondary Literature

The New Model Vandals

** A.H. Merrills and R. Miles, The Vandals (Malden, MA, 2010), esp. chaps. 3-4, 6-8.
** J. Conant, Staying Roman: conquest and identity in Africa and the Mediterranean, 439-700 (Cambridge, 2012), chaps. 1 and 3. [Two excellent up-to-date works: start here]
A. H. Merrills (ed.) Vandals, Romans and Berbers (Aldershot, 2004) [papers by Merrills x2; Pohl; Hays; George; Shanzer]

The Successor Kingdoms: Vandal Africa in Context

* C. Wickham, Framing the early middle ages (Oxford, 2005), chap. 3.2 (‘The Germanic kingdoms’), esp. pp. 87-93.

Culture and Urban Society

* F. Clover, The late Roman West and the Vandals (Aldershot, 1992), no. IX.
A. Leone, Changing townscapes in North Africa from late antiquity to the Arab conquest, Munera 28 (Bari, 2007), Part II.
Wickham, Framing, pp. 635-38, 642-43, 720-23.

Victor of Vita and Religious Conflict


Good luck! Robin Whelan (robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)
VII. Barbarians and Romans

‘The problem with the barbarian invasions is that they involved neither barbarians, nor invasions.’ (WHELAN, TRYING TO BE CLEVER) Discuss.
Did barbarian settlement make much difference to provincial society in southern Gaul AND/OR North Africa in the fifth century?
Do contemporary discussions of the Goths AND/OR Vandals tell us more about Romans than barbarians? (You may, if you wish, focus on TWO authors from the period.)

BASIC ORIENTATION
CAH XIV: chaps. 1, 5 and 18 (Heather, Collins, Wood).

ETHNOGRAPHY AND ITS PROBLEMS

THE BARBARIAN DEBATES
*G. Halsall, Barbarian migrations and the Roman West, 376-568 (Cambridge, 2007), chaps. 2*
(superlative discussion of identity), 5-8.
For narrative orientation: see Halsall, Barbarian migrations and Heather, The Fall of the Roman Empire (London, 2005), Part II.
*B. Ward-Perkins, The fall of Rome and the end of civilization (Oxford, 2005), introduction, Part I (esp. 82-83) and conclusion.
W. Goffart, Barbarians and Romans AD 418-584: the techniques of accommodation (Princeton, 1980) chap. 1 OR Idem, Barbarian tides: the migration age and the later Roman Empire (Philadelphia, PA, 2006) chaps. 5-7 and esp. 8. [Approach with caution].

On barbarian settlement, see best:

THE GOTHS
*Ammianus Marcellinus book 31.
Orosius, History against the Pagans VII.39-40 (trans. A. Fear, TTH 50) [The sack of Rome]
*Sidonius Apollinaris, Letters III.4, VII.6-7 (trans. Loeb).

*M. Kulikowski, Rome’s Gothic wars (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 100-84.


THE VANDALS

**A.H. Merrills and R. Miles, The Vandals* (Malden, MA, 2010), esp. chaps. 3-4, 6-8.
A.H. Merrills (ed.) *Vandals, Romans and Berbers* (Aldershot, 2004) [papers by Merrills x2; Pohl; Hays; George; Shanzer]

If you get interested in Christian conflict in Vandal Africa:

Good luck!
Robin Whelan (Balliol/SPC)
(robin.whelan@history.ox.ac.uk)