



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

The new Rome: Medieval Constantinople - 8157

Last update 11-09-2022

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: "Amirim" Honors Program

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Lee Mordechai

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Coordinator Office Hours:

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Lee Mordechai

Course/Module description:

Constantinople - known also by the names Byzantium and Istanbul - played a major role in history from antiquity to the 21st century. This course will focus on the medieval city, a period during which Constantinople was almost always the largest, wealthiest and marvelous Christian city. "The Queen of Cities", as many contemporaries described it, or simply "The City", as her residents tended to call it, was also an idea - identified with wealth and prestige even when these, at certain times, did not correspond to reality. Hundreds of thousands of people lived in it, and visitors from the ends of the known world - from Iceland to central Asia, came to the city to marvel at its treasures, its holy sites, and even find employment in it. The course will examine the period between the (re-)foundation of the city by the Roman emperor Constantine I in 330 CE and until the fall of the city and what remained of the Eastern Roman Empire to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The course will present different aspects of the lives of the city and its residents during the thousand years in which it flourished as a leading Christian city - and thus introduce us to medieval history and specifically urban history. We will examine the city's topography, its development over time, the different groups that lived and worked in it, and the continuous imperial plans to transform the city into a glorious capital - using ideology as well as material wealth. We will meet the empire's elite - residents of the city - as well as other colorful figures from our sources - whether street performers, whores, or the city's many eunuchs. No background is required to take this class.

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Identify the major processes, figures and events in Constantinople's medieval history
2. Analyze the development of Constantinople within a broader medieval context
3. Identify some of the written and non-written sources in scholarship on Constantinople
4. Improve verbal and written communication skills
5. Synthesize primary sources and scholarly research in independent historical research
6. Construct an evidence-based historical argument

Attendance requirements(%):

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction:

Course/Module Content:

- 1. The foundation of Constantinople and its first centuries*
- 2. Cycles of decline and renewal*
- 3. Representations of the city and its myths*
- 4. The imperial palace as an institution*
- 5. Constantinople's economy - logistics and trade*
- 6. Disasters in Constantinople - earthquakes and plagues*
- 7. War and fighting in the city - street battles, riots and sieges*
- 8. Schools, learning and entertainment*
- 9. Public ceremonies*
- 10. Religious life in Constantinople, churches and monasteries*
- 11. Visitors, pilgrims and immigrants*
- 12. Minorities in Constantinople: eunuchs, Jews, and foreign residents*
- 13. Medieval Constantinople in memory*

Required Reading:

A detailed reading list will be provided at the beginning of the semester.

Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %
Presentation 0 %
Participation in Tutorials 10 %
Project work 70 %
Assignments 15 %
Reports 0 %
Research project 0 %
Quizzes 0 %
Other 5 %
Office hours visit

Additional information: