

# THE AGE OF CONSTANTINE (CCI 327)

T/Th 12:30-1:45pm CURY 247



**Instructor: Robyn Le Blanc**

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## OFFICE HOURS:

Monday 10:00-11:30 AM

Wednesday 10:00-11:30 AM & 1:00-2:30 PM

Or by appointment

## TEXTBOOK:

- *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, N. E. Lenski (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)
- *The Council of Nicaea 'Reacting to the Past' gamebook* (PDF on Canvas)
- Primary sources (Eusebius, Aurelius Victor, Symmachus, etc.) (Links or PDFs on Canvas)

## COURSE SYNOPSIS

Constantine the Great ruled the Roman Empire from 306-337 CE. His reign inaugurated a period of profound change for the Roman Empire: a new capital would be founded in the East in 330 CE, moving the focus of imperial power permanently away from Italy; Christianity became the religion of the empire, sponsored and practiced by the emperor himself; new ideas about what it meant to be Roman and what it meant to be an emperor, emerged; new rivals for power in the east, north and west emerged; and the divide between the Eastern and Western portions of the empire solidified.

This course focuses on Roman civilization in the Mediterranean in the late third-fourth centuries CE with an emphasis on the great changes which occurred during the reign of Constantine. We will look at this age through a variety of primary sources, e.g. literary, ecclesiastical, archaeological, art historical. The course considers many different aspects to the Roman empire under Constantine, including the religious life of the people of the empire and its emperor; the art and architecture of Constantine and Constantinople; the political intrigues and decisions made by the emperor and his immediate predecessors; elements of late Roman/early Byzantine administration and life; and the impact of this Age of Constantine on the Mediterranean world.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the major changes in the Mediterranean world during and after the reign of Constantine, including (but not limited to) the impact on politics, cities, the role of the emperor, the imperial administration, religion, literature, art, and cultural identity.

2. Identify the role of Constantine in encouraging major cultural, religious and political changes in the Mediterranean.
3. Explain how Constantine’s legacy has impacted Mediterranean and modern structures.
4. Critically evaluate evidence from multiple sources (literary, archaeological, historical) and representing different perspectives and opinions.
5. Exhibit an improvement in oral communication skills in a variety of contexts.
6. Students will be able to speak in genres appropriate to the discipline(s) of the primary subject matter of the course.

### GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

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|--|-----|
| • Attendance and Participation [SLO #4-5]          | 15% |
| • RTTP Role Written Assignments [SLO #2-3]         | 30% |
| • RTTP Oral Participation/Presentations [#SLO 3-6] | 35% |
| • Final Exam [SLO #1-3]                            | 20% |

Cumulative; Friday, April 29, 3:30-6:30 PM

### RTTP (‘Reacting to the Past’) COURSE COMPONENT

A centerpiece of the course is a Reacting to the Past (“RTTP”) game on the Council of Nicaea. A RTTP scenario is a role-playing game set in the past. Informed by historical and primary texts, students take on the identity of a key participant in a historical event. The game unfolds over a series of class periods (in this case, 7 classes of game play, plus four set-up days and one class devoted to debrief and discussion) and gameplay is run entirely by the students. Students engage in discussion, debate and decision-making as their assigned participant, a role for which they prepare through the guided research of ancient source material and several short preparatory writing assignments. **All students are required to participate in the RTTP game.** Each student is expected to speak in some capacity every day of the game.

You will write two (4-5 page long) position papers detailing your characters opinions and views about the major issues facing the Council of Nicaea. Your paper on the “Creed” will be 4 pages long, and will be the basis for a one-minute long speech/summary of your views that you will deliver on the first day of the council. You will use primary evidence and rhetoric to make your points. You will prepare for the game by reading primary and secondary evidence, and considering the goals, allies and strategies of your unique character. Each paper will go through 3 graded drafts (a ‘first draft’, a rough draft, and a final draft). The assignment sequence (and due dates) are as follows:

Character Sketch + Meeting	Schedule Mon Jan 25-Fri Jan 29	
‘Creed’ ‘First Draft’	Due Tues, Feb 2 on Canvas, 8am	[Workshop 2/2]
‘Creed’ Rough Draft	Due Tues, Feb 9 on Canvas, 8am	[Workshop 2/9]
‘Organization’ ‘First Draft’	Due Thurs, Feb 11 on Canvas, 8am	[Workshop 2/11]
Rough Draft of Both Papers	Due Thurs, Feb 18 on Canvas, 8am	[Workshop 2/18]
‘Creed’ Final Draft	Due Tues, Feb 23 on Canvas, 10am	
‘Organization’ Final Draft	Due Tues, March 15 on Canvas, 10am	
Game Reflection	Due Tues, March 29	

## Character Sketch and Meeting

Jan 25-29

After you receive your character role sheet you will need to consider what your character's goals and strategies will be during the Council. This needs to be based on the unique historical perspective of your character. In order to achieve your goal in the Council you will need to have a firm grasp of the primary evidence that supports your beliefs/points/goals, and also enlist allies and turn "undecided" votes to your side. Your character sketch is a 2-page outline of your character's beliefs and motivations based on your character role sheet and additional research on the topics/factions/beliefs of your character. You **must** include the following elements:

- 1) your personal goals: what does your character want to achieve during the Council?
- 2) strategy: what is your strategy for achieving these outcomes?
- 3) allies: who will you ally with? Which of the "indeterminate" characters might you persuade to be on your side, and how?
- 4) enemies: who stands in the way of your goals? Who is most likely to argue against your views, why, and with what evidence?
- 5) perspective: what is your character's perspective about the two key topics (the Creed, Church Organization)? Provide 3 pieces of evidence from primary sources to support your opinion.
- 6) additional material: come up with a list of 3 secondary sources or topics you should research to help inform your opinions and background. This can range from contemporary information about your home province or city, about your profession or ethnic background, etc.

You will schedule a 15-minute meeting with me between Monday, January 25 and Friday, January 29. All students **must** meet with me during this time. If you do not show up, or are more than 5 minutes late your grade on this assignment will be reduced by **2 letter grades**. If you need to reschedule you must do so at least 24 hours in advance, and the new date of the meeting must be between Jan 25-29.

## THE CREED PAPER

Length: 4 pages, double-spaced

Directions: A 4 page paper articulating your characters views/opinions on the relationship between Jesus and God based on your reading of primary texts. You will use this position paper as the basis for creating a 30 second-1 minute summary of your beliefs concerning the Creed on Council day #1.

You may choose to write your own version of a Creed to bring with you to the Council. The Creed should include an assertion about the nature of God, the nature of Jesus, an explanation of their relationship, the role of Jesus in relation to his followers.

## FACTIONS:

If you are part of one of the two dominant factions you should write a paper asserting your understanding of the relationship between Jesus and God relying on primary evidence (gospels, epistles, apocryphal texts, etc). **DO NOT USE SECONDARY SOURCES**. You may want to include an example of a Creed that you can present to the Council and use as a basis for constructing a group-wide Creed.

## INDETERMINATES:

If your character is an indeterminate you should write a paper outlining your perspective on the issue of the debate between the Orthodox and Arian factions. You should include references to primary sources. You should also include a paragraph or two outlining what arguments or pieces of evidence would persuade you to side with one group or another.



delivering your speech on the first day of each topic. You cannot change your speech once you have turned in your final draft.

Failure to post by 10am will result in the reduction in your grade on the draft by 1 letter grade. Try to post your drafts the night before! You will post your papers to the appropriate assignment under “Assignments.” It should be a word doc file (.doc or .docx) or a pdf file. Any other files (or corrupted files) will be treated as if they were not turned in.

## **Game Reflection**

**March 29**

A two-page reflection on the game; what did you learn?; how did our results differ from the historical Council of Nicaea (based on the reading from *CCAC*)?; was your strategy effective (why/why not?); what might you have done differently?

You will turn in your reflection at the beginning of class on March 29—no electronic versions or late copies will be accepted for any reason.

## **RTTP PARTICIPATION**

In addition to these prepared speeches you will have to engage in debate with members representing divergent views, and strategize with members of your faction. Your participation in these parts of the game should also be conducted according to your character role sheet. You are expected to use primary evidence to support your opinions about major topics.

Your oral engagement, preparation, use of historical knowledge and ability to communicate your ideas and perspectives will be graded according to a rubric which you will receive in advance of the gameplay.

Please note that your RTTP participation grade includes participation in class councils; strategizing with faction members outside of class (if/when necessary, and with email documentation); participation in writing workshops (see below); attendance at the games, and at the character sketch meeting.

## **WORKSHOPPING**

The Council of Nicaea was essentially a “workshop” attended by the leading church and imperial officials under Constantine. Their decisions were forged through debate, revision, and critique of ideas/opinions/sources. Your character would have worked long and hard researching and revising his speech to the council on these issues tirelessly, and would have coordinated with his peers to make his speech as strong as possible. To get at the “spade work” behind the CoN this class adopts a “workshop” framework for revising and discussing all work (even outside the RTTP game). You will be organized into writing groups that you will work in throughout the semester. You will read two drafts of your group-members speeches, and provide thoughtful and constructive feedback to help them improve. Your performance in the workshops will be guided by specific instructions on the day of the workshop.

Your participation in the workshop will be graded according to a rubric distributed in advance. You are graded on participating in the workshop; submitting your own material to be workshopped; and on the quality of your feedback. We will talk at the beginning of the semester about how to give good feedback in these contexts.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance and participation in class outside of the RTTP game is crucial for your success in the class. You should do all the reading carefully and thoughtfully before you show up to class—we will typically spend part of each class discussing/analyzing/doing something hands-on based on the previous night's reading. You will have the opportunity to participate in different ways—you needn't speak in front of the class all the time if that's not your thing.

You are allowed 2 absences without penalty; after that, your attendance/participation grade will drop half a letter grade for each additional absence. Excused absences include courses missed for religious reasons (with previous notification; see below); absences for medical emergencies (with doctor's note).

## **RELIGIOUS DAYS**

State law allows students to have up to two absences for religious reasons per academic year and to be allowed to make up work missed. If this applies to you, you must notify me two weeks in advance and make arrangements to make up missed work at that time. I reserve the right to require you to do this work before your absence.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

(from the Dean of Students' Webpage): "Academic integrity is founded upon and encompasses the following five values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Supporting and affirming these values is essential to promoting and maintaining a high level of academic integrity. Each member of the academic community must stand accountable for his or her actions. As a result, a community develops in which students learn the responsibilities of citizenship and how to contribute honorably to their professions. If knowledge is to be gained and properly evaluated, it must be pursued under conditions free from dishonesty. Deceit and misrepresentations are incompatible with the fundamental activity of this academic institution and shall not be tolerated. Members of the UNCG community are expected to foster in their own work the spirit of academic honesty and not to tolerate its abuse by others. First responsibility for academic integrity lies with individual students and faculty members of this community. A violation of academic integrity is an act harmful to all other students, faculty and, ultimately, the university. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy:  
<http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>."

The following behaviors constitute a violation of UNCG's academic integrity policy, and will result in referral to the Dean of Students, penalties applied to your grade, and possible university-imposed penalties:

- Directly quoting someone else's work without citation (intentionally or unintentionally)
- Summarizing the ideas, opinions or points of other people without citation (intentionally or unintentionally)
- Submitting work done by someone else as your own
- Using outside source material while taking tests/quizzes

**Tl; dr version: CITE ALL THE THINGS. WHEN IN DOUBT, CITE**

## GRADING SCALE

100-97%=	A+	79-77%=	C+
96-93%=	A	76-73%=	C
92-90%=	A-	72-70%=	C-
89-87%=	B+	69-67%=	D+
86-83%=	B	66-63%=	D
82-80%=	B-	62-60%=	D-
Below 60%=	F		

Grades will be posted on Canvas throughout the semester so that you may keep track of your performance in the class. My “rounding” policy is as follows: I will only take into account the first number after the decimal, i.e. 89.6 will be rounded up to a 90% (A-), but an 89.59 will be a B+. If I make an error calculating your grade I’m more than happy to fix it. However, I do not negotiate grades without a solid reason based on the merits and correctness of the assignment.

I am happy to discuss your grades with you. However, university policy prohibits discussions of grades via email, and so you will have to schedule an appointment to come to my office to discuss any issues or questions you might have.

**\*please note that I reserve the right to modify this schedule as needed**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Tuesday, January 12: Introduction: Constantine: Why so “great”?; Constantine’s POV**

Reading: None

### **Thursday, January 14: The Roman Empire before the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE; The Tetrarchy**

Reading:

- 1) Corcoran, “Before Constantine,” *CCAC* pp. 35-58.

### **Tuesday, January 19: The Rise of Constantine**

Reading:

- 1) Lenski, “The Reign of Constantine,” *CCAC* pp.59-90
- 2) Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* selections from Book 1 (pdf on Canvas)

### **Thursday, January 21: Constantine as Emperor**

Reading:

- 1) Eusebius *Life of Constantine*, selections from Books 1-4 (link on Canvas)

RTTP: *Character Assignments Distributed*

### **Tuesday, January 26: Background to the Council of Nicaea: Early Christian Literature (Game Set-Up Session #1)**

Reading:

- 1) Look over the RTTP Gamebook on Canvas, read especially pp.8-16, 65-80, 84-87
- 2) Biblical sources (Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) (Link on Canvas)

RTTP: *Character meeting and character sketch due this week!*

### **Thursday, January 28: Christianity Before the 4<sup>th</sup> Century (Game Set-Up Session #2)**

Reading:

- 1) Biblical Sources (The Acts of the Apostles, Romans, I Corinthians)
- 2) Read “Historical Background” in gamebook, pp.23-34
- 3) Diocletian ‘Edict Against the Christians’ (link on Canvas)
- 4) The Edict of Toleration and the Edict of Milan (links on Canvas)

RTTP: *Character meeting and character sketch due this week!*

### **Tuesday, February 2: Constantine in Rome and Byzantium**

Reading: None

RTTP: *‘Creed’ ‘First Draft’ Due (post to Canvas by 8am) + Draft Workshop*

### **Thursday, February 4: The Empire of Constantine (Administration, Economy)**

Reading:

- 1) Kelly “Bureaucracy and Government,” *CCAC* 183-204
- 2) Humfress, “Civil Law and Social Life,” *CCAC* 205-225
- 3) Diocletian’s Price List

### **Tuesday, February 9: The Western Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. CE**

Reading:

- 1) Ammianus Marcellinus Book 14, Ch. 6 only (link on Canvas)

RTTP: *‘Creed’ Rough Draft (post to Canvas by 8am) + Draft Workshop*

### **Thursday, February 11: Art in the period of Constantine**

Reading:

- 1) Elsner, “Perspectives in Art,” *CCAC* pp.255-277

RTTP: *‘Organization’ ‘First Draft’ (post to Canvas by 8am) + Draft Workshop*

### **Tuesday, February 16: “The Constantine Question”; The Major Issues (Game Set-Up Session #3)**

Reading:

- 1) Read “Christology” in gamebook, pp.34-54
- 2) Read Appendices #1-4 in gamebook pp.92-104
- 3) Eusebius on the conversion of Constantine (link on Canvas)

### **Thursday, February 18: The Major Issues & Factions in the Council of Nicaea; Game Day Preparation; (Game Set-Up Session #4)**

Reading:

- 1) Read about factions in the gamebook pp.58-64

*\*Nota bene:* your position speech drafts should be completed on this day. You will be able to use the class period to strategize with other members of your faction and to discuss your positions with the instructor.

RTTP: *Speeches Rough Draft (post to Canvas by 8am)+ Draft Workshop*

### **Tuesday, February 23: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #1: The Creed)**

RTTP: *Turn in final ‘Creed’ speech drafts on Canvas by 10am*

### **Thursday, February 25: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #2: The Creed)**



**Tuesday, March 1: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #3: The Creed)**

**Thursday, March 3: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #4: Church Organization)**

*RTTP: Turn in final 'Organization' speech drafts on Canvas by 10am*

**Tuesday, March 8 & Thursday, March 10: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**Tuesday March 15: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #5: Church Organization)**

**Thursday, March 17: NO CLASS (work with factions)**

**Tuesday, March 22: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #6: Church Organization)**

**Thursday, March 24: The Council of Nicaea (Game Session #7: Church Organization)**

**Tuesday, March 29: Debriefing**

Reading:

- 1) Drake "The Impact of Constantine on Christianity," *CCAC* pp. 111-125 only (stop before "A Saintly Emperor")

*RTTP: Game Reflection Due (turn in hard copy)*

**Thursday, March 31: Traditional Religion in the Fourth Century (after Constantine)**

Reading:

- 1) Lee, "Traditional Religions" *CCAC* pp.159-179
- 2) The Altar of Victory (primary sources by Ambrose and Symmachus)

**Tuesday, April 5: Constantine's Heirs; Julian the Apostate**

Reading:

- 1) Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (selections from Book IV, on his death) (pdf on Canvas)
- 2) Frakes "The Dynasty of Constantine Down to 363," *CCAC* pp.91-107.
- 2) Ammianus Marcellinus Selections from Books 16, 22, 25 (links on Canvas)
- 3) Gregory of Nazianzus *Invectives on Julian* (Or.4-5)

**Thursday, April 14: The Early Byzantine Empire and Everyone Else in the East**

Reading:

- 1) Fowden, "Constantine and the Peoples of the Eastern Frontier," *CCAC* pp.377-398.

**Tuesday, April 19: The Byzantine Empire and their Northern Neighbors**

Reading:

- 1) Kulikowski, "Constantine and the Northern Barbarians," *CCAC* pp. 347-376.

**Thursday, April 21: The Rise of Theodosius; Constantine in Myth and Legend**

Reading:

- 1) Blockley, "The Dynasty of Theodosius" *Cambridge Ancient History* v.13
- 2) Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* (selections)
- 3) The Donation of Constantine