



AP/HIST-CLST 4130 6.0, Fall-Winter 2020-21
PROBLEMS IN ROMAN HISTORY:
AUGUSTUS & THE RESTORATION OF ROMAN SOCIETY,
31 BC–AD 14

Course Director: Professor Jonathan Edmondson (jedmond@yorku.ca)

Course Format/Time:

This course will be offered **remotely** in 2020-21 with weekly real-time discussion sessions held using **ZOOM** on a weekly basis within the official course timeblock: **Fridays, 11.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m.** Brief introductions to each week's material will be pre-recorded and made accessible via the **Course Moodle site** well in advance of the discussion sessions. All course components will be completed remotely or online.

Course Description

The seminar engages in an in-depth analysis of a pivotal period in Roman history, 31 BC–AD 14, when Julius Caesar's heir, the man who from 27 BC onwards was known as Augustus (in full, 'Imperator [Commander] Caesar Augustus son of the Deified One'), gradually crafted a new political system at Rome after emerging victorious from fifteen years of bloody civil war that embroiled the whole of the Roman world, and beyond. His task was to reunify the 'Roman Republic' and ensure that the new, autocratic regime proved sufficiently palatable to the key sectors of Roman society: the senatorial elite, municipal elites in Italy and the provinces (the *domi nobiles*), ordinary Roman citizens, the army, and provincial subjects across the Empire. The seminar will explore the ways in which he sought to build that consensus: his devising of a political system that proved acceptable to most; his use of images, monuments, ritual, and literature to boost his own authority and acceptability; his radical redesign of the city of Rome, making it a worthy imperial capital; his programme of social and moral reform; a series of overseas conquests of his armies that brought more territory than even before under Roman control and boosted Rome's prestige; and his reforms of provincial administration to ensure the fiscal stability of his new regime. We will also take account of protests and opposition to what he was trying to achieve.

In the seminar, we shall read critically a selection of the most important primary source material for Augustus' achievements – historical accounts of his reign (esp. Suetonius, Tacitus, Cassius Dio), selections from literature of the Augustan period (Vergil, Livy, Horace, Propertius, Ovid), inscriptions (including Augustus' own *Res Gestae*), portraits and sculpture, architectural complexes in Rome and elsewhere, coins, and archaeological and iconographic evidence – and some of the rich scholarly discussions of Augustus, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the varied interpretations that his principate continues to elicit.

Course Organization

Each week, the Course Director will post brief pre-recorded introductions to the material and any other relevant material on Moodle, which students can access at a time convenient to their schedules. Discussion of this material will take place by ZOOM meetings in the scheduled class time on **Fridays from 11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.** during the Fall and Winter Terms. (The discussion sessions will not necessarily last the full three hours.) Students will be asked to post on Moodle brief responses ahead of the weekly ZOOM sessions, as the starting point for discussion. If students cannot attend any of these ZOOM meetings, they can submit more detailed written responses to the material under discussion to the Course Director, but for the success of the course it is better if students participate in the ZOOM sessions to the fullest extent possible. Professor Edmondson will also hold a **virtual Office Hour** live via ZOOM once a week and will be available for consultation at other times by special arrangement.

Course Assignments

In the Fall Term students will be asked to submit to the Course Director via Moodle written **analyses** of (a) a relevant **primary source** and (b) a **scholarly article or book chapter**. The culminating activity in the course will be the preparation of a **research paper** on a topic chosen by each student in consultation with the Course Director. In the Fall Term, students will prepare a written **proposal** for their research project (with a preliminary bibliography) and, after receiving feedback from the Course Director, will research and write the paper in the Winter Term, again in ongoing consultation with the Course Director. In the second half of the Winter Term, students will also prepare a **short video or Powerpoint** on the topic of their project to post to the Moodle site, to gain feedback from other members of the seminar before preparing the final version of their paper.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate detailed knowledge of the period of Augustus' supremacy (31 BC–AD 14) and have an awareness of the limited and contested nature of that historical knowledge;
2. identify, describe, and analyze the various methodological and theoretical approaches most relevant to this particular field of study;
3. assess critically a range of different types of relevant primary sources – literary, inscriptional, visual, archaeological, numismatic – and demonstrate understanding of the specific nature of each type of source, identifying and assessing the problems that arise for historians in using them;
4. read and critically assess some of the modern scholarship on Augustus, and demonstrate an understanding of the important debates and disagreements in this scholarship;
5. demonstrate skills in proposing a coherent research topic, in identifying and analyzing the primary sources and scholarly discussions that are most relevant to that topic, and in organizing and writing a clear and effective paper. In this paper, they should demonstrate that they have the ability to make use of different sources, to follow appropriate standards of presentation, and to develop a cogent historical argument.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown (tentative)

Assessment	Due date	Value (% of final grade)
Primary source analysis	30 October	15%
Research proposal and bibliography	20 November	10%
Analysis of an article or book chapter	4 December	15%
Brief presentation of research project (powerpoint or short video)	26 Feb. – 2 April (depending on date of presentation)	10%
Major paper	9 April	40%
Brief weekly reading responses	throughout course	10%

Textbooks (in addition there will be short primary and secondary source readings available via Moodle each week)

Werner Eck, *The Age of Augustus* (2nd ed.), Wiley-Blackwell's Publishers, 2007
 Jonathan Edmondson (ed.), *Augustus*, Edinburgh University Press, 2009
 (Both are available as e-books via the Scott Library website.)

Suggested Modules for the Seminar (tentative – may be revised)

Module 1. Introduction and Sources (Weeks 1-2)

Module 2. The Powers of Augustus and Politics under Augustus (Weeks 3-4)

Module 3. Towards a *domus Augusta*: Creating a Dynasty and the Problem of Succession (Weeks 5-6)

Module 4. The Image of Augustus and Propaganda for the new Regime (Weeks 7-9)

Module 5. Augustus and the City of Rome (Weeks 10-12)

Module 6. Augustus' Social and Moral Reforms (Weeks 13-15)

Module 7. Augustan Imperialism and the Reorganization of the Provinces of the Empire (Weeks 16-18)

Module 8. Student Research Projects: Consultations and Presentations. Conclusions (Weeks 19-24)