

HIEU 263: Graduate Seminar / Special Topics

BYZANTIUM AND EUROPE

Seminar Convenor: PAUL STEPHENSON

Abstract: This course will explore the Byzantium in its broader European and Mediterranean contexts, considering first how the Byzantines understood their world, and then how it has been interpreted and presented since the fall of the empire. Much time will be devoted to discussing the manner in which Byzantium has been, or has not been adopted into European cultural history (c. 1800-1945, and 1945 to today). In the first four sessions, there will be four short framing papers by the convenor, followed by longer discussions. The following six sessions will be devoted to course participant presentations and discussions.

Course Outline and Key Questions: This course is concerned first with the Byzantine World in its imperial centuries, principally between the accession of Leo III (CE 717) and the sack of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade (CE 1204); and second with the modern and contemporary interpretations and representations of Byzantium. Our gaze will fall principally on the European lands of an Eastern Mediterranean empire ruled from Constantinople, known to later scholars as the Byzantine Empire. That terminology will be explored, and alternative designations (East Roman Empire, Byzantine Commonwealth, Byzantine World, etc.) will be discussed. We shall also attend to lands to the north and west of Constantinople, to explore the limits of the so-called Byzantine Commonwealth.

Initially, we shall seek to define the limits and nature of medieval Byzantium. Our interest is not principally in ethnicity, nor the study of ethnogenesis, which has so occupied scholarly discussion in recent decades. Rather, we shall pose such questions as: When was Byzantium? Who were the Byzantines? Was Byzantium a European civilization? We shall explore the rhetoric, image and reality of imperial power, and its projections; taxis and hierarchy; Byzantine views of the natural world and other worlds; and Byzantine relations with other cultures to the north and west, through war and diplomacy. This will provide the necessary background for the second and more substantive part of the course, when our attention will turn to modern representations of Byzantium, from the sixteenth century to the present day. We shall address representations of Byzantium in the region, notably by Greek and Slavic scholars, but briefly; we will then, at greater length, compare and contrast these views with those advanced by western European and North American writers, politicians and scholars, notably those from Great Britain, France, Germany and the USA. Our discussions will embrace the beginnings of text editing and national historical studies; the formation of nation states in the period of Ottoman decline; the formation of the scientific discipline of history; popular histories and fictional representations of Byzantium; the re-definition of Byzantine cultural products, notably icons, as fine art; the staging of exhibitions and congresses devoted to Byzantium; the theft and sale of Byzantine antiquities.

Some questions: How have Byzantinists, in the past two centuries, located Byzantium in broader political and cultural discussions? How have they emphasized commonalities or diversities? What place does Byzantium currently have in current narratives of European history and culture? Was Byzantine culture a European culture, or is this too narrow a definition? How might the European Union embrace Byzantine culture, or should it not do so at all? What now for Byzantine culture?

Four Framing Discussions

Framing Paper 1: Europe's Byzantine Past, I: Introduction and definitions; What is Byzantium?: Where was the Byzantine civilizational zone? How European is Byzantium?

Discussion: Beyond the Byzantine Commonwealth

The discussion will explore the importance and the limitations of various views of the empire, including: geographical determinism; the limits of Orthodoxy; spheres of cultural influence; insights from historical sociology.

D. Obolensky, "The Geographical Setting", in his *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London, 1971), pp. 19-63.

J. Shepard, "Byzantium's Overlapping Circles", in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London, 21-26 August 2006. Volume I: Plenary Papers* (London, 2006), I, pp. 15-55.

J. Shepard, "The Byzantine Commonwealth, 1000-1550", in M. Angold, ed., *The Cambridge History of Christianity, 5: Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 3-52.

J. Arnason, "Byzantium and Historical Sociology", in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 491-504.

Framing Paper 2: Europe's Byzantine Past, II: can we distinguish between the 'empire', the 'oikoumene' and the 'commonwealth'? How significant was Byzantine influence on neighbouring cultures? How did the Byzantines conceive of the natural world and other worlds?

Discussion: Byzantine World Views

Seminar discussion will be concerned with competing views of how the Byzantines themselves conceived of their world(s), including: *taxis* and the hierarchy of states; celestial and earthly hierarchy; the natural world and other worlds; invented traditions (the patriographical tradition, historical fictions, e.g. "the Bulgar-slayer")

G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine emperor and the hierarchical world order", *Slavonic and East European Review* 35 (1956) 1-14.

H. Maguire, "The Heavenly Court", in H. Maguire, ed., *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington, DC, 1997), pp. 247-58.

H. Maguire, "The profane aesthetic in Byzantine art and literature," *DOP* 53 (1999) 189-205.

W. Woodfin, "Celestial Hierarchies and Earthly Hierarchies in the Art of the Byzantine Church", in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 303-19.

J. Baun, "Middle Byzantine Tours of Hell", in D. Smythe, ed., *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 47-60.

Parastaseis syntomoi chronikai (NB correct spelling):

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/kis/schools/hums/byzmodgreek/Z304/Parastaseis.htm>

C. Mango, "Antique statuary and the Byzantine beholder," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963) 53-75.

P. Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 49-96.

Framing Paper 3: Byzantium's European Future, I: Rediscovering the Byzantine past in nineteenth-century Europe.

Discussion: Nineteenth-century visions of Byzantium

This session will address the various national, political, academic and romantic perspectives taken in the nineteenth century, including: British political pragmatism; Western European Philhellenism; Greek and Prussian Romanticism; Scientific positivism.

D. Reinsch, "The history of editing Byzantine historiographical texts," in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 435-44.

P. Kitromilides, "On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Papariggopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea", in D. Ricks and P. Magdalino, eds., *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity* (London, 1998), pp. 25-33.

D. Christodoulou, "Byzantium in Nineteenth-century Greek Historiography", in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 445-61.

P. Stephenson, *The Legend of Basil the Bulgar-slayer* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 97-137.

P. Stephenson, "E. A. Freeman (1823-92), a neglected commentator on Byzantium and Modern Greece. With an appendix: the letters exchanged by George Finlay and E. A. Freeman preserved among the Finlay Papers at the British School at Athens," *Revue Historique / Historical Review* 4 (2007): 119-56.

S. Pirivatrić, "A Case Study in the Emergence of Byzantine Studies: Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 481-90.

Framing Paper 4: Byzantium's European Future, II: Byzantium in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Europe.

Discussion: The Byzantine Past in Modern Europe

This session will address how aspects of the Byzantine past have been discussed in the twentieth century western Europe (notably Britain and the USA), and in scientific congresses and exhibitions throughout Europe and in the USA; and further how the Byzantine past has been employed, or ignored, in discussions of European identity.

A. Cameron, "Bury, Baynes and Toynbee", in R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys, eds., *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 163-75.

J. Lowden, "Byzantium Perceived through Illuminated Manuscripts: then and now", in R. Cormack and E. Jeffreys, eds., *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes* (Aldershot, 2000), pp. 85-106.

M. Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, "L'histoire des Congrès Internationaux des études byzantines, I", *Byzantina Symmeikta* 18 (2008) 11-34. <http://www.byzsym.org/index.php/bz/issue/view/99>

S. Maufroy, "Les premiers congrès internationaux des études byzantines: entre nationalisme scientifique et construction internationale d'une discipline", *Revue germanique internationale* 12 (2010), 229-40 = *La fabrique internationale de la science: Les congrès scientifiques de 1865 à 1945*, eds. Pascale Rabault-F Feuerhahn et Wolf Feuerhahn. The other articles in this collection may provide useful context: <http://rgi.revues.org/236>

A. Cameron, "The Absence of Byzantium", *Nea Hestia* 82/i (2008) 4-59; and the many responses in subsequent fascicles of *Nea Hestia* (largely in Greek).

P. Stephenson, "Byzantium's European Future?", in P. Stephenson, ed., *The Byzantine World* (London and New York, 2010), pp. 505-9.

Six Further Sessions

Class participants will be responsible for defining the topics and presenting framing papers for further discussion. Approaches may include paired presentations, contrasting Southeastern European perspectives with those held in Northern Europe and North America; or a paper may approach one or more regional perspectives, for example comparing and contrasting American and French, British and German, or even Russian approaches to the Byzantine past. The main limits to the range of discussion will be our linguistic competencies and the resources available to us, and hence the answers we are able to offer rather than the questions we would wish to ask.

Topics to address in detail may include (but are not limited to):

The Greek approach to Byzantium in the 19th century

A very great deal has been written on this, and everyone must gain some knowledge of the issues. Those presenting can select a particular author or provocative framing question, for example: What role did the Megale Idea play in the rise of Byzantine scholarship? Was Papariggopoulos a student of Byzantium or medieval Greece? (Avoid the Bulgar-slayer!)

The Foreign Schools in Athens: an absence of Byzantium?

Have the various schools, principally but not exclusively the American, British and French Schools of Archaeology in Athens, neglected the Byzantine past? If so, why? How far has this been remedied in recent decades? Why?

The US reception of Byzantium: Popular history and fiction in the twentieth century

How is Byzantium viewed by the general public in the USA? What resources have been available for Byzantine instruction at school and college? How has this changed? Can we measure the impact of certain works, for example a text for younger readers by Thomas Caldecott Chubb (whose papers, including typescripts of the book, are in the Yale archives: a decent little project for someone)? What role have immigrant scholars played? What roles have immigrant communities played in the reception and dissemination of Byzantine knowledge?

US reception of Byzantium: collecting and displaying Byzantine art and artefacts

How, when and why were Byzantine artefacts brought to the USA? What is the balance between private and public collecting and enterprise? How were the great museum collections formed, and

where? What role did temporary exhibitions play in disseminating knowledge? How do we contrast early collecting with modern theft and sale of antiquities? How did the Getty and the Met. Acquire artefacts? Who is General Cesnola? Note the New State Dept. MOU with Greece:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/07/168670.htm>

The State Department also maintains image databases of restricted items, see for example Cyprus: <http://exchanges.state.gov/heritage/culprop/cyimage.html>

British reception of Byzantium, 19th-20th centuries

Similar questions may be asked of the British, where collecting began still earlier. The first exhibition was in 1851, at the Crystal Palace in London: How Byzantine was this? What role was played by emigrant scholars, such as George Finlay, and politically active scholars in Britain, for example E.A. Freeman? What is the importance of the "Eastern Question"? How and to what extent did excavations change perceptions and augment collections?

French and German receptions of Byzantium, 19th-20th centuries

Similar questions, and contrasting attitudes, may be addressed to the French and Germans by those able to read the necessary languages. How far does popular and academic understanding diverge?

To what extent might, or should a Mediterranean/European identity be constructed on Byzantine identity?

A theme that could bring us right up to date, or not. Why has Byzantium been absent from discussions of European identity? Consider too Sarkozy's idea of a Mediterranean Union, linking lands to the south and north, and the east of the Middle Sea: is there a role for Byzantium here? Does Byzantium, as it was or as we have imagined it, offer a model for interaction between Christian, Muslim and Jewish peoples?

For Classicists, Medievalists and Ottomanists:

Options are many, and may build on themes discussed in the first framing papers, for example: Was there a Byzantine Commonwealth? How was Constantinople reimagined by its inhabitants throughout its history? Is Byzantine literature a European literature? How far do Byzantine ways of seeing build on ancient Greek models?