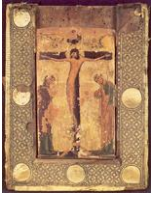


MA 2022-23



***Byzantium and its rivals  
Art, display and cultural identity in the Christian and Islamic Mediterranean***

**Preliminary Information**

Dear all,

This letter is to **welcome** you to the MA next year, and to provide you with some preliminary information. I am looking forward to meeting you all in person in the Autumn and to working with you throughout the coming year.

In this letter I provide some ideas for preliminary reading, and some information about the course as a whole.

**The timetable:**

The course will be based around two meetings per week, and will include a mixture of lectures, discussions, presentations and essays. These classes include some methodology discussion lectures and other classes which you will share with students taking other MA special options. I will be in touch closer to the term to let you know what the exact timetable will be.

**The course:**

The course covers the art of Byzantium, and that of its neighbours and rivals between, approximately, the end of Iconoclasm in the ninth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century [the bookends, in terms of Byzantine art are the new mosaics in Constantinople/Istanbul: the apse mosaics in Hagia Sophia in the 860s and those in the narthex of the Chora Monastery (the Kariye Camii) in 1315-21]. There is some flexibility here so that we can adjust the teaching to fit everyone's particular interests.

The course roughly divides in two: the first half examines key issues in the study of Byzantine art in the Middle Byzantine period ranging from mosaic churches to icons and ivories. This is to ensure everyone has an equal grounding in Byzantine art. It is against this core of material and ideas that we can compare the art of its neighbours. The second part expands the geographical horizons of the course to examine the role played by art in the cultures surrounding the Byzantine empire, both Christian and Muslim. In particular, we will look at the role played by art in the display of cultural and religious identities, and the degree to which this was defined by the emulation and appropriation of Byzantine art in these cultures. We will use particular sites, such as Jerusalem, Ani, Palermo and Venice as case studies.

The scale of the material available means that the classes aim to introduce you to important monuments from each era and area, and so allow you to see the wealth of material that is available for you to choose to study for your essays and MA dissertation. The field has been radically transformed in recent years by the discovery and publication of an enormous amount of new materials, particularly painted icons. In addition, there is now a growing interest in the arts of the Seljuqs and of the Caucasus, as well as an ever-expanding literature on the crusades and on medieval Venice.

In the course of the term we expect to cover all major art types: architecture and liturgical furnishings [iconostasis]; wall paintings, mosaics and manuscripts; metalwork, enamels and ivories.

Some of the key themes that we will look at include:

- relations between centre and periphery within the empire, and between the empire and its neighbours
- varieties of patronage in the Byzantine world and their interpretation
- notions of portability & exchange; gifts & trade

- relations between art and text
- the icon; changes in religious expression and the relation between art and liturgy
- the uses to which Byzantine art was put by its rivals, appropriation and emulation
- the use of art to promote cultural and religious identities throughout the eastern Mediterranean

### Preparation for the course

Before the course begins, there are a number of practical things you can do, if you have the time and opportunity. The two best are to **look at objects and monuments**, either in museums or on site if you are travelling, and to do **some basic reading**.

Given the range of the course, it is difficult to recommend any single book that can introduce you to everything that we will look at. The closest are the catalogues of the Byzantine exhibitions at the Met in New York: *The Glory of Byzantium* in 1997 and *Byzantium: Faith and Power* in 2004. Both are expensive (but also available in paperback), however, you can download them both for free from the Met website: <http://www.metmuseum.org/research/metpublications>. (You can also download the catalogues of the 'prequel' exhibitions: *Byzantium and Islam* (2012), and the rather drier *Age of Spirituality* (1979) which cover the third to eighth centuries between them). They are all extremely useful visual surveys of the materials that we cover.

*The Glory of Byzantium* covers the rough geographical and chronological scope of the course. It introduces all the major cultural centres that we will look at over the year, but it is, of course, restricted to the portable arts (and within that to the most aesthetically pleasing objects). We will also examine wall paintings, individual buildings and ensembles such as the cities of Ani and Konya. Despite the dates given in its title, the 2004 exhibition *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* also includes considerable materials from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries which are of great importance to us (notably the chapters by Annemarie Weyl Carr and Scott Redford, and the catalogue entries on icons from Sinai and Venice).

For an idea of my approach to this material, you can look at Antony Eastmond, *Tamta's World: the life and encounters of a medieval noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), which gives a good flavour of the 'rivals' element of the course. You can find many of my other articles – as well as a huge amount of work by other scholars – on academia.edu – all free to access.

### Reading

\**The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261* (New York, 1997) eds. Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom.

\**Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)* (New York, 2004), ed. Helen C. Evans

### Byzantium

If you want good, basic introductions to most aspects of **Byzantine art**, look at:

Linda Safran, ed., *Heaven of Earth. Art and Church in Byzantium* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1998)

Robin Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 2000) [good for ideas]

John Lowden, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (London, 1997) [wider coverage of monuments and facts]

Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki eds, *Byzantium 330-1453* (London: Royal Academy, 2008)

For **Byzantine culture and history**, see:

Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Oxford, 2006)

Cyril Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome*, (London, 1980) [rather a cynical overview of the culture], or

Michael Angold, *Byzantium: the bridge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London, 2001)

For more advanced reading:

Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence* (Chicago, 1994). This is a translation of a long German overview of the icon in East and West. We will use the book on the course piecemeal, but you might want to start reading it in advance.

For a study of the provinces of the empire look at:

Annabel Wharton, *Art of Empire. Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery* (University Park and London, 1988)

For some recent, stimulating books that look at a sequence of works of art and try to contextualise them in interesting ways see:

Alicia Walker, *The Emperor and the World. Exotic Elements and the Imaging of Middle Byzantine Imperial Power, Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries C.E.* (Cambridge, 2012)

Cecily Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy in an Age of Decline* (Cambridge, 2014)

Ivan Drpić, *Epigram, art, and devotion in Later Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2016)

Roland Bettancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality: Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2020)

### *Byzantium's neighbours*

The best way to get an overview of the peoples around Byzantium is also by looking at recent exhibition catalogues:

- *Jerusalem 1000-1400: Every People under Heaven*, eds Barbara D. Boehm and Melanie Holcomb (New York, 2016)
- *Court and cosmos: the great age of the Seljuqs*, ed. Sheila R. Canby (New York, 2016)
- *L'Orient de Saladin: l'art sous les Ayyoubides*, ed. Éric Delpont, (Paris, 2002)
- *Armenia Sacra. Mémoire chrétienne des Arméniens (IVe-XVIIIe siècle)*, eds Jannic Durand, Ioanna Rapti, and Dorota Giovannoni, (Paris, 2007)
- *Turks. A journey of a thousand years, 600-1600*, ed. David Roxburgh, (London, 2005)
- *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, ed. David Buckton, (Milan, 1984)

Although most of the literature you will use in the course is in English, sometimes knowledge of Greek (ancient, medieval or modern; even to be able to read the alphabet and so decipher saints' names in inscriptions is a huge advantage), Latin, French, Italian and German can be useful. Any work you do on extending your knowledge of these languages will be a benefit. None of these languages are a requirement for the course; but if you want to do further research after the MA, these (and other) languages become increasingly necessary.

If you have the opportunity to see any Byzantine materials in museums and galleries in any country over the Summer, look carefully and train yourself to describe what you see. If you are travelling anywhere, please contact me if you want any advice as to things to see where you are going. I will be available over most of the summer on my email.

I hope that it will be possible to organise a group trip; but I am awaiting more information about budgets etc., so cannot yet confirm this.

If you want any further information between now and the start of the course, email me:  
antony.eastmond@courtauld.ac.uk

I look forward to welcoming you in October.

Antony Eastmond  
AG Leventis Professor of Byzantine Art  
03 May 2022