



Trajan's Column

History 300A.001/ 500A.001

Thomas Sizgorich

TR 2:00 – 3:15

This upper division undergraduate course will take as its centerpiece and starting point the Column of Trajan, which still stands in what remains of the Forum of Trajan in Rome. The Column tells the story of the emperor Trajan's second-century C.E. conquest of Dacia, in what is today Romania. In addition to telling us much about what Roman soldiers wore and what sorts of weapons they used, the Column provides us with a wonderful resource for understanding the ways in which the ancient Romans imagined the phenomenon of war itself, and more importantly the ways in which they thought about the issue of empire, the peoples who resided within their own imperial domains, and the role of civilization, culture, and identity in determining the forms that the imperial Roman world would take. In this course, we will look at the evolution of Rome as an imperial power through war, diplomacy, and various kinds of "cultural work," the ways in which the Romans imagined empire and their own role as an imperial people, and finally the ways in which those whom the Romans colonized negotiated their own positioning within the Roman world. We will look at a variety of primary sources, including the Column itself, the written and visual texts of other Roman imperial monuments, the writings of Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, Cicero, Seneca, Polybius, Strabo, Aelius Aristides, and other ancient authors. We will also look at the works of modern and classical scholars and theorists of empire and colonialism, including Susan Alcock, Greg Woolf, Clifford Ando, Jürgen Habermas, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha, among others.