

Fall 2011

**HISTORY 428 : ROMAN HISTORY A.D. 193 - 378
(Later Roman Empire)**

Instructor: Prof. Richard J.A. Talbert, Hamilton Hall 516 (tel. 962-3942; talbert@email.unc.edu)

The aim of the course is to consider the nature and development of the Roman empire during the third and fourth centuries A.D., with special reference to social, administrative and economic change. The course opens with an overview of the Roman world under the Severan emperors, and considers the significance of their impact upon it. The nature of the third-century crises is analysed next, with some evaluation of the efforts made by successive emperors to surmount them, in particular Gallienus and Diocletian. Among fourth-century rulers, special attention is paid to the crucial reigns of Constantine, Constantius, Julian and Valentinian. One major development of the period which receives close examination is the emergence of Christianity from a position of persecuted sect to that of officially recognised religion – despite an attempted pagan revival on the part of Julian. The growing complexity of the state's relationship with the church is traced principally through materials relating to Donatism in North Africa. Among other important trends discussed are major changes in taxation, city-life and the army, as well as the growth of compulsory direction of labor, both in agriculture and elsewhere. Altogether, the course offers an opportunity to evaluate the factors serving alternately to divide and unify the empire – as well as to strengthen and weaken it – in an absorbing, formative era when it was subject to intense pressures.

Throughout, stress is laid upon use of source material (all in translation), most notably official documents, legal texts, speeches, and the greatest historian of the period, Ammianus Marcellinus. With the benefit of the ample guidance that the course offers, you are expected to read widely among ancient authors and modern scholarship, as well as to take an informed part in class discussion. You must be willing to articulate your findings to the class, and to react to those of others in a positive spirit. Marked importance attaches to the written and oral contributions of class members.

Word to the wise: If this will be the first Roman history course you ever take, you'd be well advised to hesitate. Consider choosing instead either Hist 106 (Fall 2011) or Hist 226 (Spring 2012); and/or have a word with Prof. Talbert before you commit to the course!