Emperors of Rome

Part I

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Professor Fagan has an extensive research record in Roman history and has held a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at the University of Cologne, Germany. He has published numerous articles in international journals, and his first monograph, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (1999), was published by the University of Michigan Press. An edited volume, *Archaeological Fantasies*, on the phenomenon of pseudoarchaeology (also known as "alternative" archaeology), appeared in 2006 with Routledge of London (U.K.). Professor Fagan is currently completing a book on spectatorship at the Roman arena and an edited volume on ancient warfare.

Table of Contents

Emperors of Rome
Part I

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Scope:

It has been claimed that the Roman emperors were the most powerful people who ever lived. At their height, they presided over a realm with footholds on three continents and a population of some 60 million souls. They had at their fingertips the wealth and resources of some of the richest lands on Earth. This course examines these emperors in all their fascinating diversity, from the enlightened and conscientious to the feckless and deranged.

The course is essentially a series of biographic portraits, from Augustus, Julius Caesar's grandnephew, to Constantine, who, in my view, was the last Roman emperor and the first medieval monarch. Along the way we will see what sort of men these emperors were. What background and training, if any, prepared them for their awesome responsibilities? What achievements can they claim? What depravities did they display? As the course progresses, we will also come to see the strengths and weaknesses of the available historical sources—how reliable they are and how skeptical we must be of many of them. We proceed chronologically and examine emperors by successive dynasty. When dynasties fail, we look at the main players in the civil wars fought to sort out who would found the next dynasty.

Aside from such issues as these, four other matters will command our attention in varying degrees as we proceed. First, what was the role of imperial women at court? From what source did they draw their power? How did they exercise that power? Second, what was the relationship of the emperor to different groups in Roman society: to the city of Rome, the provinces, the Senate, the people, and the army? How was the empire run, and what was the role of the emperor in that system? Third, linked to the second, what was the shape of the political and social system that gave the emperor his position of dominance? Finally, any serious student of history requires, at the very least, notification of where the main scholarly debates lie in a given field of study. I draw attention to some of these debates as we go along.

Our first two lectures set the stage, initially with a review of the primary sources on which such a course depends—literary sources, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological finds—followed by an examination of the political character of the Roman Republic, the soil from which the emperors sprang. The next 14 lectures address the best documented imperial dynasty, the Julio-Claudians, which started with Augustus in 31 B.C., and ended in A.D. 68 with Nero, who had so thoroughly rid himself of rivals that his death not only brought about the end of his dynasty but left a political vacuum as well.

In A.D. 69, four emperors reigned, with Vespasian finally coming to power and establishing the Flavian Dynasty, which takes us through Lecture Nineteen. The Senate's selection of Nerva in A.D. 96 set in motion another succession of

rulers, covered in Lectures Twenty through Twenty-Four, including, among others, Antoninus Pius (one of the handful of emperors to die peacefully in his bed) and the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Lecture Twenty-Five marks a transition from one era of imperial history to another, with civil war and the establishment of the Severan Dynasty in 193; Lecture Twenty-Six covers the tumultuous years that followed and the dynasty's collapse with the death of Severus Alexander in 235.

In the next five lectures, we break from the biographic and chronological path and take a thematic route, looking closely at the emperors' relationships over the decades to different entities in Roman society: the city of Rome itself, the provinces of the empire, the elite, the people, and the army. My hope is to address some issues that my focus on the lives and deeds of the individual rulers might otherwise have obscured.

We resume our chronological path with Lecture Thirty-Two, aptly named "Chaos." To illustrate how completely and quickly the situation deteriorated after the collapse of the Severan Dynasty, we need only note that in the 265 years between the rise of Augustus and the death of Severus Alexander, there were 24 legitimate emperors and 15 claimants; in the 50 years between the death of Severus Alexander in 235 and the accession of Diocletian, there were 21 legitimate emperors, 38 claimants, and 11 secessionist rulers. This lecture outlines the problems that generated this instability, then studies the reigns of four legitimate emperors as exemplars for how these problems played out during this difficult time.

Lecture Thirty-Three covers the founding of Diocletian's Tetrarchy and the reestablishment of order between 285 and 305. Lectures Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five examine the rise and reign of Constantine, whose conversion to Christianity and founding of Constantinople were to change the face of history. In my final lecture, I share some thoughts on this imperial roster and its fascinating parade of characters, examining in particular why the popular perception of "good" and "bad" emperors should be viewed with a skeptical eye and proposing that we use a different and far more accurate lens to assess the emperors of Rome.

Lecture One

The Shape of Roman Imperial History

Scope: The republican era of Rome dates from 509 to 31 B.C., and the most momentous and violent political upheavals in Roman history took place toward the end of that period. This course focuses on what came next, the rule of the emperors from Augustus to Constantine. These lectures are, essentially, a series of biographic portraits, sometimes encompassing towering achievement and progress and other times taking us into some of the darkest recesses of the human condition.

After discussing an overview of the course and defining the term *Roman imperial history*, we will survey the ancient sources available for a study of Rome's emperors: literary works, official inscriptions, physical remains of structures erected by emperors, and coins stamped with official messages of the emperors. While each source has its strengths and weaknesses, each of them also sheds light, in its own way, on this most intriguing and significant time in human history.

Outline

I. This course focuses on the rule of the Roman emperors, concentrating on the personalities and actions of the rulers from Augustus to Constantine.

- **A.** In addition to looking at what sort of men these emperors were, we will look at their awesome responsibilities, their achievements, and on occasion, their depravities.
- **B.** Four other matters will also command our attention.
  1. What was the role of imperial women at court, and how did they exercise their power?
  2. What was the relationship of the emperor to different groups in Roman society—the city of Rome, the provinces, the Senate, the people, and the army?
  3. What was the shape of the political and social system that gave the emperor his position of dominance?
  4. What are the main scholarly debates that still exist in the study of Roman imperial history?

II. The public thinks of history as a story about great and significant figures, usually men, who are believed to shape events.

- **A.** Professional scholars, in contrast, tend to see history more as a matter of impersonal forces working themselves out:
- **B.** This course takes the position that a mixture of the two shaped Roman history.

III. Now, let's turn to an overview of the course.

A. Between Augustus, who established the *Principate* in 31 B.C., and Severus Alexander, who was murdered by his own troops in A.D. 235, there were 24 legitimate emperors. The length of their reigns ranged from Augustus's 45 years to the 66-day rule of Didius Julianus.

B. The 50-year period following Severus Alexander was one of great instability: It saw some 21 legitimate emperors and 38 usurpers; all of the latter perished violently as did all but three of the legitimate rulers.

C. After Diocletian reestablished order between 285 and 305, matters settled down some but not entirely, as we will see.

IV. The broad shape of Roman imperial history alternates between relatively stable dynasties and periods of civil war or, in the mid-3rd century, sustained chaos.

A. Note that the term *Roman imperial history* refers to the period of rule by the emperors, beginning with Augustus in 31 B.C.

B. Therefore, Roman imperial history refers not to the period of Rome's territorial supremacy, which was established under the republic, but to governance by the emperors that supplanted the republican oligarchy.

C. We proceed chronologically and examine emperors by successive dynasty. We pause occasionally to examine particularly powerful women at court, relevant scholarly debates, and in later lectures, the emperor's relationship to different groups in Roman society.

V. Before proceeding, it is vital to appreciate the strengths and limitations of the source material available for the study of the Roman emperors.

A. As with all ancient history, the primary sources are literary works, official inscriptions, physical remains of structures erected by emperors, and coins stamped with official messages of the emperors.

B. Ideally, all these classes of material can be deployed in unison, but rarely does such a fortuitous convergence.

1. For Augustus and the Julio-Claudian Dynasty that followed him (down to A.D. 68), we have relatively full written accounts, supplemented by coins and inscriptions. This richness begins to thin out with the Flavians (A.D. 69–96) and runs out entirely for Trajan and much of the 2nd century. For that era, we must rely on Byzantine summaries of lost earlier works and on coins and inscriptions.

2. With Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, and the Severan Dynasty that followed (roughly A.D. 160–235), literary evidence again becomes more plentiful, supplemented by coins and inscriptions. Darkness descends again for much of the 3rd century, until Diocletian and Constantine.

VI. The literary sources for the Roman emperors are those polished, essentially artificial works of literature composed by ancient Romans and preserved by a process of copying through the centuries.

A. Ancient literature stems from the upper classes and was composed by men, most of whom lived in Rome. It is, thus, bounded by class, gender, and geography.

B. The most directly pertinent literary sources imaginable for Roman emperors would be imperial memoirs published by the men themselves.

1. We know that several emperors wrote such memoirs, notably Augustus, Claudius, and Septimius Severus, but none of their works has survived.

2. Only two emperors have left us works by their own hands: Augustus and Marcus Aurelius.

C. The most directly pertinent literary sources for the emperors are the ancient historians.

1. Of these, the greatest is Cornelius Tacitus (c. A.D. 56–120), who wrote the *Histories* and the *Annals*.

2. As a secretary to Hadrian, Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (c. A.D. 70–130) wrote biographical portraits known today as *The Twelve Caesars*, stretching from Julius Caesar to Domitian.

3. Lucius Cassius Dio (c. A.D. 164–230) composed a global history of Rome in 80 books.

4. For many of the 3rd-century emperors down to Diocletian, we encounter what is perhaps the strangest source in all of ancient history: the *Historia Augusta*.

D. In addition to writers of history, there are contemporary authors who provide insight into the rule of the emperors.

1. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 B.C.–A.D. 65) was deeply embedded in the Julio-Claudian Dynasty. His literary output was impressive, including letters, tragedies, speeches, and philosophical treatises.

2. The major literary contribution of Pliny the Younger (c. A. D. 61–112) is a collection of stylized letters published in 10 books, which are excellent documents for the Roman senatorial lifestyle and sensibilities of his day.

VII. Ancient Mediterranean cultures inscribed important documents on stone.

A. Inscriptions relevant to the study of emperors include epitaphs of dead emperors and members of the imperial house, senatorial decrees, imperial rescripts or edicts, decrees of local authorities, and sometimes, copies of correspondence between local communities and emperors.

B. Particularly noteworthy are lists of consuls, termed *fasti*, with notations of historical events appended as they occurred. These were erected in Rome and other cities.

C. Another useful source is the so-called *Acts of the Arval Brethren*, whose minutes, carved on stone, survive in fragments and record such events as imperial births and deaths, conspiracies uncovered, and so on.

VIII. Roman imperial coins were minted under state contracts and paid primarily to soldiers.

A. On the *obverse* side of the coin is usually found the head of the emperor in profile. On the *reverse* is found the "message" of the coin: symbolic images, usually accompanied by text.

B. A series of coins can confirm and corroborate the accounts in the literary sources, but such neat convergences are the exception.

IX. Finally, we turn to archaeological evidence, that is, the remains of buildings erected by and for the emperors.

A. These are mostly found at Rome itself, the chief beneficiary of the resident emperor's largesse.

B. We will survey the various emperors' building activities in Rome as we proceed and assess the value and implications of such material in adding to our understanding.

X. As we will see, each source has its strengths and weaknesses, and we will return to these issues as we proceed through the course.

Essential Reading:

Crawford, *Sources for Ancient History*.

Supplementary Reading:

Biers, *Art, Artefacts and Chronology*.

Bodel, *Epigraphic Evidence*.

Finley, *Evidence and Models*.

Oxford Classical Dictionary, 3rd ed. (for information about individual ancient authors).

Questions to Consider:

1. Which class of evidence is, to your mind, the most essential for studying the Roman emperors?

2. What peculiar pressures does the nature of the evidence for Roman history put on the modern student?

Lecture Two
The Roman Republic

Scope: Before there were emperors, there was the Roman Republic. The republic had been founded in 509 B.C. in reaction to monarchy and had retained as a core element in its political ideology a strong aversion to imposed one-man rule. In this lecture, we investigate the political character of the republic—rule by the Senate, people, and magistrates—especially in light of a recent and heated debate about whether or not the system was more or less "democratic" or "oligarchic." The most important characteristics of the republic for understanding the events that follow are that it had no written constitution, that it was dominated by leading families who expected to pass prestige and political prominence down the dynastic tree, and that its institutions existed on the scale of a city-state. However, as the 2nd century B.C. drew to a close, these institutions were expected to regulate a Mediterranean-wide empire.

Outline

I. The Roman Republic was founded in 509 B.C., when the last of Rome's kings, Tarquin the Arrogant, was expelled.

- **A.** The king's former duties were distributed among several magistracies and priesthoods, staffed by Rome's leading families, who adopted a corporate identity in the form of the *Senate*, or Council of Elders.
- **B.** Attached to the Senate was a corps of executive officers, the *magistrates*. The most important of the magistrates were those imbued with the quality of *imperium*, or the power of command.
- **C.** Every year, two *consuls* were elected who presided over the Senate, put proposals to it, and raised and commanded the armies of Rome.
- **D.** The *praetors* were assistant consuls who held lesser *imperium* than the consuls, but whose main duties lay in the judicial sphere.
- **E.** Every fifth year, a special election was held to chose two *censors* from among the ex-consuls. The censors carried out the census of Roman citizens, let contracts for public works, and reviewed the rolls of the Senate for deadbeats and the morally offensive, whom they could expel.
- **F.** The extraordinary office of the *dictatorship* was empowered only in emergencies.

II. The Senate had no legislative power; laws were enacted by a vote of the people convened into one of four voting assemblies.

A. One assembly was called the *comitia centuriata*, or Centuriate Assembly, which grouped citizens into 193 voting units called *centuries*.

1. The Centuriate Assembly elected the consuls and praetors annually and the censors every five years. It also voted on issues of war and peace and had judicial functions.

2. Voting descended from the wealthiest centuries down to the poorest in a strict order. Once a majority was reached (in this case, 97 centuries), voting stopped.

B. The other important popular assembly was the Tribal Assembly of the Plebs.

1. The Tribal Assembly of the Plebs was convened by special officers called *tribunes of the plebs*. All patricians were barred.

2. The Tribal Assembly grouped citizens into 35 voting units called *tribes*.

3. The tribunes of the plebs, 10 of whom were elected annually, were to look out for the interests of the plebs. The tribunes could put proposals to the Tribal Assembly and have them voted on. If passed, these proposals, called *plebiscita*, carried the force of law.

4. The tribunes of the plebs had an absolute veto over any assembly, Senate meeting, or magistrate's action.

C. This system of governance was nowhere recorded as a constitution; rather, only parts of it were written into law. Many of the procedures were a matter of habit, forged in the past and sanctioned by tradition.

III. Typically, a piece of legislation took the following route through the Roman system.

A. First, consuls convened the Senate and put a proposal to it. The matter was debated and voted on by a physical division of the house. Then, a senatorial decree was issued.

B. For the decree to become law, the people had to vote on it in a formally convened assembly; typically, the Tribal Assembly was chosen for this.

C. The tribunes debated the senatorial decree in a series of informal meetings in the Forum. Then, a voting assembly of the plebs was formally convened.

D. The decree was then put to the vote. If passed, it became law.

IV. German scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries noted that in the *fasti*, the lists of consuls, the same names appeared repeatedly across generations. The study of such people and their family connections is termed *prosopography*.

A. These prosopographical investigations of Rome were set against the social backdrop of widespread patronage in Roman society, leading to a rigidly oligarchic view of the republic.

B. There is little doubt about the usefulness of prosopography for understanding Roman history, but scholars have expressed skepticism about the wider political landscape its advocates claimed to discern.

C. Based on various observations, a group of scholars has advocated a more democratic view of the Roman Republic. In this view, the republic was a democracy with oligarchic elements.

D. In the end, the reality is that the same people *do* show up repeatedly from the same families. For this reason, scholar Alexander Yakobson concludes that the Roman Republic was neither a true oligarchy nor a true democracy. Rather, it was a democratic oligarchy.

V. Before we move on to the career of Julius Caesar and his most influential predecessors, we need to stress three key features of the Roman Republic.

A. First, in the absence of a written constitution, the republic relied on a deep respect for tradition and precedent.

B. Second, the consular lists leave no doubt that a few leading families enjoyed the lion's share of political prominence in the republic.

C. Third, the republic was essentially a city-state system of governance, a small-scale affair, conducted face-to-face in assemblies where physical presence was requisite. The expectation that government was immediate and accessible to citizens long persisted under the emperors.

VI. Under the Republic, Rome went from Latin town to imperial capital of the Mediterranean, but the pressures exerted by empire would tear this system to pieces, as we shall see.

Essential Reading:

Millar, *The Crowd in Rome*.

Supplementary Reading:

Mouritsen, *Plebs and Politics*.

Scullard, *Roman Politics*.

Yakobson, *Elections and Electioneering*.

Questions to Consider:

1. All things considered, does the Roman Republic strike you as more "democratic" or more "oligarchic"? Indeed, to what extent are these labels appropriate to Roman conditions at all?

2. What four features of Roman republican politics strike you as the most important for understanding why the system collapsed and led to the institution of monarchy?

Lecture Three

Caesar and the Suicide of the Republic

Scope: Beginning in 133 B.C., the Roman Republic began to unravel. This process has been charted in greater detail in my Teaching Company course, *The History of Ancient Rome*, but here we briefly recap the main events and focus more closely on analyzing their meaning. The *late republic*, as the period 133–31 B.C. is often termed, provided the stage-set for the reign of the emperors, and in this period can be found the seeds of imperial rule. We pay close attention to those events and developments that elucidate this point, particularly the career and assassination of Gaius Julius Caesar. Although he was not an emperor, Caesar did more than anyone in this period to create the conditions that led to the reintroduction of monarchy to Rome.

Outline

I. The collapse of the Roman Republic has been interpreted in various ways—by prosopographers, Marxists, and others.

A. Put simply, the republic was a city-state mode of governance that proved structurally incapable of running a Mediterranean-wide empire.

B. Contemporary writers believed Romans had become lazy, avaricious, ambitious, and arrogant, unlike the virtuous ancestors of old.

C. What had really changed, however, by the late 2nd century B.C., was that the leaders of the Roman Republic found themselves in charge of an empire stretching from Spain to Turkey. In this new context, the traditional way of doing things was not up to the task.

II. The beginning of the slide into monarchy was innocuous enough: nothing more than a tribune of the plebs proposing a land distribution bill.

A. Tiberius Gracchus's proposed land bill of 133 B.C. is important not so much for its content as for the methods he chose to get it passed. He bypassed the Senate and proposed his bill to the Assembly of the Plebs.

1. To save the republic from nascent mob rule, a group of senators beat Tiberius and 300 of his supporters to death.

2. Note that Tiberius Gracchus had done nothing illegal or technically wrong: He merely flexed the political muscle of the tribunate.

B. Tiberius's brother, Gaius Gracchus, was tribune of the plebs in 123 and 122 B.C. He introduced a series of laws to empower groups other than the Senate, such as the *equites* (knights). Unfortunately, Gaius shared his brother's fate: He and 3,000 of his supporters were killed.

C. In the following decades, the center of political gravity gradually shifted from the civic forum to the army camp. The first instigator of this shift was the new man Gaius Marius, who rose from obscurity to political prominence in the last decade of the 2nd century B.C.

1. Among his troops, Marius regularized a recruiting practice that had previously been exceptional: the enrollment into the legions of landless levees. Traditionally, only men meeting a certain property qualification could pass muster.

2. The problem with this development was that the troops looked on their generals as their patrons, who would secure them land and a decent living on discharge. To secure such land grants, the generals, in turn, looked to the newly empowered tribunes.

3. Given that all legionaries, even the landless ones, were Roman citizens, the discharged troops themselves could turn up at the assemblies to make sure things went their way. Thus, Roman politics came to be characterized by intimidation, violence, and finally, open warfare.

D. It was not Marius, however, who upped the ante on the army's involvement in politics but his rival, Lucius Cornelius Sulla.

1. In 88 B.C., the Senate assigned Sulla, then consul, an army to fight a foreign foe in the east. By vote of an assembly, a tribune had awarded the same eastern command to Marius.

2. The conflict between the Marians and the Sullans ultimately resulted in open warfare across Italy. The victorious Sulla had himself declared dictator and, using his broad powers, decreed into being a reactionary conservative order.

3. The pattern of Roman politics was now in place: Powerful generals at the head of armies loyal to themselves set the political agenda and jockeyed for primacy.

E. This was the political landscape that confronted a young aristocrat born to a patrician but eclipsed family in 100 B.C.: Gaius Julius Caesar.

III. Though not himself an emperor, Caesar is so central to the emergence of Roman emperorship that his career warrants detailed scrutiny.

A. Until the late 60s B.C., Caesar's public career was unexceptionable.

B. In 61 B.C., as propraetor in Spain, Caesar campaigned to make a name for himself on the battlefield, and his success there led to the first clear indications of his political opportunism.

C. By the time Caesar returned from Spain in the summer of 60 B.C., political tensions in Rome were running high.

1. Pompey, Rome's leading general, had returned from the east three years earlier, and his requests to have his eastern settlements ratified and land granted to his veterans were being stymied by a faction of ultraconservative senators led by Marcus Porcius Cato

(Cato the Younger). Pompey's longstanding rival, the wealthy patrician Marcus Licinius Crassus, was enjoying Pompey's political discomfort.

2. When Caesar returned to Rome, he petitioned to be allowed to stand for the office of consul *in absentia*, so that he could also receive his triumphal procession for his military victories in Spain, but his petition was denied by Cato and his supporters.
3. Caesar then sought to reconcile Crassus and Pompey and to join with them in a political pact. The result was the so-called *First Triumvirate*, formed before the consular elections of 60 B.C.
4. The combined resources of the three proved unstoppable in the elections, and Caesar became consul for the following year. His revolutionary impulses were now given free rein.
5. Caesar intimidated his colleagues into ineffectuality, browbeat the Senate, and as consul, had legislation passed through popular assemblies that were marked by tumult and disorder. His program was focused on benefiting himself, Pompey, and Crassus.

D. When his consulship was over, Caesar left for Gaul and spent the next nine years adding all of modern-day France and Belgium, as well as parts of Holland, Germany, and Switzerland, to the Roman Empire.

E. In 56 B.C., Caesar met with Pompey and Crassus and renewed their pact.

F. Toward the end of the decade, with Caesar still embroiled in Gaul, two events took place that fatally weakened the tripartite pact.

1. First, Crassus died in 53 B.C. in an unprovoked war he had launched against the neighboring Parthian Empire.
2. Second, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, Julia, died in childbirth (as did the child); Pompey was offered Caesar's grand-niece in Julia's place, but he refused and married instead the daughter of a member of the anti-Caesar Catonian group.
3. From this time onward, Pompey was increasingly seduced by these ultraconservatives into thinking of himself as the republic's bastion of liberty against Caesar's threatened tyranny.

G. The Catonians and others had long petitioned for Caesar's recall to stand charges for his disgraceful behavior as consul in 59 B.C., as well as for a war in Gaul that many believed to be immoral and illegal. In 51 and 50 B.C., these petitions became more strident.

H. As his command in Gaul came to an end, Caesar faced a stark choice: leave his province and return to Rome as a private citizen or return to Rome under arms to defend his honor.

I. In January 49 B.C., the anti-Caesarian consuls called for Caesar to disband his army and return to Rome by a certain date or be considered a *hostis*, an enemy of the state. Caesar, after much thought, chose

armed insurrection and crossed out of Gaul into Italy under arms. He was now a rebel.

IV. Caesar's political actions during his brief period of domination proved fatal.

A. He disdained tradition and showed no interest in maintaining proper appearances. His inclination toward open autocracy was intensely distasteful to his peers.

B. His behavior prompts us to ask: What was Caesar thinking?

1. He may have considered himself to be above the traditional mores of the state.

2. Another possibility is that, after so many years on campaign, Caesar had grown accustomed to command.

3. Finally, facing so many enemies in the field at once, Caesar was given scant opportunity to work through the constitutional niceties of his position.

4. Whatever the case, there can be little doubt that Caesar's political actions seemed aimed at establishing an autocracy.

C. Suspicions arose that Caesar was trying to restore the despised kingship in form, if not in name.

D. On 15 March 44 B.C., Caesar paid the ultimate price for his political insensitivity. Isolated and surrounded while the horrified Senate looked on, he was cut down with 23 stab wounds.

Essential Reading:

Appian, *Civil Wars*, books 1–2.

Caesar, *Civil Wars*.

Plutarch; *Caesar*, *Brutus*, *Pompey*, *Crassus*, *Cicero*.

Suetonius, *Deified Julius*.

Supplementary Reading:

Gelzer, *Caesar*.

Goldsworthy, *Caesar*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What, in your opinion, are the three most important milestones in the collapse of the republic *before* Caesar's rise to prominence?

2. In what ways was Caesar's career and dominance a natural outgrowth of what came before, and in what ways did it mark a radical departure from precedent?

Lecture Four

The First Emperor—Augustus

Scope: The importance of Augustus to Roman (and European) history cannot be overstated. He brought an end to the civil wars that had torn the republic apart and established a system of governance that brought peace and prosperity to the empire. Yet for all the sources available to us, including his wholly unique political testament, the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, penned by the man himself, he remains one of the most enigmatic eminences of European history. The private person has been almost wholly subsumed behind the public façade. In this lecture, we outline Augustus's career from avenging revolutionary to senior statesman and briefly survey the main thrust of his domestic policies and the broad shape of culture in the Augustan Age.

Outline

I. Augustus was born Gaius Octavius in 63 B.C. to a relatively humble family, the Octavii of Velitrae, who held equestrian status.

- **A.** His father, also Gaius Octavius, was a wealthy senator, and his mother, Atia, was a niece of Julius Caesar.
- **B.** We know virtually nothing of Caesar's early dealings with his great-nephew, but he was clearly impressed with the young man.

II. The political prospects of the 18-year-old Octavius should have perished with Caesar, had it not been for a bombshell in Caesar's will: Octavius was posthumously adopted as Caesar's son and chief heir.

- **A.** Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, the young heir, faced a perilous road. The murderers of Caesar, termed the "Liberators," were still at large, and Caesar's followers naturally looked for leadership to Mark Antony.
- **B.** Against all advice, Octavian moved toward Rome, gathering a retinue of Caesarian veterans as he proceeded.
- **C.** A two-way power struggle developed, first, between the Caesarians and the Liberators and, second, between Octavian and Antony over leadership of the Caesarians and control of the entire Roman world.
  - **1.** After raising a private army from among Caesar's settled veterans, Octavian secured legitimacy for himself as a propraetor in opposition to Antony, who was under arms in northern Italy late in 44 and into 43. Octavian drove Antony over the Alps but was then rebuffed by the Senate.

2. Octavian seized Rome in the summer of 43, had himself elected consul, and set about securing his adoption, his inheritance, and the conviction *in absentia* and en masse of his father's murderers.
3. But his political position remained perilous. Antony had returned from across the Alps, and the Liberators had seized most of the eastern half of the empire. In a bold move, Octavian buried the hatchet with Antony, and the two confronted Brutus and Cassius.

D. This alliance, known as the *Second Triumvirate*, was formalized by law in November 43 B.C. Octavian, Antony, and one of Antony's generals, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, were nominated "triumvirs with consular power for organizing the state." In September and October 42 B.C., the Liberators were vanquished at Philippi in Greece, and Cassius and Brutus committed suicide.

E. Octavian took control of the western half of the empire, more or less, and Antony, of the east. Lepidus was sidelined in Africa.
1. The relationship between Antony and Octavian fluctuated between hostility and reconciliation, but it was always marked by mutual suspicion.
2. When Lepidus made a power grab in Sicily, he was removed from office, and Antony and Octavian were left to face off alone.

III. Up to this point, Octavian had been a radical revolutionary, shunned and snubbed by both Antony and the Senate.

A. One of the most remarkable things about Octavian, however, was his ability to think long-term.

B. Octavian established a reputation as one who was concerned with preserving traditions, respecting the law, and serving as guardian of the Latin West.

C. On 31 December 33 B.C., the triumvirate lapsed. In 32 B.C., pro-Antony senators abandoned Italy to join their general.
1. War was declared on Cleopatra, making this an "external," not a "civil," war. The real enemy, of course, was Antony and his supporters, Cleopatra among them.
2. Octavian, technically a private citizen, had no legal status at this time, but in reality, he was the preeminent military leader in the West. An oath of allegiance, supposedly spontaneous, taken to Octavian personally allowed him to claim himself the people's choice for the war on the foreign queen.

D. In 31 B.C., with Octavian consul again, the forces of East and West met in the Balkans. After a single day's fighting at sea on 2 September 31 B.C., off the promontory of Actium in western Greece, Antony's land forces promptly defected.

1. Octavian pursued the fleeing Antony and Cleopatra to Egypt. On his arrival in 30 B.C., they both committed suicide, and Egypt was annexed.
2. Amid scenes of tumultuous rejoicing, the victorious Octavian reentered Rome in 29 B.C.

E. Octavian changed his image yet again to fit his new circumstances; he became a senior statesman with a new name—Augustus, the first emperor of Rome.

IV. For the rest of this lecture, we will focus on Augustus's life and his achievement in restoring peace and stability to the empire.

A. Augustus significantly expanded the Roman Empire; indeed, with the exception of Britain and Dacia, added by later emperors, he brought the Roman Empire to the extent and borders familiar to most moderns.

B. As a result of his campaigns, Augustus celebrated six triumphal entries into Rome and received several salutations as *imperator* for military successes achieved on his behalf. Wisely, he also looked after the interests of the troops and kept them busy on campaign far from Rome.

C. Despite occasional health problems, Augustus conducted several tours of the provinces between 31 and 8 B.C. The provincials owed much to him for he brought to the provinces peace, prosperity, and responsible government after decades of civil war and maladministration.

D. In 28 B.C., Augustus trimmed the number of senators from 1,000 to 600, and several times after that, he reviewed the membership.

1. The Augustan Senate was quite different from the Senate faced by Caesar or Pompey. Most of the republican diehards were long since dead or marginalized, and even the anti-Augustan senators who had sided with Antony were outnumbered by Augustus's supporters.
2. In essence, the Senate's role had changed from that of the predominant organ of the Roman state to a pool of administrators from which Augustus might draw appointees for various offices.
3. A key element of the Augustan regime, however, was to disguise the Senate's diminished role as much as possible.
4. Augustus also increased the number of consulships every year to open the prestige of the office to more individuals and to create a larger pool of ex-consuls to fill senior posts in the administration.

E. Finally, Augustus patronized the equestrian class, and several new posts were created for equestrians only.

V. Augustus's posture as the defender of Roman tradition permeated his political acts and domestic policies.

A. Neglected religious rites and shrines were revived, and ancient priesthoods were restaffed with fresh personnel.

B. Augustus displayed a very Roman concern with respecting the differentiations of rank. Excessive displays of wealth were curbed.

C. Marriages between certain classes were banned, and Augustus punished the childless financially and rewarded those who had more than three children.

VI. Another major feature of the Augustan Age was patronage of the arts, particularly literature and architecture.

A. The *Res Gestae* lists the buildings Augustus erected, including the Forum of Augustus, his vast mausoleum, and the Altar of Augustan Peace.

B. In the sphere of letters, the Augustan Age saw a great flowering, directly stimulated by men close to Augustus.

1. His friend Gaius Maecenas acted as patron for such luminaries as Virgil, Horace, and Livy. Other authors, such as Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus were also funded by people close to the emperor.

2. Dissent was tolerated—up to a point. The poet Ovid was exiled to a trading post on the Black Sea for his humorous books called *The Art of Love*, which seemed to mock Augustus's conservative social agenda.

Essential Reading:

Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*.

Appian, *Civil Wars*, books 2–5.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 50–56.

Suetonius, *Deified Augustus*.

Supplementary Reading:

De Imperatoribus Romanis (*DIR*), "Augustus."

Southern, *Augustus*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was it possible for Antony and Octavian to reach a permanent understanding, or were conflict and war unavoidable?

2. Was Augustus the same person as Octavian? What continuities do you see in the character of each? What differences?

Lecture Five

The Powers of Augustus

Scope: The system of governance Augustus founded is termed the *Principate*. For all its flaws, the system bestowed on Europe the longest period of peace and prosperity in the continent's history. We survey the series of constitutional settlements that saw Augustus established as a sort of super-magistrate, simultaneously part of and above the organs of state, and assess the extent to which claims that the "Republic was restored" were justified. We also look beyond the legal frontage of the Principate and uncover the harsh realities of imperial rule, rooted as they were in the imperatives of late republican politics. A fair assessment can only conclude that the Principate was a military dictatorship screened by legal niceties. However, this does not mean that it was cynically enacted in the interests of one man and his supporters—it did bring genuine benefits.

Outline

I. Until 31 December 33 B.C., Augustus held triumviral powers. Then, from 31–23 B.C., he was consul every year. Scholars have long puzzled over the blank spot for the crucial year 32, when Augustus organized the war against Antony and Cleopatra.

- **A.** It appears that Augustus had no legal powers at all in 32 B.C. On what authority did he convene the Senate, open and publicize Antony's will, and raise and command troops?
  - **1.** One suggestion is that he quietly continued to exercise the powers of the lapsed triumvirate.
  - **3.** Before 28 B.C., the significant *imperium* of Augustus was symbolized by his entourage of 24 *lictors*. Yet if anything, a baseless claim of consular power in 32 B.C. would be even more revolutionary than persisting in lapsed triumviral privileges.
- **B.** Two factors may be crucial in solving this dilemma.
  - **1.** Sometime in 32, the communities of Italy, Gaul, and Spain took a personal oath of allegiance to Augustus.
  - **2.** The second factor is the circumstances of 32 B.C. The greatest civil war in Roman history loomed large. In such a crisis, who would challenge the legality of Augustus's actions in 32?
- **C.** Once Augustus was back in Rome in mid-29 and through 28, his aims became clear: first, to forestall the threat of future civil war and secure order for the state and, second, to survive doing so.

II. The *First Constitutional Settlement* took place on 13 January 27 B.C., when

Augustus, according to the *Res Gestae*, "transferred the *res publica* from my power to the dominion of the Senate and people of Rome."

A. Augustus gave a lengthy speech. He concluded by recharging the Senate and Roman people with governance of the empire, and then laid aside all his powers and retired to private life.

B. After some persuasion, Augustus agreed to help out with running the empire. He accepted, for a period of 10 years, control over all the provinces where the armies were located. The Senate kept the rest.

1. His control was held either by virtue of his ongoing consulships or by virtue of a special grant of proconsular power. Either option was familiar, traditional, and justified by precedent.

2. In this way, the First Settlement directly addressed what had been the bane of the late republic: confused and divided army loyalties.

C. The empire was, thus, officially divided into *imperial* provinces under Augustus and *public* or *senatorial* provinces under the traditional organs of the republic. The essence of the division was that the imperial provinces had the largest troop concentrations.

D. In addition to this 10-year grant of control, Augustus was given his new name: Imperator Caesar Augustus.

E. The First Settlement encapsulated the essence of all future formulations of Augustus's position in the state.

1. First, no powers were taken by Augustus that were completely novel, unprecedented, or unfamiliar. Second, only traditional and unthreatening terminology was to be used in referring to Augustus. Third, Augustus assumed no powers for life.

2. The key was that the whole package had been voluntarily given by the Senate and the people, ostensibly against Augustus's wishes.

III. Shortly after the settlement, Augustus left town for three years while everyone became accustomed to the new arrangements. During this time, he was consul every year and administered his vast *provincia* of all the territories with large armies in them. In the summer of 24, he returned to Rome.

A. In the summer of 23, Augustus relinquished the consulship. In return, the Senate granted him *imperium proconsulare maius* ("greater proconsular power") and *tribunicia potestas* ("tribunician power").

B. By virtue of the tribunician power, Augustus could summon the Senate, propose legislation, and exercise an absolute veto over all government procedures. The grants of power in this, the so-called *Second Constitutional Settlement*, established the twin pillars of the legal position of Augustus and all subsequent emperors: preeminent proconsular power in the provinces and tribunician power at home.

IV. In the years following 23, adjustments were made to the terms of the settlements of 27 and 23 B.C.

A. A major stimulant for the first adjustments, which took place in 19 B.C., was a series of disturbances among the people in Rome, who seemed to have mistaken Augustus's relinquishing of the consulship for his stepping down from power.

B. Dio states baldly that in 19 B.C., Augustus received consular *imperium* for life, but this grant is most unlikely.

1. What seems much more likely is that Augustus got the right to bear consular insignia, thus regaining the trappings and *some* privileges of the consulship without actually holding the office.

2. In this way, the adjustment of 19 effectively returned to him everything he had given up with the consulship four years earlier.

C. In the following years, Augustus was granted censorial powers, the curatorship of public morals, and the curatorship of the grain supply. The ultimate honor came in 2 B.C., when the Senate voted him the title *pater patriae* ("father of the fatherland").

D. Noteworthy is Augustus's patience and his refusal to accept excessive or completely novel honors.

V. An illuminating series of documents from Cyrene in North Africa, dated to 7 B.C., shows Augustus in action.

A. The people of Cyrene had sent an embassy to Augustus complaining about the composition of juries in their courts. Augustus's edict in response defers to the decision-making power of the Senate and *suggests* rather than *orders* a course of action.

B. What allowed Augustus to behave in this way was a quality termed *auctoritas* in Latin and untranslatable into any one English word, though "authority" is the cognate.

1. *Auctoritas* was not a voted power but a personal quality earned by virtue of one's birth, personal qualities, public achievements, offices held, and so on. In this quality, Augustus was unrivalled.

2. *Auctoritas* greased the wheels of Augustus's legal powers and allowed him to avoid invoking them constantly to get things done.

3. The approach was summed up in the title Augustus used of himself: *princeps* ("leading citizen"). This, too, was a republican word, denoting any leading man of the state. Now it meant rule by *one* leading man, and the system was referred to as the *Principate*.

VI. At the root of Augustus's position lay the 350,000 men of the Roman imperial army. We will look in detail at the emperor's relationship with the army in Lecture Thirty-One and will consider only a few key points here.

A. Under Augustus, troops were no longer raised by consuls as needed but organized as an all-volunteer, standing professional force, in which soldiers served for fixed periods and were equipped by the state. Army commanders were handpicked by Augustus himself and often came from his immediate family.

B. Every effort was made to fashion a new military paradigm and break the disastrous patterns of the past. Augustus's legal position did much to cloak the raw fact of the regime's military underpinnings behind a curtain of familiar terms and powers.

VII. A debate has raged about the entire process we've reviewed in this lecture.

A. One view, favored by the ancients, was that Augustus deliberately set out to rule the Roman world alone. Another view, favored by many modern scholars, sees the Principate emerging ad hoc and in stages.

B. Both versions have a kernel of truth. Augustus was hardly oblivious to what he stood to gain by challenging the Liberators and Antony. At the same time, it is not hard to imagine that he was unsure how to go about formulating his legal position and "felt" his way toward equitable solutions that would be acceptable to people, aristocracy, and troops.

C. Yet the genius of his solution generated a problem that was to dog Augustus and all subsequent emperors: the succession problem.

Essential Reading:

Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 50–56.

Suetonius, *Deified Augustus*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1–11.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Augustus."

Southern, *Augustus*, pp. 100–159.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was the Augustan Principate a carefully planned and protracted coup d'état, or did it arise as an ad hoc reaction to specific crises?

2. Proposition: The Augustan Principate was a sham and a farce, a military dictatorship thinly veiled by a screen of legalities. If you accept this, how could contemporaries participate in the charade? If not, what features of the system force you to reject the proposition?

Lecture Six
Succession Woes

Scope: In any political system, the issue of transferring power from one incumbent to the next is often a serious problem. Given the nature of the Principate as a compromise between raw military dominance and the traditional practices of the republic, it was particularly difficult for Augustus to secure the succession by means of legal mechanisms. He therefore resorted to more indirect methods to indicate his favorites, which left the matter in doubt. That Augustus ruled for 45 years also did not help. We examine the main events of the Augustan succession—powers granted, marriages arranged, and adoptions secured—and the theories propagated by modern scholars to make sense of them. The succession problem proved a destabilizing influence during Augustus's reign and was to remain so for his successors for centuries to come.

Outline

I. The Augustan Principate was officially the personal preserve of Augustus himself. If the legalities were strictly followed, on Augustus's death, the Principate should lapse, power would devolve to the Senate and the people, and the republic would rise again—and so, undoubtedly, would civil war.

- **A.** If the Senate favored a return to the republic of old, loyalists to Augustus could challenge that decision and seek to install themselves as the new *princeps*. Even if the Senate decided to continue with the Principate, who would choose the new candidate?
- **B.** Suetonius cites an edict of Augustus, probably dating from his last years, in which he expresses the fervent wish that the Principate continue after his death.
- **C.** But there was no legal mechanism for passing on the powers granted to Augustus by the Senate and the people.
- **D.** Augustus's solution to the succession dilemma lacked the genius of his constitutional maneuverings and followed a more predictable path: He sought to raise select relatives to positions of authority.
- **E.** Constrained, however, by the legal fictions that masked the military basis of his rule, Augustus could only indicate his choices by various means, guided, it seems, by his own political past. This left the door open to machinations at court that proved tragic to his family as well as to later generations of emperors.

II. On 13–15 August 29 B.C., Augustus celebrated his great triumph over the Dalmatians, Actium, and Egypt. Riding to the right of his chariot was his

13-year-old nephew, Marcus Claudius Marcellus.

A. In 25 B.C., Marcellus married Augustus's only natural child, Julia. The following year, the Senate granted Marcellus the right to sit with the ex-praetors at meetings. He was also given special dispensation to stand for the consulship 10 years in advance of the legal age. But then, in the unhealthy summer months of 23, Marcellus fell ill and died.

B. Augustus's intentions for Marcellus were clear and highlighted his methods for designating a successor: a family connection to himself and public indications of favor.

III. The monkey wrench in the works with Marcellus was Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, a contemporary and crucial supporter of the *princeps*.

A. Agrippa was a long-time friend of Augustus and a capable general, yet from 25 B.C. on, he was forced to stand by and watch the public honoring of the young Marcellus.

B. In 23 B.C., however, when Augustus lay almost dead from an illness, the *princeps* summoned to his bedside Agrippa and gave to him his signet ring.

C. Once he recovered, Augustus sent Agrippa to the east with a five-year grant of proconsular power. But as conditions in Rome deteriorated in 21 B.C., Agrippa was recalled. Augustus also arranged the marriage of the widowed Julia to Agrippa, which produced five direct descendants of the *princeps*.

D. In 18 B.C., Agrippa's five-year grant of proconsular power was renewed and a grant of tribunician power was added. From a legal perspective, this latter move effectively made Agrippa coemperor with Augustus, although the partnership was not an equal one.

E. Undoubtedly, had anything happened to Augustus during the years of Agrippa's ascendancy, Agrippa was sufficiently empowered to take over. In 12 B.C., however, he died of an illness.

IV. The case of Agrippa revealed Augustus's succession scheme: A second-level *princeps* with a family connection to Augustus and imbued with substantial grants of Augustus's own powers would be ready to step in if needed.

A. But this scenario is confused by what happened with Agrippa's eldest sons, Gaius and Lucius, born in 20 and 17 B.C., respectively, whom Augustus adopted.

1. The question for scholars is: If Agrippa was to take over, as seems indisputable, what role did Gaius and Lucius Caesar have to play?

2. To assess the two main models put forward to explain this conundrum, we need to look first at two other princes.

B. In 38 B.C., Augustus stole Livia Drusilla from her husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero, when she was already pregnant with a second son, Drusus Claudius Nero. Her eldest son, Tiberius, had been born in 42 B.C. These two boys came into Augustus's household as stepsons.

1. Their careers down to 12 B.C. followed the path pioneered by the young Marcellus. Tiberius, for example, eventually became praetor, married Agrippa's daughter, and was sent to govern Gaul.

2. In 12 B.C., when Agrippa died, Tiberius was forced to divorce his wife, Vipsania, of whom he was very fond, and betroth the newly widowed Julia. In 11 B.C., he married Julia and, over the next few years, received a consulship, followed by a five-year grant of tribunician power. Tiberius, it seemed, had replaced Agrippa.

3. Meanwhile, Drusus continued his elevation, earning a grant of proconsular power in 10 B.C. and a consulship the following year. Unfortunately, he died in Germany late in 9 B.C.

C. What was Augustus up to in cultivating Agrippa, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, and Tiberius and Drusus? Two models have been advanced to explain this dynastic activity.

1. According to the *regency model*, Agrippa was to be emperor while Gauis and Lucius Caesar grew to adulthood. Agrippa would then step aside and let Gaius ascend to the throne. When Agrippa died, Tiberius would be elevated as his replacement. This model, however, offers no description for the role of a retired emperor nor does it take into account Lucius Caesar or Drusus, whose elevation is left unexplained by it.

2. The second model, *paired succession*, boils down to Augustus's establishing pairs of rulers in overlapping generations to avert the possibility of civil war on his death. Agrippa and Augustus were a pair in the first generation; next came Tiberius and Drusus; and next were Gaius and Lucius Caesar. The paired scheme, however, on the grounds of mechanics alone, seems unlikely.

3. I believe that Augustus created a pool of princes, from which he drew immediate successors (Agrippa and Tiberius, not related by blood to Augustus) and indicated his preferences for the third generation of the Principate (Gaius and Lucius Caesar). Under this system, at any given time, there was an immediate successor and, behind him, a stable of viable candidates.

V. In 6 B.C., Tiberius, newly imbued with tribunician power and clearly next in line for the throne, unexpectedly packed up and moved to the Greek island of Rhodes, where he remained for seven years.

A. This situation was not only personally embarrassing but also politically threatening for Augustus. Tiberius still had tribunician power, and he actually exercised it on Rhodes, albeit only once.

B. Gaius and Lucius Caesar were still too young to replace Tiberius, but Augustus decided to continue their elevation. When they came of age, Augustus took up the consulship for the first time since abdicating it in 23 B.C. and, as consul, personally led them into the Forum, where they were hailed as "princes of the youth."

C. When Gaius was 19, he was given a command along the Danube, then granted proconsular power and sent east. In A.D. 1, he became consul and was then sent east again. Lucius was designated consul for some future year. Things seemed to be proceeding as planned.

D. While Tiberius languished on Rhodes, Julia continued to take lovers, as she had done since her marriage to Agrippa. In 2 B.C., Augustus found out about her sordid behavior and banished her to a small island. Her removal is said to have delighted Tiberius, who now divorced her.

E. But the deaths of Lucius Caesar on 20 August A.D. 2, and Gaius on 21 February A.D. 4, left Augustus, now 66, devastated. In addition to the personal loss, the deaths of the two left his aspirations for the succession scheme in tatters.

VI. Augustus had no choice but to turn once more to Tiberius, who had been admitted back to Rome as a private citizen. On 26 June A.D. 4, Augustus adopted Tiberius, declaring, "This I do for reasons of state."

A. Two other adoptions followed: Augustus adopted as his son the 15-year-old Agrippa Postumus, the third son of Agrippa and Julia. Tiberius, despite having a son, Drusus, by Vipsania, was made to adopt his nephew, Germanicus, the son of his brother, also Drusus, who had died in 9 B.C.

B. Within 17 weeks of Gaius's death, Augustus had restored a successor for himself, as well as a stable of backup princes. When Germanicus was married to Augustus's granddaughter Agrippina in A.D. 5, a future emperor from the Julian bloodline was assured.

C. Agrippa Postumus, however, proved to be a problem. In A.D. 6, Augustus disinherited him and sent him to Sorrento. The following year, Postumus was banished to a small island for life.

D. Meanwhile, Tiberius was sent on various missions around the empire and proved a competent and popular general. As Augustus aged, he was increasingly the frontman for the regime.

E. Finally, Augustus fell ill while traveling in Campania and retired to a villa in the town of Nola. On 19 August A.D. 14, the father of the fatherland, ruler of the Roman world for the past half a century, died. He was little over a month shy of his 76th birthday.

VII. The reign of Augustus is a pivotal one in the history of Rome. Whatever its faults, the Principate he established stood for more than two centuries and

brought, for the most part, peace to the lands under Roman rule.

A. The legalities of the institution Augustus developed were maintained for decades, but the political reality of autocracy became increasingly obvious in various ways within 30 years of his death.

B. Augustus's handling of the succession issue had ravaged his family and opened up factional fault lines at court, as circles of supporters formed around potential candidates for promotion. Indeed, the problem of succession was to persist for the duration of the empire.

C. Tiberius's road to power had been rocky, and many people had to die to see him enthroned. The sources are rife with insinuations against Livia, Augustus's wife and Tiberius's mother, who is connected with many of the deaths by innuendo, including Augustus's own.

Essential Reading:

Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*.

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 50–56.

Suetonius, *Defied Augustus, Tiberius*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1–11.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Augustus."

Levick, *Tiberius the Politician*, chapters 2–4.

Seager, *Tiberius*, chapter 2.

Southern, *Augustus*, pp. 160–198.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Augustus's solution to the succession problem viable and successful? What other options did he have?

2. Which model of Augustus's succession scheme do you find the most convincing? Why?

Lecture Seven
Livia Drusilla, Empress of Rome

Scope: Augustus's wife, Livia Drusilla, and his stepson, Tiberius, were major players in his succession schemes. In this lecture, we take a look at the intelligent and resourceful woman who won Augustus's heart and respect. We examine the continuities and discontinuities in the roles of aristocratic women in the republic and under the empire, Livia's family background, and her meeting and marriage to Augustus (then Octavian). The opinion that Livia was a sort of dynastic black widow, murdering or arranging the deaths of rivals to ensure Tiberius's eventual succession, is scrutinized and found wanting. The position of women under the Principate, a matter investigated further in coming lectures, is introduced here. As we will see, Livia was easily the most powerful woman in Roman history to date.

Outline

I. Under the republic, female members of prominent senatorial families had enjoyed a certain public profile, but their influence tended to be indirect, derived by association with their men.

A. The historical archetype for the ideal Roman noblewoman was Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi brothers.

B. By the time Augustus came to power, aristocratic women such as Cornelia had long enjoyed a degree of political influence and public prominence. But their prominence was muted by the limitations placed on them by the male-dominated expectations of Roman republican culture.

C. Now that a single family was in charge and authority and prestige flowed from a single source, the women of Augustus's family became titans by comparison with their republican predecessors.

II. On her father's side, Livia Drusilla was a descendant of the Claudii, one of the foremost patrician families in the Roman state. Her grandfather was Marcus Livius Drusus, a tribune of 91 B.C. who had espoused the cause of suffrage for the Italian allies.

A. Livia was born on 30 January 58 B.C. We hear nothing of her early life until her marriage to Tiberius Claudius Nero, probably in 43 B.C. On 16 November 42 B.C., Livia gave birth to a son, the future emperor Tiberius Claudius Nero.

B. At some later point, the young Augustus met Livia and was instantly smitten, as was Livia.

D. Augustus, too, was married and had a daughter, Julia, but he began an affair with Livia. Shortly after Julia's birth late in 39, and only a few weeks after meeting Livia, Augustus divorced his wife and betrothed Livia, who was pregnant with a second son by her first husband.

III. The marriage between Livia and Augustus was sanctified on 14 January 38 B.C., not more than 16 weeks after the couple had met for the first time.

A. Livia now moved into Augustus's house on the Palatine Hill and disappeared into the shadows. Later in life, she appears as a formidable figure.

B. From the sources, Livia emerges as the "Black Widow"—a schemer and a murderer, an image that stems from the succession problem.

1. It's clear that many people had to die or be ruined before Tiberius ascended to the throne in A.D. 14. The deaths alone include Marcellus, Agrippa, Drusus, Lucius Caesar, and Gaius Caesar. If we ask the simple and valid question "Who benefited?" the answer is Tiberius.

2. Recall that Tiberius was Livia's natural son and Augustus's stepson. There is a tradition in the sources that Augustus did not care for Tiberius, and Tiberius, for his part, repeatedly declared his fatigue with public life and his reluctance to rule.

3. Given these facts, it is not much of a stretch to see Livia as the force behind Tiberius's eventual accession.

4. This view of Livia is not directly expressed in the sources, but it crops up as innuendo and insinuation.

C. We shall investigate this image of Livia as a black widow in two ways.

1. First, we will examine the events of 6 B.C.–A.D. 2, when Tiberius was on Rhodes. These events reveal Livia's role in representing Tiberius's interests when they clashed with those of Augustus.

2. Then, we shall subject the murder charges against Livia to the test of plausibility, reviewing the deaths and banishments she is alleged to have had a hand in, from Marcellus to Augustus himself.

IV. As we saw in the last lecture, by 6 B.C., Tiberius had been conferred with tribunician power and, thus, confirmed as Agrippa's replacement in Augustus's succession plans. Unexpectedly, he then abruptly left Rome and retreated to Rhodes, where he took up residence with an astrologer.

A. Tiberius himself gave two different reasons for his behavior, as reported by Suetonius. In 6 B.C., he claimed weariness with public life. Five years later, he changed his story and claimed that he had not wanted to stand in the way of Gaius and Lucius Caesar's advancement.

B. The matter was much discussed in ancient times, and other reasons for Tiberius's withdrawal are found in Dio, Tacitus, and Suetonius.

1. Some claimed that Tiberius left in disgust because he hated Julia and knew of her philandering. Others believed that he was enraged by Gaius Caesar's elevation or by the arrogant behavior of the two young Caesars. Still others saw his move not as a voluntary withdrawal but as an exile, alleging that Augustus sent Tiberius away for plotting against Gaius and Lucius Caesar.
2. Modern scholars have debated these details no less fervently and with no clearer results.

C. Two matters, however, compel our attention in this incident.

1. First, it is noteworthy that Tiberius did not lose his tribunician power while on Rhodes.
2. The second matter is Livia's role in the affair. Events tell us clearly that Livia acted as an advocate for Tiberius in Rome during his time on Rhodes and again in A.D. 4 when he was adopted by Augustus.

D. It should not be surprising that Livia had an interest in Tiberius's advancement, but that does not mean that she murdered a slew of princes to secure his succession.

V. Livia is linked with four alleged murders during Augustus's lifetime and one after. The first four are Marcellus (23 B.C.), Lucius Caesar (A.D. 2), Gaius Caesar (A.D. 4), and Augustus (A.D. 14). The posthumous allegation links her to Agrippa Postumus's murder, a few days after Augustus's death.

A. Marcellus died young and suddenly in the late summer of 23 B.C. Dio reports Livia's alleged involvement but then immediately notes that the summer that year was particularly unhealthy. There is no reason to think of Marcellus's death as anything other than natural.

B. Livia's involvement in the death of Lucius Caesar in A.D. 2 is insinuated by Tacitus, but this prince died of a sudden illness at Massilia in southern Gaul. Gaius Caesar died in Asia Minor of wounds sustained during a siege in Armenia. It is difficult to see how Livia at Rome could have orchestrated either of these deaths from afar.

C. The insinuation of Livia's involvement in Augustus's death is even more scurrilous, given that the man was quite elderly by Roman standards when he died and had been ailing for some time.

D. All in all, the facts seem to make Livia's involvement in these deaths extremely unlikely. Why, then, is she suspected?

1. We discussed one reason for suspicion of Livia earlier: Tiberius had only a slim chance at succession, and many had to die for him to realize it. But that is a circumstance—not a good basis for judging Livia.

2. Another reason is Livia's prominence. Roman male sentiment recoiled from such public prominence for women, and she undoubtedly became resented in certain quarters.
3. The career of Tiberius himself also brings suspicion to Livia. He was a serious disappointment as an emperor. If the son was this bad, went the logic, he must have learned it from his mother.
4. Finally, there is the poor reputation of stepmothers in Roman culture in general, who had a standing reputation for callousness and cruelty.

E. The case against Livia for the pre-accession deaths of various princes is weak and can be traced to her particular circumstances and to broader cultural prejudices against women in her position.

1. We are left, however, with Agrippa Postumus, brutally murdered on his island within days of Augustus's death.
2. Tiberius and Livia are indeed prime suspects in this killing, but to understand why, we need to examine the first transfer of power from one *princeps* to another.

Essential Reading:

Barrett, *Livia*, especially pp. 3–72.

Supplementary Reading:

Levick, *Tiberius the Politician*, chapter 4.

Seager, *Tiberius*, chapters 1 and 2.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were the major differences between the roles of aristocratic women under the republic and of imperial women under the Principate? How does Livia exemplify those differences?
2. Does the portrayal of Livia as a black widow in the Julio-Claudian house under Augustus convince you? What evidence might we expect in support of it? Is it plausible?

Lecture Eight
The Early Years of Tiberius

Scope: Augustus died on 19 August A.D. 14. By that time, as we saw in Lectures Six and Seven, Tiberius was practically co-emperor. Technically, the succession went smoothly, but politically, it was something of a disaster. Tiberius, trying to exhibit Augustan tact, overplayed his hand in making a show of "refusing power" (*recusatio imperii*), and the senators became uncertain and uneasy. Despite this shaky beginning, Tiberius proved true to Augustan principles in his early Principate. In this lecture, we also look at the career of Germanicus, from his quelling of mutinous legions in 14 to the severe political fallout from his premature death in 19. We discuss the events surrounding his death and its aftermath, especially in light of a newly discovered and remarkable inscription from Spain. The tragedy was politically embarrassing for Tiberius but lent a new prominence to his natural son, Drusus, who now appeared to be next in line for the throne.

Outline

I. When Augustus died, Tiberius was, for the most part, already emperor. But Tiberius's rule did not get off to a good start.

A. According to Tacitus, "The first crime of the new regime [Tiberius's] was the slaughter of Agrippa Postumus….", probably within a day or two of 19 August.

B. After Augustus's death, Tiberius traveled to Rome with his body. On reaching the city at the end of August or in early September, he summoned the Senate.

1. Tiberius forbade any discussion except that concerning the last rites of Augustus.

2. The Senate was not convened again until 17 September, and during the intervening weeks, Tiberius's position remained unclear. At this second meeting, when the matter of his position came up, Tiberius confused the senators by suggesting that several helpers be assigned to assist him in governing Rome.

3. As the confusion persisted, Tiberius changed tack. He suggested that he'd be happy to govern any part of the state the Senate might assign him. Again, the result was confusion. Ultimately, Tiberius accepted his inevitable role as sole ruler of the empire.

C. To Tacitus and other detractors of Tiberius, this charade was forced on the Senate by Tiberius's malign and secretive character. Less jaundiced views are possible, however.

1. Tiberius may have attempted to follow the Augustan model of putting on a show of reluctance, but he botched it. Further, Tiberius had not actually laid down his powers, as Augustus had done.
2. We should also note the possibility that Tiberius genuinely hoped to be relieved of some of his duties, just as he requested.

II. Horrible news now arrived from the north: The armies of Germany and Pannonia (a province along the Danube) were in revolt.

A. The soldiers, agitated by malcontents, had taken Augustus's death as an opportunity to push their claims for better conditions.

B. Tiberius dispatched his son Drusus, born in 15 or 14 B.C., to deal with the situation in Pannonia, and Drusus quelled the mutiny.

C. According to Tacitus, some soldiers in Germany hoped that Germanicus, the popular son of Tiberius's brother Drusus, might make a claim to the throne directly. Tiberius had adopted Germanicus as part of the succession arrangements of A.D. 4

D. The mutinies of A.D. 14 were the first major events in which the princes Germanicus and Drusus were tested, and serious questions arise over Germanicus's leadership. He suppressed the mutinies but did so at a terrible cost and by means of deceit. Drusus, in contrast, effected a more measured resolution in Pannonia.

E. As it turned out, neither prince was fated to fulfill his imperial destiny.

III. When Tacitus introduces Germanicus to his readers, he notes the "concealed hatred" of Tiberius and Livia for the young prince, but the facts show that Tiberius respected Augustus's succession wishes with regard to Germanicus.

A. After quelling the mutiny in Germany, Germanicus spent the years 15 and 16 campaigning east of the Rhine. In 17, he returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph. The following year, he was consul for a second time. He also received the commission that was to prove his last: Granted "greater proconsular power," he was sent east.

B. Problems in the east stemmed from Rome's complex relationship with her only civilized neighbor, Parthia.

1. The Parthians had been dominant in the Iran/Iraq region since the 3rd century B.C. By the 1st century B.C., their realm abutted Rome's along the Euphrates River.
2. Relations between the two empires had initially been peaceful, until the Romans launched an unprovoked attack on Parthia in 53 B.C. and suffered defeat at the battle of Carrhae. After that, sporadic warfare, interspersed with diplomatic initiatives, characterized Romano-Parthian relations.

3. Overall, Parthian interest in Rome's eastern provinces appears minimal, although the buffer kingdom of Armenia was a bone of contention.

C. Trouble was now brewing again in Armenia, and Germanicus was granted greater proconsular power over the eastern provinces to deal with it. At the same time, Tiberius recalled the governor of Syria and appointed in his stead Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso.

D. Both Germanicus and Piso headed east. Whereas Germanicus charmed and impressed everywhere he went, Piso irritated and offended. Germanicus quickly and diplomatically settled problems in Armenia and elsewhere, but Piso refused to obey his commands.

E. In 19, Germanicus took a trip to Egypt, although Augustus had insisted that no Roman senator enter Egypt without specific permission from the emperor. On his return from Egypt, Germanicus fell ill in Syria.

1. As he lay dying, Germanicus became convinced that Piso and Plancina, Piso's wife, were behind his illness.
2. At this point, Piso decided to leave his province of Syria, but he sailed slowly, awaiting news of the prince's death. As the end approached, Germanicus urged his wife and friends to avenge his unjust death, which finally came on 10 October.
3. Germanicus's friends then appointed one of their number, Gaeus Sentius, to replace Piso, who now foolishly decided to reclaim the province he had abandoned.
4. Piso raised a motley force of deserters and mercenaries, invaded, and was defeated. He was then granted safe passage to Rome to plead his case before the emperor.

F. Meanwhile Germanicus's wife, Agrippina, was approaching Italy with the ashes of her beloved husband. The people of Rome were incensed by the death of their idol. The public supported Agrippina and her remaining children, calling her the true descendant of Augustus.

G. Piso arrived in Italy and displayed his characteristic tactlessness by not mourning Germanicus. He was arraigned almost immediately.

H. On the third day of the trial, Piso was found dead, apparently by suicide. Plancina was tried separately, but the proceedings against her were cut short when Tiberius interceded.

IV. In the 1980s, astonishing finds turned up in Spain: several fragments and one largely intact text of a long inscription carved into bronze plaques.

A. The best preserved version, called "Copy A," bore its title across the top: *Senatus Consultum de Gnaeus Pisone Patre* (*SCCP*), or "The Senatorial Decree Concerning Gnaeus Piso, Senior." Dated 10 December A.D. 20, this was the official record of the outcome of Piso's trial.

B. The decree records the official position on the death of Germanicus, Piso's involvement in that death, and the illegal actions of Piso himself. It also throws light on the ideology of the Principate a mere six years after the death of Augustus.

C. The inscription opens with a preamble, then the Senate's verdicts in each case are recorded. It is clear that the primary charge against Piso was treason and fomenting civil war.

D. Germanicus's proconsular *imperium* is said to have been greater than any governor's on the spot, but Tiberius's is, in every instance, to be greater than Germanicus's.

E. Perhaps most astonishing is the official recognition of Livia's power.

F. The emperor is urged to devote himself to his one remaining son, Drusus. This notable acknowledgment of the succession to Tiberius stands as an open admission in A.D. 20 that the republic was no more.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 57.

SCCP.

Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, books 1–3.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Tiberius," "Germanicus."

Seager, *Tiberius*, chapter 3.

Questions to Consider:

1. How could Tiberius have better handled his accession before the Senate? Would anything he could have done made any difference?

2. What do you make of the conflict between Piso and Germanicus? Do you think there is any substance to suspicions that Tiberius orchestrated it to ruin or even kill Germanicus? What is the evidence for your position?

Lecture Nine
The Would-Be Emperor—Sejanus

Scope: In this lecture, we meet one of the most odious figures in all of Roman history: Lucius Aelius Sejanus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard. Consideration of his career requires us to look at the Praetorian Guard, the body of troops under his command. The corps had been established by Augustus and stationed discreetly in and around Rome. The two prefects of the Guard were of equestrian rank, and initially, Sejanus and his father held the office jointly. Sometime around the death of Augustus, however, Sejanus was left in sole command and prevailed upon Tiberius to concentrate the corps in a single camp in the city. From then on, Sejanus wielded a powerful influence on the emperor. He allegedly seduced Livilla, wife of Drusus, and began to use show trials to ruin rivals. His demise and its aftermath offer lessons in the perils of court politics.

Outline

I. The death of Germanicus left the road open for Drusus to succeed his father; indeed, this expectation was expressed by senatorial decree.

A. Drusus had been born in 15 or 14 B.C., and enjoyed no significant advancement until the adoption of Tiberius in A.D. 4 made him a Caesar.

B. With Germanicus's death in 19, all future hope for succession fell on Drusus's shoulders. In 21, Tiberius assumed his fourth consulship, taking Drusus as his colleague. Drusus's role as successor was confirmed in the following year, when he received tribunician power.

C. Around A.D. 4, Drusus had married Julia Livilla, sister of Germanicus. This marriage produced four children, two of whom survived infancy: a daughter, Julia, and a son, Tiberius Gemellus. Between these two and the six surviving children of Germanicus (three of them boys), dynastic stability seemed assured.

D. But disaster was looming in the form of the Praetorian prefect Lucius Aelius Sejanus. To understand him and the roots of his influence, we need to fill in a little background on the origins of the Praetorian Guard.

II. In 27 B.C., Augustus had established a force of nine cohorts (each 500 or 1,000 strong), which he dubbed the Praetorian Guard. Augustus discretely distributed his new force throughout Rome and its environs.

A. The primary task of soldiers in the new Guard was to accompany the emperor and his family in public and to patrol the imperial residence.

B. Technically, the Praetorians were under the command of the emperor, but in 2 B.C., Augustus established a prefecture of two men, the *praefecti praetorio* ("prefects of the Praetorium"), of equestrian status.

III. When Augustus died, the two Praetorian prefects were Lucius Seius Strabo and his son, Lucius Aelius Sejanus.

A. In 15 or 16, Seius Strabo had been promoted to the prefecture of Egypt. This left Sejanus in sole command of the Praetorian cohorts. Sejanus's influence with Tiberius was already such that the emperor openly referred to him as his "ally in toil" (*socius laborum*).

B. Sometime before 23, the prefect persuaded Tiberius to gather the Praetorian and urban cohorts into a single camp in the eastern outskirts of the city. This concentration of the Praetorians in Rome enhanced Sejanus's influence, but the prefect had even bigger plans.

C. According to Tacitus, in 23, Sejanus seduced Julia Livilla, Drusus's wife, and divorced his own wife, Apicata. The two lovers then poisoned Drusus, the heir apparent, who died on 14 September 23. However, we have good reason to doubt Tacitus's story.

D. A more likely reconstruction of events is as follows: Drusus fell ill in the summer of 23 and died in September. His death was fortuitous for Sejanus, who divorced Apicata and began wooing Livilla. Sejanus also began to attack Agrippina's friends, at first privately in Tiberius's presence, then in public in the courts.

E. Sejanus's goals are widely debated, but what he wanted ultimately was to inveigle himself into the succession.

F. To gain Tiberius's confidence, Sejanus played on the emperor's suspicious nature, in particular, conjuring enemies in the circle around Agrippina.

G. In the year 27, Tiberius took up residence on Capri, never again returning to Rome. Sejanus and his Guards now provided the only access to the sequestered emperor.

IV. Undoubtedly, Agrippina's relationship with Tiberius was strained due to the death of Germanicus. Sejanus turned this existing situation to his own benefit.

A. With the removal of Germanicus's sons and of Agrippina herself, Sejanus's path to the succession would be clear. As well, in destroying Agrippina and her circle, he could present himself as looking out for Tiberius's best interests.

B. Sejanus moved against Agrippina's friends first, using as his tool a legal charge called *maiestas populi Romani minuta*, or "having diminished the majesty of the Roman people."

C. In 25, Sejanus asked Tiberius for Livilla's hand in marriage. The emperor replied in a letter, praising Sejanus but denying his request.

D. At the same time, relations between Tiberius and Agrippina had completely broken down. At this juncture, Tiberius, partially on Sejanus's urging, left Rome for the south.

V. Sejanus next moved on Agrippina's sons, Nero and Drusus Caesar, by sowing seeds of distrust between the brothers and corrupting Nero's wife.

A. In 28, Tiberius denounced Agrippina and Nero in a letter.

B. Sometime in 28 or early in 29, Agrippina was arraigned on charges of trying to flee to the provincial armies. She was banished to an island and starved herself to death in 33.

C. Nero and later his brother Drusus were both declared public enemies. Nero ended up on a small island, where he committed suicide before he could be executed sometime before the end of 31. Drusus was locked up in the basement of the palace and starved to death in 33.

D. By 29, Sejanus had rid himself of his competitors. In 30 came his betrothal to Livilla. He was designated consul for 31, with Tiberius himself as his colleague. As he entered his consulship on 1 January 31, Sejanus, it seemed, had won.

E. Within 10 months, however, his murdered corpse lay exposed in Rome, abused and despised. How did this stunning reversal of fortune come about?

1. In May of 31, Sejanus received a grant of proconsular power; only tribunician power stood between him and the succession.

2. According to Dio, Tiberius had then grown suspicious of the prefect. As well, Tiberius had begun drawing attention to Caligula, the last surviving son of Agrippina and Germanicus.

3. Early in October 31, Tiberius had secretly replaced Sejanus as prefect of the Guard with a loyalist named Surtorius Macro.

4. On 18 October 31, with Sejanus present in the Temple of Apollo where the Senate met, a long letter from Tiberius was read, its text sprinkled with comments critical of Sejanus.

5. The prefect was dragged off, and the senators ordered him killed.

F. Scholars have, once more, argued extensively over these events. Why did Tiberius suddenly turn on Sejanus? What made him suspicious?

1. Tiberius himself, in his memoirs quoted by Suetonius, claimed that he ruined Sejanus after finding out about the prefect's plot against the sons of Germanicus, although many scholars reject this claim.

2. The ancient sources give one critical clue about where Tiberius got his information: a letter from his sister-in-law Antonia, widow of his brother Drusus, which laid out Sejanus's nefarious doings. But

some scholars argue cogently that the tale of Antonia's letter is a total fabrication.

3. For two years after the fall of the prefect, there were denunciations, imprisonments, tortures, and executions, ending in 33 with a general massacre of all those still in custody.
4. Tiberius was haunted by Apicata's letter and ruthlessly inquired into Drusus's death.

VI. The rest of Tiberius's reign was uneventful.

A. If Suetonius is to be believed, the emperor remained on Capri for the rest of his reign.

B. Amidst his general apathy, the succession went untended, and with the house of Germanicus decimated, choices were limited. Tiberius appears to have settled by default on Caligula, Germanicus's youngest son, but his elevation was half-hearted.

C. The old emperor finally died on 16 March 37, at age 77. His reign had been anything but successful.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 57–58.

Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, books 4–6.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Tiberius."

Seager, *Tiberius*, chapters 5–6.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were Sejanus's goals? Is it unlikely, as some scholars insist, that a mere equestrian could successfully accede to the throne?
2. Was Sejanus involved in Drusus's death in 23? What is the best evidence in favor of his involvement? The best evidence against?
3. What does the career and demise of Sejanus tell us about Roman imperial politics? How does this model of politics differ from that of the republic?

Lecture Ten
The Mad Emperor? Caligula

Scope: In this lecture, we survey the stories told in the sources about Caligula, which tend to portray him as deranged. But was Caligula insane? We examine different modern approaches to addressing this issue, with particular reference to two stories often reckoned to be key: the bridge at Baiae and the abortive "invasion" of Britain. The testimony of Philo of Alexandria, who went on an embassy to Caligula in 39/40, is pivotal because it is an eyewitness account from a hostile observer. Philo shows us a man both cruel and capricious but not insane.

Outline

I. With Tiberius dead, the young Gaius Caligula acceded and assumed the name Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus. We will refer to him as Caligula.

- **A.** On the surface, his prospects were good. Caligula was a son of the immensely popular Germanicus and the natural grandson of Drusus the Elder, brother of Tiberius.
- **B.** We should note that for the sources for Caligula's reign, we have only materials by Suetonius, Josephus, and Dio.

II. Caligula was born on 31 August A.D. 12, probably in the Italian town of Antium (modern Anzio), south of Rome.

- **A.** He stayed with his father, Germanicus, up to A.D. 19, then lived with his mother, Agrippina. After she was exiled when he was about 16, he lived for a year or two in the house of his great-grandmother Livia. He was summoned to Tiberius on Capri when he was 19. Here he remained until he acceded in March 37.
- **B.** Caligula's early years were unsettled, even sinister. His father was allegedly murdered; his mother and two brothers were murdered. He moved around constantly before settling on Capri.
- **C.** Tiberius's will contained a surprise: Caligula and Tiberius Gemellus were declared joint heirs. However, the will was set aside, and Caligula alone was conferred with the usual package of powers.
- **D.** In his early months, Caligula made all the right moves, in particular, demonstrating his *pietas*, or reverence for his family, and highlighting his direct descent from Augustus.

III. Suetonius, in his *Life of Caligula*, groups his stories together by type—sexual excess, cruel sayings, examples of brutality, and so on—which makes it difficult to chart the descent of the reign in any sort of chronological order. From Dio and others comes a more ordered picture.

Several writers identify as a key turning point an illness Caligula suffered in 37.

A. Caligula recovered from the illness but, in some accounts, emerged a changed man.

1. Many have tried to diagnose the illness as a form of encephalitis or hyperthyroidism, both of which carry behavioral symptoms that might suggest insanity to an observer.

2. The problem with ascribing all of Caligula's problems to the illness of 37 is that under the following year, 38, Dio includes many good acts by the emperor. Conversely, the sources also identify signs of Caligula's viciousness long before 37.

B. The stories about Caligula's erratic behavior are legion, but most are presented as vague and uncontextualized generalizations.

IV. Amidst this mass of lunacies, some events are firmly established.

A. The execution of Gnaeus Lentulus Gaetulicus, the governor of Germany, in 39 was no arbitrary act. The theory that Gaetulicus was killed for plotting is a near certainty, and in this light, all of the emperor's actions are perfectly consonant with a conspiracy uncovered.

B. Two incidents in particular may act as test cases for the question of Caligula's sanity. The first one, reported by Dio, Suetonius, and Josephus, involves a pontoon built by the emperor across the bay at Baiae, a town on the Bay of Naples.

1. Having erected the bridge, Caligula built a causeway on it and rode a chariot back and forth for two days.

2. When he got bored, Caligula hurled people off the bridge and, later, sailed about in warships and sank other boats.

C. The second incident took place in 40, if we believe Dio, and has Caligula going on ludicrous maneuvers in Germany.

1. The emperor then marched his army to the seashore opposite Britain, sailed out a ways in a warship, and came back to the shore.

2. He arrayed his troops as if for battle, then ordered them to pick up seashells. Declaring a great victory over the sea, he returned to Rome and held a triumph.

D. Scholars have adopted four main lines of approach to this material.

1. One, as we've seen, is to diagnose Caligula as suffering from some sort of identifiable illness or condition.

2. Another view argues that the sources are not likely to have made up such tales, and we ought to accept that Caligula was insane.

3. A third approach takes skepticism over the sources to extremes and advocates disbelieving what they tell us entirely.

4. The final approach is to take a balanced view: We ought neither to accept nor reject our sources' information uncritically.

V. Time and again when interpreting such stories, we are forced to confront problems with the sources. Scholars have shown that a tradition arose that exaggerated or even fabricated Caligula's actions.

A. Dio, for instance, claims that Caligula rushed Tiberius's funeral and brought his body into the city by night, unnoticed. But the consular lists, the *fasti*, make nonsense of this claim.

B. Likewise, Dio and Suetonius report that Caligula harried his grandmother Antonia to the point of suicide, then dishonored her memory. However, the *fasti* and other inscriptions belie this claim.

C. For his part, Tacitus alludes to Caligula at several junctures in his works. He makes mention of his "troubled mind" and his flighty character. But he does not dub the man deranged.

VI. Philo of Alexandria also serves as an eyewitness to Caligula's reign.

A. Ethnic and religious hostility smoldered in Ancient Alexandria between a large Jewish community and their pagan Greek neighbors. This hostility not infrequently broke out into riots and pogroms.

B. Caligula's insistence on being worshiped as a god isolated the Jews, and the Greek Alexandrians launched a major pogrom against them in 38. Philo, a leader in the Jewish community, was sent to Rome as part of an embassy to plead the Jewish case before the emperor himself.

C. When the ambassadors arrived in Rome, Caligula greeted them in an affable and friendly manner; he would hear their case when he got a chance. The visitors then waited—for weeks.

1. According to Philo, the ambassadors were finally brought before Caligula as he was going through some houses and issuing orders about their interior decoration. They had heard of his plan to erect his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem and would try to dissuade the emperor from such a disastrous course.

2. Ultimately, Caligula asked about the details of the case, but as the Jewish envoys spoke, he paid little attention. Finally Caligula commented that the Jews seemed more misguided than wicked in not recognizing his divinity. Then he was gone.

D. According to Philo, Caligula is certainly an unpleasant man, arrogant and self-obsessed, but he's not overtly insane.

VII. From all this, we can develop a fair and balanced explanation for what happened with Caligula.

A. He was intelligent, had a cutting tongue, and had learned the arts of guile to survive his nightmarish childhood.

B. He came to supreme power devoid of administrative and military experience but gradually realized that he was in an unassailable

position. Thus, he began to push the envelope, making more and wilder demands and mocking those who fell over each other to meet them.

C. The discovery of the Gaetulican conspiracy can only have darkened the emperor's outlook. The reign took a turn for the worse as suspicion joined caprice in shaping Caligula's behavior.

D. Caligula was more likely corrupted by power over time than driven insane by any single event.

E. Many of the stories told about Caligula can be put down to misunderstanding of his cruel wit, or to exaggeration, or to the hunger of a hostile tradition for salacious material. From a senatorial perspective, Caligula's level of capriciousness was unprecedented and bordered on the insane—so insane he was declared.

F. None of this is to absolve Caligula of responsibility for his disastrous reign, but the plain fact is that he had no business being emperor in the first place. Caligula was simply the clearest indication yet of the inadequacy of the loose system of succession set up by Augustus.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 59.

Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, books 18–19.

Suetonius, *Life of Caligula*, *Life of Claudius*.

Supplementary Reading:

Barrett, *Caligula: The Corruption of Power*.

DIR, "Gaius Caligula."

Ferrill, *Caligula, Emperor of Rome*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Were people's initial hopes for Caligula's reign misplaced?

2. What, in your opinion, best accounts for Caligula's behavior: illness (physical or mental), insanity, circumstances, a hostile tradition, or systemic failings in the Principate?

3. Should Philo's evidence be given a special place in addressing Caligula as both a man and an emperor? If not, why not?

Lecture Eleven
Killing Caligula, Finding Claudius

Scope: The excesses of Caligula's reign eventually provoked conspiracies against him, one of which proved successful. Its main movers were officers of the Praetorian Guard, though they may have had connections to more powerful if shadowy figures. The young emperor was murdered on 24 January 41. Given his youth, Caligula had paid no serious attention to the succession issue. In the vacuum left by his murder, the senators debated restoring the old republic, but the ambitious in their midst soon turned the discussion to their own suitability for the Principate. Meanwhile, the Praetorian Guard, facing unemployment if there were no emperor to serve, acclaimed as emperor Caligula's reviled uncle, the lame and stammering Claudius. Tense negotiations averted near civil war, and Claudius was ratified by the Senate. These events mark a turning point in the history of the emperors: the first time an emperor was openly assassinated and another installed so blatantly by the wishes of the soldiers.

Outline

I. In the last lecture, we saw how the capricious behavior of Caligula exposed the powerlessness of the civic wing of government, a powerlessness that Augustus had done much to entrench but had cleverly disguised.

- **A.** The state had been entrusted to a youth who was manifestly unfit and, if the sources are even partially correct, was running amok. Yet there was no legal mechanism for removing him from power.
- **B.** The only viable option for dealing with Caligula was to hasten his death. The successful plot, when it came, stemmed from the very men entrusted with the emperor's safety: the Praetorian Guard.

II. Our fullest account of the plot against Caligula and the subsequent accession of Claudius is found in book 19 of Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*.

- **A.** This source, composed in the 70s and 80s, includes material tracing the life of the Jewish prince Herod Agrippa, a grandson of his more infamous namesake.
- **B.** The frontmen in the plot were two tribunes, or mid-level officers, in the Praetorian Guard named Cassius Chaerea and Cornelius Sabinus. They were joined by another tribune, Papinius.
  - **1.** Chaerea and Sabinus were both staunch republicans and, thus, ideologically opposed to the emperorship. They were also disgusted by Caligula's behavior.

2. Papinius may have been related to a man executed by Caligula, which gave him a personal motive for wanting to kill the emperor.

C. A main senatorial mover was Marcus Annius Vinicianus. He had been charged, along with others, under the *maiestas* law in 32 and was one of two defendants to survive that experience.

D. Another senator involved was Valerius Asiaticus, whose wife Caligula had violated at a party. Ambition may also have played a role in Valerius's involvement.

E. Caligula's *freedman* Callistus was also involved, possibly as a gatherer of intelligence.

III. The initial plan was to attack Caligula at the Palatine Games in mid- to late January 41, but several attempts had to be aborted at the last minute.

A. Finally, Chaerea insisted that the conspirators act. On 24 January 41, the emperor was on the Palatine watching theatrical performances, with the plotters positioned around him.

B. Finally, Caligula got up to have lunch and bathe, preceded by his Uncle Claudius and the conspirator Asiaticus. Once inside the palace, Caligula took an isolated corridor that led to the baths.

C. Suetonius gives two versions of what happened next.

1. In one version, Chaerea approached the emperor from the rear and slashed his neck. Sabinus then stabbed him in the chest.

2. The other version has it that Sabinus split Caligula's jawbone with his sword. The fallen emperor was then butchered where he lay—no less than 30 wounds were counted on his corpse.

3. Josephus agrees with the first version, with added details. Struck in the neck, Caligula ran forward to escape, only to be shoved to the ground by Sabinus. The other assailants then closed in.

D. The assassination of Caligula marks a milestone in Roman imperial history. Less than 27 years and two reigns beyond the death of Augustus, murder had been revealed as the only viable method to remove an unfit *princeps* from office.

IV. Back in the theater where Caligula had sat before his murder, chaos reigned.

A. Roman emperors enjoyed the protection of 500 or so German bodyguards, distinct from the Praetorian Guard. Caligula's Germans, on finding his butchered body, went berserk, killing indiscriminately.

B. Meanwhile, the conspirators dispersed. Vinicianus was brought before the Praetorian prefect and fellow-conspirator Clemens, who praised the murder and released him.

1. Chaerea dispatched a Praetorian officer to see to Caligula's family. Caligula's wife, Caesonia, and infant daughter were murdered.
2. Rather like Brutus and Cassius after killing Caesar, the conspirators had made no plan for what to do after killing Caligula. A vacuum was left, and into it stepped, first, the Senate, then, the Praetorians.

C. The Senate convened on the evening of the 24th. Talk ran to ending the rule of the Caesars and restoring the republic. The consuls appeared to be in control, but elsewhere, events were taking another course.

D. The most famous version of what happened is found in Suetonius's *Life of Claudius*. In the aftermath of Caligula's murder, a band of guardsmen discovered Caligula's old Uncle Claudius hiding behind a curtain in the palace. Convinced he was going to die, the terrified Claudius groveled before the soldiers, but instead of being killed, he was hailed as emperor and carried off to the Praetorian camp.

E. This tale, echoed in other sources, was clearly a widely sanctioned version of events, in which Claudius is a passive partner in the soldiers' desires. In *Jewish Antiquities*, however, Josephus tells a more complex story that opens up many interesting possibilities.

V. Claudius was the brother of Germanicus, the son of the popular Drusus the Elder, Tiberius's brother, and Antonia, the daughter of Mark Antony. He was born on 1 August 10 B.C. and named Tiberius Claudius Drusus. Later, in A.D. 4, he added the name Germanicus.

A. From childhood, Claudius had a number of physical handicaps, the source of which remains a mystery. Because of his physical disabilities, he was written off by his family as a fool.

B. Yet Suetonius quotes letters of Augustus in which the *princeps* takes an open-minded position: If Claudius is sound of mind, advises Augustus, let him be advanced in the fashion normal for imperial princes.

C. When compared to his able-bodied male relatives, however, Claudius's advancement was minimal.

D. Marginalized, Claudius devoted himself to drinking, gambling, and history. He also composed a variety of literary works, although none of these survives.

VI. This was the man the Praetorians are supposed to have found cowering behind a curtain in the palace, but Josephus paints a different picture.

A. According to Josephus, in discussing the situation, the soldiers agreed that "democracy" (meaning the republic) was not an option: There would be no reason to maintain an imperial guard in a republic. They then chose Claudius as their candidate, kidnapped him from the palace, and brought him to the camp, where he was acclaimed emperor.

B. Clearly, there were different traditions about what happened with Claudius. Some scholars suspect that these are cover stories and that Claudius was, in fact, actively involved in the plot to kill Caligula.

C. However the situation came about, as matters stood in the evening of 24 January, Claudius was in the Praetorian camp being hailed as emperor. The Senate, meanwhile, couldn't agree on a course of action.

1. The initial enthusiasm for a restored republic had given way to speeches in favor of monarchy, then to speeches extolling the virtues of individual candidates for the Principate.

2. After word arrived that the Praetorians were hailing Claudius as emperor, it was decided to send a delegation to the camp to inquire after Claudius's intentions.

3. Josephus again offers us divergent versions of events, one involving two tribunes of the plebs as envoys and two involving Herod Agrippa.

D. The broad situation, however, is discernible: A standoff had developed between the Praetorians and the Senate. During the night, the Senate met again, its numbers now depleted, because many had fled in fear.

1. The senators had some military support: the three urban cohorts, under the command of the senatorial prefect of the city.

2. With this force, they had occupied the Forum and the Palatine, when suddenly, the troops defected to Claudius.

3. A likely reason for the defection is the huge sum of money promised to the soldiers by Claudius as a gift, termed a *donative*. Claudius's donative was significant and was to be paid to both the Praetorians and the provincial armies.

4. The timing of the donative is also key: Josephus sets it late in the evening of 24 January, that is, before the second meeting of the Senate. This, combined with its vast size, strongly suggests that the donative is what lured away the Senate's minimal military support.

E. The defection of the urban cohorts rendered the Senate unarmed and helpless in the face of Claudius's troops. The senators voted Claudius all the powers and titles of the emperorship, which he accepted. He ruled under the name Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus.

1. In fact, Claudius had no claim to the name *Caesar*; he had never been adopted into the Julian clan.

2. His use of *Caesar* marks the pivotal transition of that appellation from a Roman family name to the title of a ruler.

F. These events made it clear that direct descent from a Julian, especially from Augustus, was not necessary to become emperor. The accession of Claudius widened the pool of potential claimants to the throne.

G. Among the new emperor's first acts was to punish Caligula's murderers. Even though he had benefited from their deed, he could not condone the murder of an emperor.

VII. This entire lecture has been devoted to one day in the history of Rome.

A. This 24-hour period showed that assassination was the only viable way to remove an incompetent or unfit incumbent, and the lesson was learned well: Caligula was not the last Roman emperor to die violently.

B. This day also revealed that the prospects for a return to the republic were nonexistent.

C. Finally, the manner of Caligula's end and of Claudius's accession was an open demonstration of the centrality of the army to the position of the Roman emperor.

1. An unfit ruler had been removed and a new emperor had been enthroned—both on the strength of the soldiers' support.

2. The Senate had little choice but to rubber-stamp the guardsmen's choice, and the military basis for the emperor's position was jarringly exposed.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History,* books 59–60.

Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities,* book 19.

Suetonius, *Life of Claudius.*

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Caligula," "Claudius."

Levick, *Claudius,* chapters 1–4.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you account for the broad membership of the conspiracy to kill Caligula? Can any single driving force be identified?

2. How do you interpret the accession of Claudius? Was it chance, as the tradition holds? Are there reasons to be skeptical about the quality of our sources for these crucial events?

3. What are the main lessons about Roman emperors taught us by the events of 24–25 January 41?

Lecture Twelve

The Odd Couple—Claudius and Messalina

Scope: Claudius's reign was surprisingly successful. He embarked on the first major war of expansion since Augustus by adding Britain to the empire and was a conscientious if pedantic man and an attentive ruler, versed in history and tradition. But his reign was not without its problems. One pillar of the tradition about Claudius is that he lived under the thumb of powerful subordinates, notably his freedmen and wives. Chief among these was Messalina, his third wife. The sources represent Messalina as an amoral nymphomaniac. Modern interpretations prefer to see her as cleverly deploying sex to manipulate court politics. Whatever her motives and moves, Messalina took a step too far in October 47. When Claudius was away visiting Ostia, she married another man, consul-elect Gaius Silius. In response, Claudius's cunning secretaries orchestrated Messalina's execution, directing a stunned and passive Claudius to do their bidding. The meaning of these much-studied, even bizarre events is assessed against the wider backdrop of the political role of imperial women.

Outline

I. By and large, our sources are hostile toward Claudius. The position of those sources is that he was physically and mentally weak, a habitual drunk whose wives and freedmen wielded undue power over

II. On 25 January 41, Claudius was voted all the powers of the former emperor. His initial acts were promising.

- **A.** He decreed amnesty for those implicated in Caligula's murder, except the killers themselves, and he praised those senators who had advocated an end of Caesarism after the assassination.
- **B.** Indeed, all of Claudius's initial acts are praised in our sources. He had a solid if largely theoretical grasp on how to behave as emperor. But his household was still seen as problematic.
- **C.** All emperors presided over a large household of slaves and ex-slaves. The ex-slaves or freedmen usually held positions of some importance. Under Claudius, for the first time, such freedmen were awarded the honor of going about in public with the insignia of low-level senatorial magistrates. This practice was offensive to elite sensibilities.
  - **1.** Because Claudius's relationship with the traditional senatorial and equestrian elites had been limited, he naturally looked to his own household for advisors.
  - **2.** Claudius's sheltered life would have also kept him in the company of just such domestics.

D. Given the manner of Caligula's end, Claudius's reign was marred by paranoia. In 42, a senator named Gaius Appius Silanus was executed because both Claudius's wife Messalina and the freedman Narcissus reported a dream to Claudius in which Silanus was out to kill him.

1. Silanus's sudden end sparked a brief rebellion led by the governor of Dalmatia, Lucius Arruntius Camillus Scribonianus.

2. The rebellion was short, but it marks the first time a provincial commander attempted to lead his men against the emperor, their commander-in-chief.

3. Claudius conducted extensive inquiries into the whole affair, even torturing senators to get information.

4. At the same time, *maiestas* charges were revived. We read of Claudius hearing capital cases in private, in which the charges were ludicrous. Many senators and equestrians were condemned and killed as a result of such kangaroo proceedings.

5. The secretive nature of these hearings speaks badly of Claudius's regime and reflects his poor relationship with the traditional elites.

III. In the summer of 43, Claudius, sorely in need of military credibility, assembled a strike force of four legions and corresponding auxiliaries and launched them across the English Channel into Britain.

A. The legions and auxiliaries landed in Britain and began making headway inland. The Britons were brought to battle and defeated. The Romans halted at the Thames estuary and summoned Claudius.

B. The emperor, accompanied by some cohorts of the Guard, hastened to the scene, where he took command personally. Claudius oversaw some operations before returning to Rome after only 16 days in the field.

1. The Senate voted to Claudius and his son the title Britannicus, as well as a triumph.

2. Yet serious trouble was brewing closer to home, in the form of Claudius's third wife, Valeria Messalina.

IV. Claudius had married Messalina, a noblewoman, in 38 or 39. She was about 20 years old when she married Claudius, then in his late 40s.

A. In 39, Messalina bore Claudius a daughter, Octavia, and in February 41, shortly after his accession, she gave birth to a son, Tiberius Claudius Caesar Germanicus, renamed Britannicus in 44.

1. Messalina's position was precarious. The fate of Caligula's wife told her that she and her family would be in danger if anything happened to Claudius before Britannicus reached maturity.

2. It is not surprising to find her maneuvering to strengthen her dynastic position, and she found natural allies in the freedmen.

B. The ancient sources paint a picture of Messalina as a nymphomaniac. The more modern opinion sees her as a dynastic manipulator. But she could have been both a serious political force at court and a party girl.

V. Gaius Silius was handsome, politically well-connected, and consul designate. Sometime in 47, Messalina embarked on a torrid affair with him.

A. In 48, the tryst appears to have gone somewhat stale. When Silius recognized that his time might be up, he proposed the ultimate outrage: Messalina should marry him!

B. When Claudius was away inspecting the ongoing harbor works at Ostia, Messalina and Silius held a wedding ceremony in front of assembled friends, followed by a party and a traditional wedding night.

C. Narcissus hastened to Ostia and had the emperor's favorite concubines reveal all. Claudius was paralyzed with fear and asked repeatedly whether he was still emperor.

D. Word arrived back in Rome that Claudius knew all and was bent on vengeance. The centurions arrived and began putting wedding revelers in chains. Messalina set out in a rubbish cart with her children to meet Claudius and plead her case.

E. As Tacitus tells it, Claudius's pliability was a key to these events. The freedmen could not afford to allow Messalina a hearing—she might sway Claudius and escape.

F. Messalina's cart finally met Claudius's on the road outside Rome. Messalina held up their children and appealed for a hearing; Narcissus shouted her down and blocked Claudius's view of her.

1. Claudius was then taken to the Praetorian camp, where the accused were brought forward and judged on the spot. Silius made no defense and asked only for a quick end.

2. Messalina had taken refuge in some gardens. Narcissus told the guards on duty that Claudius had ordered Messalina killed. One of the Praetorian officers ran her through with a sword.

3. Claudius never inquired about her.

VI. For modern scholars, this episode is so bizarre that many have concluded it must be exaggerated or fabricated; scholars have then substituted their own alternative scenarios, often involving some sort of formal plot.

A. Almost every conceivable permutation of plotter and target has been suggested; however, all the proposed plots present problems.

1. In the first place, the staggering ineptitude of the plotters is at odds with the notion of Messalina as a master court politician. Rather than secure the support of the troops or even the Senate, the conspirators first conducted an open marriage, then threw a party.

2. The reaction of Claudius to such a plot is also at variance with the norm in such situations. The kangaroo proceedings in the Praetorian camp were not followed by the standard witch hunt to root out the disloyal.

3. Finally, Suetonius lists in one place the plots against Claudius but makes no mention of the Silius affair. He does, however, include it under the heading, "baseless reports of plots."
4. That said, the swift punishment of Silius and the others involved, the damnation of memory against Messalina, and Claudius's own inquiry about whether he was still emperor reveal unequivocally that there was a political dimension to what happened.

B. The dynastic succession system lent the activities of all imperial women powerful political ramifications. Since 25 B.C., when Augustus had married Julia to Marcellus, successors had been partly legitimated by a connection to the Julio-Claudian house bridged by a princess.

1. The private actions of a princess were imbued with political significance: Any princess or empress who took a lover into her bed was also taking an outsider into the heart of the dynasty.
2. When such indiscretions were discovered, it was natural that the lovers' actions would be interpreted as at least quasi-treasonous.
3. This line of reasoning explains the Silius affair neatly. Messalina and Silius may have been playacting in staging the marriage, or the marriage could even have been fabricated by the freedmen to put the final nail in her coffin—either way, only her actions matter.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 60 (in epitome only).

Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, book 11.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Claudius."

Levick, *Claudius*, chapters 5–6.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is Claudius's reputation for weakness and buffoonery deserved? On what evidence do you base your decision?
2. What do you make of Messalina? How do we make sense of the events surrounding her fall?

Timeline

B.C.

509–31 ..... Republican era.

133–31 ..... Fall of the Roman Republic, a.k.a. the Roman Revolution.

133 ..... Tribunate of Tiberius Gracchus; Gracchus murdered.

123–122 ..... Successive tribunates of Gaius Gracchus.

82–79 ..... Sulla dictator; voluntarily retired (79).

70 ..... Sulla's restoration undone.

63 ..... Cicero consul; Catilinarian conspiracy; Octavius (later Octavian, later Augustus) born (23 September).

60 ..... Formation of the First Triumvirate

59 ..... Caesar consul.

58–49 ..... Caesar proconsul in Gaul (the Gallic Wars).

54–29 ..... Caesar's Forum built.

54 ..... Death of Julia (1) in childbirth.

53 ..... Death of Crassus at Carrhae.

49 ..... Caesar marches on Rome.

48–45 ..... Caesar's civil wars.

46 ..... Caesar named dictator for 10 years.

44 ..... Caesar assassinated by the "Liberators" (15 March).

43 ..... Octavian seizes Rome, elected consul; formation of the Second Triumvirate.

42 ..... Battle of Philippi; Liberators defeated; Tiberius born.

36 ..... Battle of Naulochus; Lepidus forced to retire; burning (by decree) of all records of Octavian's acts.

33 ..... Octavian relinquishes triumviral powers.

32 ..... Oath of allegiance to Octavian taken in west.

31–23 ..... Successive consulships of Octavian/Augustus.

31 ..... Battle of Actium.

31–A.D. 14 ..... Reign of Augustus.

31–A.D. 68 ..... Julio-Claudian Dynasty.

30 ..... Augustus reduces the army to 28 active legions; suicides of both Mark Antony and Cleopatra; Egypt added to Roman Empire.

29 ..... Octavian celebrates a triple triumph (for Dalmatia, Actium, Egypt).

27 ..... Formation of the Praetorian Guard; First Constitutional Settlement; Octavian named Augustus, *princeps*.

23 ..... Second Constitutional Settlement; Augustus granted proconsular powers and tribunicia potestas; death of Marcellus.

18 ..... First Augustan marriage laws passed; Agrippa's proconsular power renewed; tribunician powers added.

13 ..... Agrippa's powers renewed; Drusus (2) born.

12 ..... Augustus named *Pontifex Maximus*; death of Agrippa; cult of Rome and Augustus arises.

9 ..... Death of Drusus the Elder (1).

8 ..... Tiberius granted proconsular powers over Germany.

7 ..... Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso consul with Tiberius.

6 ..... Tiberius granted tribunician powers (five years); retirement to Rhodes.

2 ..... Augustus named *pater patriae*; Forum of Augustus opened.

A.D.

1 ..... Gaius Caesar consul.

2 ..... Death of Lucius Caesar; return of Tiberius to Rome; new forum dedicated by Augustus.

4 ..... Death of Gaius Caesar; Augustus's adoption of Tiberius; Tiberius's adoption of Germanicus;

6–9 ..... Tiberius's campaign in Pannonia.

6 ..... State military treasury established; Agrippa Postumus banished; Judaea comes under direct imperial rule.

9 ..... Teutoburg Forest massacre; Vespasian born.

12 ..... Germanicus consul.

13 ..... Tiberius granted proconsular power equal to Augustus; Germanicus made commander in Germany.

14 ..... Death of Augustus (19 August); Augustus deified; accession of Tiberius; Agrippa Postumus murdered; mutiny of troops in Pannonia and Rhine.

14–37 ..... Reign of Tiberius.

16 ..... Sejanus sole Praetorian prefect.

18 ..... Germanicus consul (2nd).

19 ..... Death of Germanicus.

20 ..... Piso's trial and suicide; Piso's memory damned.

21 ..... Drusus consul with Tiberius.

23 ..... Praetorian and urban cohorts consolidated into one camp under Sejanus; death of Drusus (2) by poison.

26/27 ..... Tiberius's retirement to Capri; Sejanus in control.

30 ..... Gaius (Caligula) summoned to Capri.

31 ..... Suicide of Nero (Caesar); Sejanus consul with Tiberius, granted proconsular powers; Sejanus denounced and executed.

33 ..... Drusus (3) starved to death; massacre of remaining suspected Sejanus supporters; Galba consul.

37 ..... Death of Tiberius; accession of Caligula; Claudius suffect consul; execution of Tiberius Gemellus; birth of Nero.

37–41 ..... Reign of Gaius (Caligula).

38 ..... Philo's embassy to Caligula.

39 ..... Gaeticulan conspiracy; Gaetulicus and Lepidus executed; Titus born.

41–54 ..... Reign of Claudius.

41 ..... Assassination of Caligula (24 January); accession of Claudius; Seneca banished by Claudius.

42 ..... Scribonianus revolt; Silanus executed; Vinicianus's suicide.

43 ..... Claudius's invasion of Britain.

44 ..... Claudius's triumph (Britain).

50 ..... Nero adopted by Claudius.

51 ..... Domitian born; Nero named *Princeps Iuventutis*, given proconsular imperium.

52/53 ..... Claudius drains the Fucine Lake and holds extravagant games.

54 ..... Death of Claudius, accession of Nero; death of Marcus Junius Silanus.

54–68 ..... Reign of Nero.

55 ..... Britannicus poisoned.

59 ..... Nero performs at the Ludi Maximi.

64 ..... Great fire in Rome (18–27 July); first Christian persecution; Nero competes in the chariot races at Naples; Domus Aurea.

65 ..... Pisonian conspiracy foiled; Seneca, Lucan forced to commit suicide.

66 ..... Tiridates the Parthian crowned king of Armenia by Nero.

66–70 ..... Jewish Revolt in Judaea.

68 ..... Revolt of Vindex and Galba; suicide of Nero (June).

69 ..... Year of Four Emperors; temple to Jupiter Optimus Maximus burned; declaration of Vespasian as emperor (1 July).

69–79 ..... Reign of Vespasian.

69–96 ..... Flavian Dynasty.

70 ..... Jerusalem Temple destroyed by Titus; Vespasian returns to Rome; Titus and Domitian named *Principes Iuventutis*.

71 ..... Titus granted tribunician powers; triumph for Vespasian and Titus (Judaea).

72 ..... Titus consul with Vespasian.

75 ..... Helvidius Priscus executed; Berenice in Rome; Forum of Peace dedicated.

79 ..... Death of Vespasian; accession of Titus; eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

79–81 ..... Reign of Titus.

80 ..... Vespasian deified; Colosseum opens.

81 ..... Death of Titus; accession of Domitian; Titus deified.

81–96 ..... Reign of Domitian.

82–85 ..... War against the Chatti.

83 ..... Domitian's triumph over the Chatti; recall of Agricola from Britain.

89 ..... Revolt of Lucius Antonius Saturninus (Upper Germany); Dacian treaty.

96 ..... Domitian assassinated; accession of Nerva; Trajan assigned to Germany.

96–98 ..... Reign of Nerva.

97 ..... Trajan adopted by Nerva.

98 ..... Death of Nerva; accession of Trajan.

98–117 ..... Reign of Trajan.

101–102 ..... Trajan's first Dacian war.

105–106 ..... Trajan's second Dacian war.

113 ..... Trajan's Column dedicated.

113–116 ..... Trajan's Parthian-Armenian campaigns.

114 ..... Optimus incorporated into Trajan's official titles.

117 ..... Hadrian in charge of Syria; death of Trajan at Selinus; accession of Hadrian; Trajan's eastern provinces abandoned.

117–138 ..... Reign of Hadrian.

118 ..... Hadrian's return to Rome; Trajan deified.

121–125 ..... Hadrian's first tour of the empire.

122–134 ..... Hadrian's Wall constructed.

128–132 ..... Hadrian's second tour of the provinces.

132–135 ..... Bar Kochba Revolt.

135 ..... Jerusalem rebuilt as the pagan city Aelia Capitolina.

138 ..... Death of Hadrian; accession of Antoninus Pius.

138–161 ..... Reign of Antoninus Pius.

139 ..... Antoninus named *pater patriae*; Marcus Aurelius named P*rinceps Iuventutis*.

145 ..... Marcus Aurelius marries Faustina the Younger.

147 ..... Marcus Aurelius granted tribunician and proconsular powers.

161 ..... Death of Antoninus Pius; accession of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.

c. 161–169 ..... Joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.

161–180 ..... Reign of Marcus Aurelius.

162–166 ..... Lucius Verus's Parthian command.

166 ..... Parthian triumph of Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius.

167–169 ..... Devastating plague throughout Roman Empire.

169 ..... Death of Lucius Verus.

169–175 ..... Marcus Aurelius's Germanic campaigns along the Danube.

175 ..... Gaius Avidius Cassius declared emperor, murdered by his troops; Commodus summoned north, named *Princeps Iuventutis.*

176 ..... Marcus Aurelius's tour of the east; German and Sarmatian triumphs; Commodus granted imperium.

177 ..... Commodus granted tribunician and proconsular powers.

180 ..... Death of Marcus Aurelius; accession of Commodus; withdrawal from trans-Danubian territory; formal peace with the Iazyges.

180–192 ..... Reign of Commodus.

181/182 ..... Failed conspiracy against Commodus.

182–189 ..... Cleander ascendant as imperial adviser.

185 ..... Failed conspiracy against Commodus; Perennis executed.

192 ..... Assassination of Commodus (31 December).

193 ..... Pertinax killed by the Praetorian Guard; reign of Didius Julianus; Severus proclaimed emperor by his troops.

193–211 ..... Reign of Septimius Severus.

193–235 ..... Severan Dynasty.

193–197 ..... Civil war among Septimus Severus, Pescennius Niger, and Clodius Albinus.

194 ..... Severus defeats Pescennius Niger and secures eastern half of empire; Niger killed.

196 ..... Caracalla named Caesar.

197 ..... Severus defeats Clodius Albinus, purges his supporters in the Senate; Parthians raid in the east.

198 ..... Severus captures Ctesiphon; Caracalla named Augustus; Geta named Caesar.

205 ..... Caracalla and Geta co-consuls; Plautianus executed.

208 ..... Severus leads expedition to Britain.

210 ..... Geta named Augustus.

211 ..... Death of Severus; Geta killed and erased from all public monuments; increased military pay.

211–217 ..... Reign of Caracalla.

212 ..... Citizenship extended to all freeborn inhabitants of the empire.

214–217 ..... Caracalla campaigns in the east.

217 ..... Caracalla stabbed to death by a guardsman; Macrinus saluted emperor by the eastern army; peace with the Parthians.

217–218 ..... Reign of Macrinus.

218–222 ..... Reign of Elagabalus.

218 ..... Elagabalus defeats Macrinus in battle.

220s..... Parthian state falls to the Sassanid Persians.

221 ..... Elagabalus adopts Marcus Aurelius Alexander as Caesar.

222 ..... Elagabalus murdered.

222–235 ..... Reign of Severus Alexander.

231 ..... Alexander launches a Persian campaign.

233 ..... Settlement with the Persians.

235 ..... Alexander buys off the Germans; Alexander and Mamaea murdered by their own soldiers.

235–238 ..... Reign of Maximinus Thrax.

235–284 ..... 3rd-century crisis.

238 ..... Maximinus Thrax killed by troops.

244–249 ..... Reign of Philip the Arab.

249 ..... Philip and his son killed in battle (or murdered).

249–251 ..... Reign of Trajan Decius; Christian persecution.

251 ..... Trajan Decius killed in battle against Goths.

253–268 ..... Reign of Gallienus.

253–258/260 ..... Reign of Valerian.

258 or 260 ..... Valerian captured by Shapur I; Gallienus claims the whole empire for himself.

260 ..... Postumus establishes the Gallic Empire; rise of the Palmyrene state under Odenathus.

260–269 ..... Postumus rules the Gallic Empire.

262 ..... Aureolus hailed emperor by his troops.

267 ..... Odenathus murdered.

268 ..... Aureolus hailed emperor (again) by the cavalry; death of Gallienus.

268–270 ..... Reign of Claudius II.

269 ..... Postumus killed by his own troops; Claudius defeats Germanic hordes decisively; Aureolus killed.

270 ..... Claudius dies of the plague; Aurelian proclaimed emperor.

270–275 ..... Reign of Aurelian.

270–271 ..... Barbarians expelled from Balkans and northern Italy.

271 ..... Tetricus seizes control of the Gallic Empire.

272 ..... Aurelian defeats Zenobia and the Palmyrenes.

273 ..... Palmyra rebels and is destroyed.

274 ..... Aurelian defeats the Gallic Empire.

275 ..... Completion of the Aurelianic Walls in Rome; Aurelian murdered by his officers.

276–282 ..... Reign of Probus.

282 ..... Probus murdered by his troops.

282–284/5 ..... Reign of Numerian (to 284) and Carinus (to 285).

284–305 ..... Reign of Diocletian.

285 ..... Diocletian sole emperor; Maximian declared Caesar.

286 ..... Maximian declared Augustus; Carausius declares himself emperor; secessionist empire formed in Britain.

293 ..... Diocletian forms the Tetrarchy; Constantius and Galerius named Caesars.

297 ..... Constantius suppresses Carausius.

301 ..... Price Edict.

303–311 ..... Persecution of Christians.

303 ..... Diocletian celebrates his 20th anniversary in Rome; Diocletian and Maximian swear to abdicate together.

305 ..... Diocletian and Maximian abdicate; accession of Galerius and Constantius to Augusti; Severus and Maximinus Daia named Caesars.

306 ..... Constantius dies; Constantine proclaimed Augustus by troops; Severus becomes Augustus and names Constantine Caesar; Maxentius declared *princeps* by Senate and Praetorian Guard.

306–337 ..... Reign of Constantine.

307 ..... Maximian reemerges from retirement; Severus forced to abdicate; Maxentius declares himself Augustus.

308 ..... Maximian flees to Constantine, meets with Diocletian and Galerius; Galerius names Licinius as co-emperor.

310 ..... Maximian reemerges from retirement again; forced to commit suicide; Constantine's vision of Apollo.

311 ..... Edict of Toleration; death of Galerius.

312 ..... Battle of the Milvian Bridge; Maxentius drowns; Constantine converts to Christianity.

313 ..... Maximinus Daia defeated and dies; death of Diocletian; pro-Christian measures implemented in the east; Donatist controversy.

314 ..... Council at Arelate.

316 ..... Constantine invades Licinius's territory; Licinius defeated.

317 ..... Crispus, Constantine II, and Licinius II made Caesars.

324 ..... Constantine defeats Licinius; Constantine founds Constantinople; Constantius II named Caesar.

325 ..... Licinius executed; Council at Nicaea.

326 ..... Licinius II executed.

327 ..... Council at Nicomedia.

330 ..... Constantinople dedicated.

333 ..... Constans named Caesar.

335 ..... Council at Tyre.

336 ..... Crispus and Fausta executed.

337 ..... Constantine baptized; Constantine dies; "massacre of the princes"; empire divided among Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans.

Glossary

Achaemenid Empire: Refers to the period of Persian dominance in the Middle East. The empire began in 539 B.C., when Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon, and endured to 331 B.C., when Darius III was conquered by Alexander the Great. Persian rule stretched from the Balkans and Libya all the way to the Indus Valley and central Asia.

adlocutio: An event during which the emperor would visit and exhort his troops.

Adoptive Emperors: Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius (a.k.a. the "Five Good Emperors" or the Antonines), who ruled from A.D. 96 to A.D. 180, a period of relative stability with respect to the imperial succession by the practice of adoption.

aediles: Originally an office of the Plebeian State that became an optional magistracy in the regular *cursus honorum*; four were elected annually (six after reforms introduced under Caesar), two plebeian and two patrician (the latter termed *curule aediles*). They were in charge of the fabric of Rome, the marketplace, and public games. They had no *imperium*.

***aerarium militare* ("military treasury")**: Founded on the Capitoline Hill in A.D. 6 by Augustus, its purpose was to provide money for discharged soldiers' pensions.

***alimenta* ("nourishments")**: System of state loans at low interest for landowners, by which charitable funds were raised for poor children during the reign of Nerva.

annona: The public food supply. Grain ration first set up at a subsidized price by Gaius Gracchus but made free for Roman citizens by Clodius Pulcher in 58 B.C. The *annona* was supplied by grains paid to the state as taxes from Sicily, Africa, and Egypt.

archaeology: The study, by excavation or survey, of human material remains.

Arsacids: Ruling dynasty of the Parthian Empire, c. 250 B.C.–c. A.D. 230. Founded by Arsaces, who successfully revolted from Seleucid Bactria; the dynasty's relations with Rome were generally hostile, including several invasions of Syria.

Arval Brethren (*Acts of…*): An obscure brotherhood of 12 priests during the republican period "revived" by Augustus during the Principate. Its members consisted of the reigning emperor and 11 important senators, and they were associated with the goddess Dea Dia. Their "Acts," or minutes, were carved on stone and today are an important primary source for many imperial events.

auctoritas: Personal "authority" based upon one's birth, family heritage, wealth, charisma, achievements, public offices held, philosophy, or lifestyle. The *unofficial* quality of being able to command and influence others.

augury: The practice of divination by various means, such as observing the sky, birds, or other natural phenomena, including interpreting omens.

Augustales: Officials, usually freedmen, who were in charge of overseeing imperial cults throughout the empire. They also provided essential services to their communities, such as funding public entertainments and building projects.

auspices: The reading of the gods' attitude toward a project by various means, including observing the sky, birds, the sacred chickens feeding, or the behavior of four-legged beasts. All public business had to have favorable auspices in order to proceed.

auxiliaries: Non-citizen troops in the Roman imperial army. They served 25 years and were granted citizenship and a pension on discharge.

basilica: A large rectangular building that served various judicial and commercial purposes. In late antiquity, their large rooms were commodious gathering places for Christian worship, and thus, the term became equated with churches rather than multipurpose gathering spaces.

Byzantine Empire/Period: Period of dominance of the eastern (Greek) Roman Empire, named for the city on the Bosporus where Constantinople was founded in A.D. 324 as a new capital. The empire endured until the conquest of the city by the Turks in A.D. 1453.

Campus Martius ("Field of Mars"): Named for an altar of Mars in the vicinity, this area of Rome was originally an alluvial plain of the Tiber River between the Quirinal, Capitoline, and Pincian Hills. In the republican period, it was used for troop musters and exercises, and later, it was the site of multiple prominent state monuments of the Principate.

Capitoline/Capitolium: The smallest of Rome's seven hills. It was dedicated during the monarchy to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, and Minerva. It served primarily as a citadel and religious center for the city of Rome.

Carthage: A city in northern Africa (modern Tunisia) that was founded by Phoenician traders from Tyre in 814 B.C. The Phoenicians were the leading naval power in the western Mediterranean until Rome went to war with them in the mid-3rd century B.C. At the end of the final Punic War in 146 B.C, Carthage lost her empire and the city was completely destroyed. It was resettled under Augustus and grew to become the second largest city in the western Mediterranean by the 2nd century A.D.

censors: Two magistrates elected every five years for an 18-month tenure of office. They counted citizens, assigned them to their classes, reviewed the register of senators and public morals, and let contracts for tax collection and public construction. They had no *imperium*.

centuriate assembly (*comitia centuriata*): One of the Roman assemblies of the republic used for enacting laws, electing higher magistrates, declaring war and peace, and inflicting capital punishment.

chi-rho symbol/*labarum*: A symbol first used by Constantine in the battle of the Milvian Bridge. The symbol consisted of the two Greek letters *chi* and *rho*, which were the first two letters of the word *Christ*. The symbol was frequently used in imperial iconography from the time of Constantine onward.

Circus Maximus: Large enclosure in Rome (600 × 150 meters) for chariot-racing, with long parallel sides and one semicircular end. It was situated in the Murcia Valley between the Aventine and Palatine Hills, reputed to be of Regal Period origins and rebuilt with spectator seating by Gaius Julius Caesar.

citharode: A professional singer accompanied by a stringed instrument called a lyre or *cithara*.

***clientela* ("clientship")**: The social system of binding high and low families together by granting favors and meeting obligations, originating as early as the Regal Period.

cohort: Administrative, then tactical unit in the Roman army.

colony: Rome started settling colonies of Latins and citizens early as a means of securing territory. Eventually, *colonia* became the highest status a subject community (whether founded by Rome or not) could attain, whereby all freeborn male inhabitants became Roman citizens.

Colosseum (Flavian Amphitheater): Large concrete and travertine amphitheater in Rome, begun by Vespasian and completed by Titus and Domitian. It was dedicated by Titus in A.D. 80 and became the principal place of gladiatorial and other mass entertainments in the city. It was restored several times under later emperors.

***comes* ("companion")**: During the Principate, one who accompanied the emperor on his travels abroad. Later, the term was used for certain civil and military administrative posts.

comitatenses: Mobile army units of the late empire who were separate from the frontier armies (*limitanei*). They were directly responsible to the emperor and received higher wages than the frontier armies. The division between these two forces was completed under Constantine. Each large mobile unit was commanded by a *magister equitum* ("master of the cavalry") or a *magister peditum* ("master of the infantry").

***comitia* ("assembly")**: Term applied to the Roman popular assemblies convened for voting on law: the curiate assembly (*comitia curiata*); centuriate assembly (*comitia centuriata*); tribal assembly of the people (*comitia populi tributa*); and tribal assembly of the plebs (*comitia plebis tribute*), a.k.a. the

council of the plebs (*concilium plebis*). All voting was done in blocks as appropriate for each assembly.

consul: Chief magistrate in republican Rome. Two were elected annually and held top powers in the political, judicial, and military spheres. They had the greatest *imperium* in the state. *Ordinarii* consuls were those initially holding office, while *suffecti* were those appointed to finish the remainder of the annual term.

contio: Informal meeting of a governing body convened by a magistrate. In such a meeting, the whole populace was summoned, but not by voting blocks, thus differing from an assembly (*comitia*).

***cursus honorum* ("run of offices")**: Enforced order of office holding in republican Rome, based on criteria of wealth, age, and experience. The order of ascent was *quaestor* (or tribune of the plebs) → *aedile* (optional) → praetor → consul. Ex-consuls could also become censors or dictators, and patrician ex-consuls could be elected as *interreges*.

decuriones: Term applied to the men who ran Roman local governments in colonies and municipalities as members of a local council. They controlled the public life of the community, as well as its administration and finances.

delatores: Court prosecution "informers," particularly in a *maiestas* trial.

dictator: Extraordinary magistracy instituted in crises. A dictator was appointed by a magistrate and suspended the normal government of Rome. He had no colleague but appointed an assistant called the master of horse (*magister equitum*). He held office for six months or until he had completed his specific task. A dictator had the combined *imperium* of the suspended consuls and was, thus, entitled to 24 *lictors*.

***dioceses* ("districts")**: The 12 districts of provinces as established by Diocletian in the 3rd century A.D. All the provinces (with a few exceptions) were grouped into one of the 12 dioceses, each of which was administered by a *vicarius*.

diploma: Official document of discharge issued to Roman veterans, consisting of a pair of small bronze tablets recording the man's privileges.

Dominate (< *dominus*, Latin for "master"): The term sometimes applied to the autocratic system of rule founded by Diocletian and to the period of its operation (A.D. 284–476). The term is used chiefly to distinguish it from the Principate, as established by Augustus.

Donatists: A group of hardliner Christians in Africa who demanded the removal of all African clergy who were *traditores* ("traitors") during the Great Persecution (A.D. 303–311). The sect remained confined to Africa and became the majority church there well into the early 5th century A.D., whereupon it seems to have reconciled with the Catholic Church.

donative: Cash gifts given out to the troops or, occasionally, the populace to mark important imperial events (anniversaries, birthdays, weddings), especially the accession of a new *princeps*.

***dux* ("leader and general")**: A supreme military commander. This title was also sometimes given to an officer performing duties over and above his current rank, especially starting in the 3rd century A.D.

Edict of Toleration: Passed by Galerius in A.D. 311 right before his death, this edict officially ended the persecution of Christians begun in 303. It allowed freedom of worship to Christians as well as pagans.

Empire of the Gallic Provinces: A secessionist state arising in Gaul in A.D. 260 under the leadership of Postumus. The empire consisted of Gaul, Britain, and Spain. In 274, the emperor Aurelian overthrew the secessionist empire and brought it back under Roman control.

epigraphy: The study of inscriptions (on any surface) that derive directly from the ancient world. The field is concerned with both the form of the letters and their content.

equites: Roman term for cavalry and for a social class parallel to, but larger than, the senatorial order. During the Principate, emperors increasingly employed officers of equestrian status to circumvent consolidation of power by senatorial and patrician families.

faction: Term applied to politically allied groupings in republican senatorial politics. Applied later to the four chariot-racing teams and their supporters.

falx: Large, distinctive, scythe-like weapon used by the Dacians, capable of splitting a Roman shield and simultaneously wounding the man holding it.

fasces: Bundles of rods carried by *lictors* as marks of a magistrate's *imperium*.

fasti: Lists of annual consuls kept at Rome and other towns, usually in the forum. Later, notable events were added under their appropriate years, making surviving *fasti* (mostly from Italian towns) valuable witnesses to events.

First Constitutional Settlement: The first creation of special governmental powers for Augustus on 13 January 27 B.C. Augustus accepted control over the armed provinces for a period of 10 years.

Flavian Dynasty (r. A.D. 69–96): Three emperors of the Flavius family: Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian.

***Forma Urbs Romae* ("Plan of the City of Rome")**: A large map of the city of Rome that decorated a wall in the Temple of Peace. The scale of the map was roughly 1:240. Only about 10 percent of the map survives. Most pieces date to sometime after A.D. 203, but a few seem to belong to the earlier Flavian version.

freedman/freedwoman: An emancipated slave.

Gallia (Gaul): The Roman name for the Celtic-controlled sector of mainland western Europe. It was divided into two parts, *Gallia Transalpina* ("Gaul across the Alps"), comprising France, Belgium, and parts of Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, and *Gallia Cisalpina* ("Gaul this side of the Alps"), in the Po Valley in north Italy. Both regions eventually came under Roman control.

Gemonian Steps ("Stairs of Mourning"): Ancient stairs in Rome near the Tiber River where corpses of state criminals and public enemies were displayed.

gown of manhood: The plain white toga donned by a Roman boy when he reached the age of 13 or 14. Before this, he would wear the purple-bordered *toga praetexta*.

gravitas: One of the essential virtues of a Roman man, *gravitas* referred to one's respectability and seriousness in public.

hostis: Officially declared public enemy.

imperator: Someone who has wielded *imperium* effectively, particularly a victorious military commander. Being hailed by one's troops as *imperator* made one worthy of a triumph. Later, the term was associated solely with the *princeps*.

Imperial Period: Habitual designation for the period from Augustus to the "fall" in the 5th century, covering the years 31 B.C.–A.D. 476. Usually subdivided into the early empire (Augustus–Nerva), the high empire (Trajan–Severans), and the late empire (3rd–5th centuries).

imperium: Originally, this term meant the "power of command" in a military context and was conferred on kings and, later, on consuls and praetors (and dictators). It was also used to denote the area over which the Romans had the power of command and, hence, came to mean *empire* in a territorial sense.

jugate: An iconographical arrangement on the obverse of a Roman coin in which one profile is superimposed on another, thus showing two echeloned faces.

Julio-Claudian Dynasty (31 B.C.–A.D. 68): The family of the first five emperors of the Roman Principate: Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero.

***juvenalia* ("youth games")**: A festival commemorating a young emperor's first shave, first celebrated under Nero in A.D. 59.

legate (*legatus*, pl. *legati*): Roman term for a man sent (< *legare*, "to send, commission") to represent someone, either an individual or a community. In military terms, it could denote (as *legatus*) a commander of an imperial-era legion or (as *legatus pro praetore*) a governor or commander of a larger body of troops, who was sent out as a representative of the emperor's *imperium*. Under

the emperor Augustus, this term became used for various important administrative offices responsible directly to the emperor.

legion: The basic infantry unit of the Roman army. It varied in size over time.

libertas: Freedom from domination by a monarch or group.

lictors: Officials who carried the *fasces* in public as the badges of a magistrate's *imperium*. The number of *lictors* reflected the magistrate's relative level of *imperium*: 6 each for praetors (2 when in Rome), 12 each for consuls, and 24 for dictators (but before Sulla, only 12 when in Rome).

limitanei: The frontier troops of the late Roman army, who were distinct from the mobile strike troops (*comitatenses*) because they maintained permanent positions. They were also paid less than the mobile unit soldiers. This separation of the two forces was completed under Constantine. The *limitanei* were made up of the legions, auxiliary units, cavalry, and infantry. Each unit was commanded by a *dux*.

***maiestas* (*maiestas minuta*)**: Formal charge of treason against the state or imperial family, first established as a crime by the Lex Appuleia of 103 B.C. Revised several times in the late republican period, this type of charge became increasingly common under the emperor Tiberius.

master of horse (*magister equitum*): Subordinate officer appointed by a dictator who held derivatory *imperium* from the dictator and ranked with the praetors. Originally associated with the command of cavalry, the office later came to imply the second-in-command of the dictator either on the battlefield or in Rome.

***mater castrorum* ("mother of the camp")**: A standard title for wives and mothers of the emperors from the Severan Dynasty onward, giving them both military and imperial power.

***mos maiorum* ("way of the ancestors")**: Nostalgic notion of the time-honored, steadfast, effective, and proper customs and laws of Roman culture.

names, Roman: The full citizen's name usually had three elements: the *praenomen* (identifying the individual; very few were in general use), the *nomen* (identifying the clan), and the *cognomen* (identifying a family within a clan). Extra names (usually heritable) could be accumulated through adoption, as honorific titles, or as nicknames.

***naumachia* ("sea battle")**: Arena in which historic or mythical naval battles were reenacted for entertainment. Also the sea battle show itself.

Nicene Creed: A creed, sponsored by Constantine and the state, that contained the "essentials" of the Christian faith as determined by the Council at Nicaea in A.D. 325. The creed was an attempt to reconcile the differing doctrinal views of

the early Christian sects. It led to a standardization of Christianity that was state-sponsored, making heresy an easily defined crime.

numismatics: The study of coins.

oligarchy: "Rule by a few," selected usually on the basis of birth (aristocracy) or wealth (plutocracy) or a combination of the two.

order (< *ordo*, the Latin word for "rank"): The term applied to the various social classes of citizens organized by status. Over the long course of Roman history, five orders appeared: patrician, plebeian, senatorial, equestrian, and decurional.

Ostia: A city at the mouth of the Tiber River that served as Rome's port. Ostia is one of the most important archaeological sites in Italy.

Palatine Hill: Chief of the seven hills of the city of Rome and the site of oldest Roman settlement. Under the Principate, various emperors constructed monumental residences or "palaces" on this hill.

Parthians/Parthian Empire: Important semi-feudal kingdom of south-central Asia during the Hellenistic and Roman eras. After throwing off the yoke of their Macedonian overlords, the Parthians expanded to control territory from the Euphrates to the Indus and, thus, repeatedly came into conflict with the Romans, especially during the period of the Principate.

***pater patriae* ("father of the fatherland")**: Highly honorific title originally bestowed on Cicero by the Senate after his execution of the Catalinarian conspirators in 63 B.C. Later, Julius Caesar accepted the title, and later still, it became a common honor typically voted to an emperor after a brief period of reign, starting with Augustus in 2 B.C.

***pax deorum* ("peace of the gods")**: Beneficial relationships between deities and mortals, maintained by proper execution and continuation of the state cults.

pietas: Proper deference to one's ancestors, family, gods, customs, and tradition.

plebeians (*plebs*): Name for the general body of Roman citizens, as distinct from the patricians. The members of the class were originally excluded from magistracies and religious colleges, but they gradually acquired increased egalitarian rights, representation, and participation as the republic evolved. Under the late republic, the term became used more loosely in common parlance to denote members of the lower socioeconomic class.

Pontifex Maximus: Chief priest of pagan Rome and head of the college of *pontifices*. During the Principate, this traditional office was held by the emperor, until the reign of Gratian, who refused the office in A.D. 375.

***populus Romanus* ("Roman people")**: Although this term seems to have originally referred to the soldiers of Rome, it came to include the entire adult male citizen population of Rome, excluding women, children, slaves, and

foreigners. By the imperial period, the term *populus* was more closely identified with the plebeians, while the elite groups had their own specific labels. It was the *populus Romanus* who elected magistrates, passed laws, and approved treaties.

***potestas* ("power")**: Political power granted by the holding of a magistracy.

***praeses* ("protector, governor")**: The civilian governor in a Roman province, usually of the equestrian class. This term became widely used in the 3rd century A.D., when Diocletian divided the provinces into smaller units. With the exception of Africa, Asia, and the divisions of Italy, all provinces were governed by *praesides*. The *praeses* had only civil power, whereas the military power was handed over to the *dux* of the province.

praetor: Second highest annually elected republican magistracy. Originally assistants to the consuls, six were elected each year by 150 B.C., with two more added by Sulla. They carried out judicial, political, and military functions. They had lesser *imperium* than that of the consuls.

Praetorian Guard/prefect: Originally a special detachment of soldiers who guarded the commanding officer's tent (*praetorium*) in an army camp, the term was adopted for the imperial guard of the emperor in Rome. Formed by Augustus and discreetly billeted in towns around Rome, the guard was barracked in a single camp on the outskirts of the city by Tiberius in A.D. 23. It played some role in imperial politics. The commander, a prefect of equestrian status, could be a person of great influence. The guard was disbanded by Constantine in A.D. 312.

prefect (from *praeficere*, "to put in charge"): Before the Social War, this term was originally used to denote minor magistrates sent to allied towns in Italy. It later became used exclusively for a military officer of equestrian status, usually appointed to command allied or auxiliary troops. Under the Principate, the word was also employed in the titles of a variety of powerful imperial offices for administrators of non-senatorial status.

prefect of the city: The emperor's deputy in Rome, a position instituted by Augustus. The prefect, always of senatorial rank, was in charge of keeping order in the city and, thus, had *imperium* to command the urban cohorts.

Price Edict: Passed by Diocletian in A.D. 301, the edict attempted to curb inflation after he had created a unified currency by setting maximum prices and wages throughout the empire. Despite its harsh penalties, the edict was difficult to enforce and, thus, faded away.

***princeps* ("first man")**: This was a republican-era term of honor denoting prominent statesmen. Although not originally an official title and not conferred by specific grant of the Senate, Augustus chose this word to describe himself and his revised position within imperial administration, and it was subsequently applied to all emperors.

Principate: Term used to describe both the imperial system established by Augustus and the period of its operation (31 B.C.–A.D. 284).

proconsul, propraetor: Promagistrates operated in place of a consul or praetor, respectively, outside of Rome. They held *imperium* equal to the consuls or praetors, but that *imperium* was limited to the borders of their assigned territories. Originally, *imperium* was extended if a magistrate's term ended before he was able to settle a conflict, but in the later republic and the Principate, promagistrates were appointed to oversee Rome's provinces as governors.

procurator: Originally the term for an agent or a representative in legal proceedings. Under the Principate, the word became used for midlevel governorships appointed by Roman emperors, usually presiding over less important imperial provinces. Procurator was also the name used for a variety of imperial posts in civil administration, usually filled by men of equestrian status.

prosopography: A type of study that identifies, analyzes, and uses as explanatory facts the relationships between individuals within a political, literary, or historical system.

***provincia* ("province")**: Originally designating the sphere of action of a magistrate with *imperium*, this term came to be used in the late republic more specifically to denote a set administrative command of overseas territory.

quaestor: Most junior magistracy in the *cursus honorum*. Ten were elected annually; they had financial duties and no *imperium*.

Republican Period: Traditionally dated 509–31 B.C., this long period of oligarchic rule by Senate and magistrates is often subdivided into the early republic (down to 264 B.C. and the First Punic War), middle republic (264–133 B.C.), and late republic (corresponding to the Roman Revolution, 133–31 B.C.).

Roman Revolution: Tumultuous period of civil wars down to 27 B.C.; the end result was the transformation of the republic into the Principate by Augustus.

sacramentum: The oath of allegiance sworn by soldiers to each individual emperor. The oath, which emphasized obedience and loyalty, was renewed annually on New Year's Day or on the anniversary of the emperor's accession.

sacrosanctitas: Quality of being "twice-holy," inviolable, unable to be coerced or harmed physically.

Sarmatians: A nomadic people, originally from Iran, who migrated into the regions of the Danube in the centuries after 250 B.C. They became clients of Rome during the early empire but began causing problems again in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. because of pressures from the Germanic tribes. They eventually were settled into Roman provinces in large numbers.

Sassanids/Sassanian Empire: Called the successors of the Achaemenids, they ruled Persia from A.D. 224–651. At its greatest extent, the empire stretched from Syria to India and from Iberia to the Persian Gulf. Several Roman emperors campaigned against the Sassanid Empire during the Principate. The empire came to its end in A.D. 651 when the Arabs conquered Mesopotamia and Iran.

Second Constitutional Settlement: The second formal creation of special governmental powers for Augustus in the summer of 23 B.C. He was granted *imperium proconsulare maius*, "greater proconsular power," as well as *tribunicia potestas*, "tribunician power," and *ius auxilii*, "right of helping" (he had already been granted a tribune's *sacrosanctitas* in 36 B.C.).

Senate: Council of Roman aristocratic advisers, first to the kings, then to the magistrates of the republic, and finally, to the emperors. Its origins are obscure.

***Senatus consultum (ultimum)* ("[final] decree of the Senate")**: Senatorial edicts were advice issued by the Senate to magistrates; they were not legally binding under the republic. The "final" (*ultimum*) decree was essentially a declaration of martial law first issued in 121 B.C.; the last SCU was issued in January 49 B.C.

***sesterce* (*sestertius*)**: A silver or bronze coin of ancient Rome. An average farmhand might receive 1 ½ to 2 sesterces a day in wages.

severitas: Ideal quality of being stern, grave, and outwardly serious of purpose. This quality was connected with traditional Roman behavior, and one who comported himself in such a fashion could command some degree of authority.

Sol Invictus ("the invincible sun god"): A sun god whose origins were in Syria, but who became equated with the Greek sun god Apollo. The worship of this god persisted until it was displaced by Christianity.

Stoic/Stoicism: School of Hellenistic philosophy founded by Zeno and quite popular among Roman aristocrats of the late republican and Principate periods. Stoics advocated an acceptance of what was in accord with nature, as well as dutiful and courageous behavior in both the private and public spheres. The philosophy's emphasis on personal austerity, simplicity, seriousness, frugality, and public service coincided well with traditional Roman values.

Subura: A narrow valley between the Viminal and Equiline Hills, connecting to the Forum Romanum. It was a center of trade and manufacture but was also known for being a dirty area and one of the red-light districts of ancient Rome.

Sybilline Oracles: An obscure collection of Latin prophetic verse with pagan, Jewish, and Christian elements freely intermingled. The various parts contain numerous references to classical mythological tales, as well as clearly Christianizing, apocalyptic passages.

Tetrarchy ("Rule of Four"): A modern term applied to the system of succession introduced by Diocletian in A.D. 293. In the Tetrarchy, the rule of the empire was split among four men: The two Augusti each adopted a general as a junior emperor, or Caesar, who would then succeed him as Augustus. Each ruler had his own capital city, though he was usually out campaigning with his own army. The system did not last long after Diocletian's retirement.

Third-century crisis: A period of chaos in the Roman Empire after the death of Alexander Severus in A.D. 235. This period, characterized by a rapid succession of legitimate and claimant emperors, lasted for nearly 50 years, until the accession of Diocletian (A.D. 284).

Thirty Pretenders: Refers to the various men throughout the provinces who attempted to claim imperial power after the capture of Valerian in the 3rd century A.D. According to the *Historia Augusta*, there were actually 32 claimants, including 2 women. Most of the pretenders are said to have lived during the reign of Gallienus, but only 9 of them actually did. Many of the so-called pretenders also seem never to have gained any actual authority, while others are completely fictitious.

***traditores* ("traitors")**: A term applied to Christians who gave into the pressures of the Great Persecution (A.D. 303–311) Although some people forgave them their behavior, the Donatists claimed that such traitors were no longer Christians.

tribune of the plebs: Not technically a magistrate, this was the officer attached to the tribal assembly of the plebs. He was entrusted with looking after the interests of the plebs, and could convene discussion sessions (*contiones*) or voting sessions (*comitiae*) of the plebs. His most important power was a veto on meetings of all assemblies and the Senate and on all legislation.

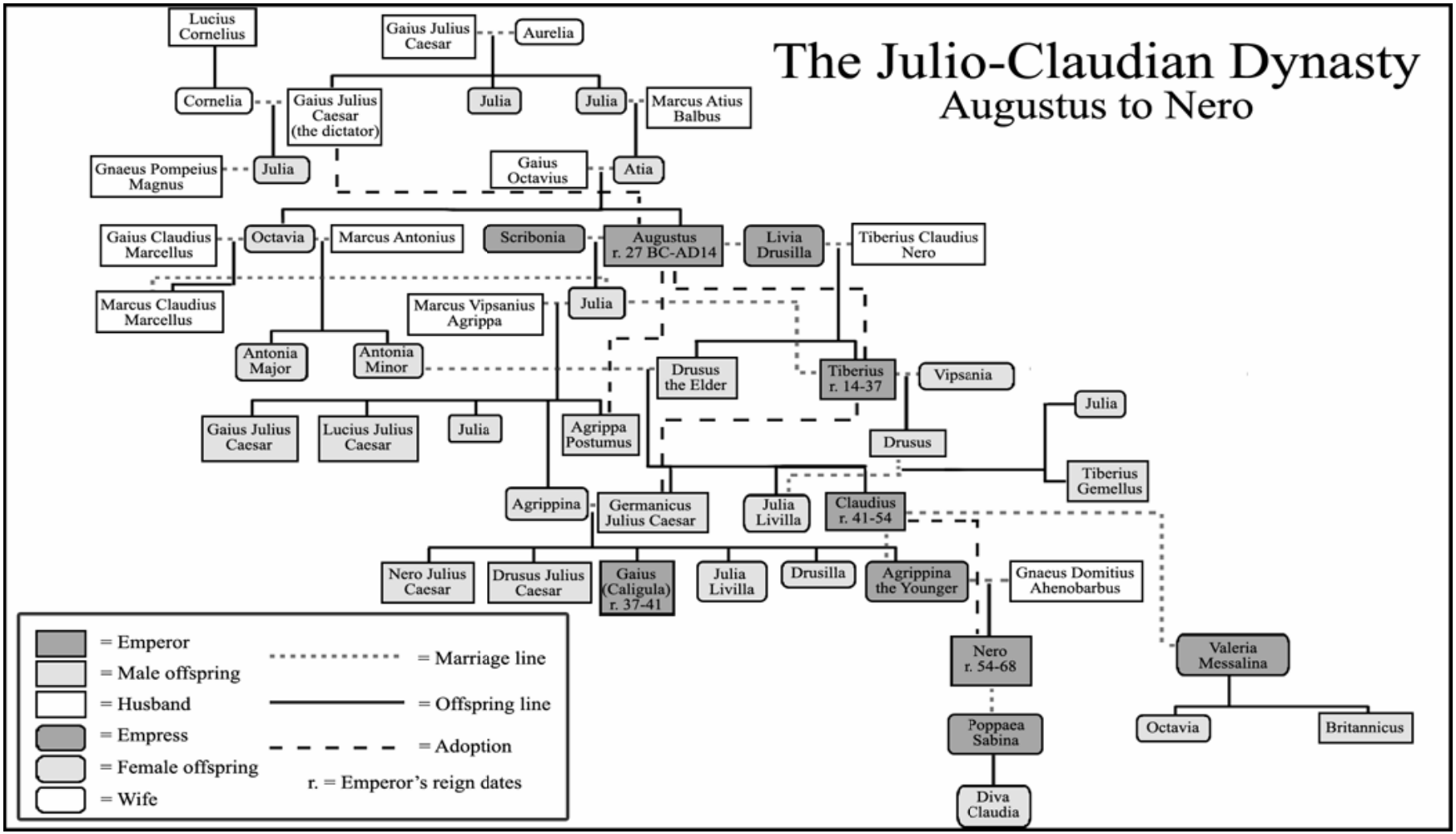
triumph: Special procession of a victorious Roman magistrate with *imperium* to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, in which particular august rituals were observed and the *triumphator* was adorned as a sort of god-king.

triumvirate: Latinate term applied to any board of three men empowered to carry out some task (e.g., Tiberius Gracchus's land commission). Usually applied (technically incorrectly) to the pact among Crassus, Pompey, and Caesar formed in 60 B.C. (the so-called first triumvirate). The second triumvirate comprised Octavian, Antony, and Lepidus and was legally instituted in 43 B.C.

Vestal Virgin: A priestess to the Roman goddess of the hearth, Vesta. The Vestal Virgins had two main duties: maintaining the eternal fire of Rome, which ensured the city's permanence, and preparing the grain mixed with salt for public sacrifices. There were six Vestals at any time, all of whom were required to maintain sexual purity during their 30-year service to the goddess.

***vicarius* (“deputy”)**: The administrator of a diocese; an equestrian official who served as the deputy of the Praetorian prefects. He oversaw the provincial governors (*praesides*) and heard appeals from their courts.

***vigiles* (“night watchmen”)**: Military force of seven cohorts of 500 or 1000 freedmen, each cohort under the authority of an equestrian prefect. The body was formed to combat fire in the city of Rome.



Emperors of Rome
Part II

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Professor Fagan has an extensive research record in Roman history and has held a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at the University of Cologne, Germany. He has published numerous articles in international journals, and his first monograph, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (1999), was published by the University of Michigan Press. An edited volume, *Archaeological Fantasies*, on the phenomenon of pseudoarchaeology (also known as "alternative" archaeology), appeared in 2006 with Routledge of London (U.K.). Professor Fagan is currently completing a book on spectatorship at the Roman arena and an edited volume on ancient warfare.

Table of Contents

Emperors of Rome
Part II

Emperors of Rome

Scope:

It has been claimed that the Roman emperors were the most powerful people who ever lived. At their height, they presided over a realm with footholds on three continents and a population of some 60 million souls. They had at their fingertips the wealth and resources of some of the richest lands on Earth. This course examines these emperors in all their fascinating diversity, from the enlightened and conscientious to the feckless and deranged.

The course is essentially a series of biographic portraits, from Augustus, Julius Caesar's grandnephew, to Constantine, who, in my view, was the last Roman emperor and the first medieval monarch. Along the way we will see what sort of men these emperors were. What background and training, if any, prepared them for their awesome responsibilities? What achievements can they claim? What depravities did they display? As the course progresses, we will also come to see the strengths and weaknesses of the available historical sources—how reliable they are and how skeptical we must be of many of them. We proceed chronologically and examine emperors by successive dynasty. When dynasties fail, we look at the main players in the civil wars fought to sort out who would found the next dynasty.

Aside from such issues as these, four other matters will command our attention in varying degrees as we proceed. First, what was the role of imperial women at court? From what source did they draw their power? How did they exercise that power? Second, what was the relationship of the emperor to different groups in Roman society: to the city of Rome, the provinces, the Senate, the people, and the army? How was the empire run, and what was the role of the emperor in that system? Third, linked to the second, what was the shape of the political and social system that gave the emperor his position of dominance? Finally, any serious student of history requires, at the very least, notification of where the main scholarly debates lie in a given field of study. I draw attention to some of these debates as we go along.

Our first two lectures set the stage, initially with a review of the primary sources on which such a course depends—literary sources, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological finds—followed by an examination of the political character of the Roman Republic, the soil from which the emperors sprang. The next 14 lectures address the best documented imperial dynasty, the Julio-Claudians, which started with Augustus in 31 B.C., and ended in A.D. 68 with Nero, who had so thoroughly rid himself of rivals that his death not only brought about the end of his dynasty but left a political vacuum as well.

In A.D. 69, four emperors reigned, with Vespasian finally coming to power and establishing the Flavian Dynasty, which takes us through Lecture Nineteen. The Senate's selection of Nerva in A.D. 96 set in motion another succession of

rulers, covered in Lectures Twenty through Twenty-Four, including, among others, Antoninus Pius (one of the handful of emperors to die peacefully in his bed) and the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Lecture Twenty-Five marks a transition from one era of imperial history to another, with civil war and the establishment of the Severan Dynasty in 193; Lecture Twenty-Six covers the tumultuous years that followed and the dynasty's collapse with the death of Severus Alexander in 235.

In the next five lectures, we break from the biographic and chronological path and take a thematic route, looking closely at the emperors' relationships over the decades to different entities in Roman society: the city of Rome itself, the provinces of the empire, the elite, the people, and the army. My hope is to address some issues that my focus on the lives and deeds of the individual rulers might otherwise have obscured.

We resume our chronological path with Lecture Thirty-Two, aptly named "Chaos." To illustrate how completely and quickly the situation deteriorated after the collapse of the Severan Dynasty, we need only note that in the 265 years between the rise of Augustus and the death of Severus Alexander, there were 24 legitimate emperors and 15 claimants; in the 50 years between the death of Severus Alexander in 235 and the accession of Diocletian, there were 21 legitimate emperors, 38 claimants, and 11 secessionist rulers. This lecture outlines the problems that generated this instability, then studies the reigns of four legitimate emperors as exemplars for how these problems played out during this difficult time.

Lecture Thirty-Three covers the founding of Diocletian's Tetrarchy and the reestablishment of order between 285 and 305. Lectures Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five examine the rise and reign of Constantine, whose conversion to Christianity and founding of Constantinople were to change the face of history. In my final lecture, I share some thoughts on this imperial roster and its fascinating parade of characters, examining in particular why the popular perception of "good" and "bad" emperors should be viewed with a skeptical eye and proposing that we use a different and far more accurate lens to assess the emperors of Rome.

Lecture Thirteen

Power and Poison—Agrippina and Claudius

Scope: While Livia Drusilla and Messalina had been powerful, they pale beside Agrippina the Younger, perhaps the most prominent female dynastic figure of the century and, arguably, in all of Roman history. This woman was connected to four of the five Julio-Claudian emperors: She was the great-granddaughter of Augustus, the sister of Caligula, the niece and wife of Claudius, and the mother of Nero. Her early life, although obscure, suggests a towering ambition and a willingness to act. Despite suspicion and exile, Agrippina struggled and survived to emerge as a major player in the years after 49, when she replaced Messalina as Claudius's wife. She set about establishing her own ascendancy over Claudius and maneuvering on behalf of her teenage son, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, despite Claudius having his own natural son, Britannicus. In 50, young Lucius was adopted by Claudius and renamed Nero Claudius Caesar (Nero). Four years later, Claudius was dead, and Nero, at 16 years of age, became emperor of Rome. For this, he could thank his mother, Agrippina. In this lecture, we consider the nature of Agrippina's political prominence, brazenly broadcast in ways heretofore unthinkable.

Outline

I. Roman legend celebrated upstanding women of the deep, fictitious past, such as Lucretia who, despite being blameless, killed herself when raped by a prince rather than bring dishonor on the names of her father and husband.

A. But the hoary tales of the Roman past also enshrined a quite different female archetype, as represented by Tullia, a Roman princess who seduced her brother-in-law, then conspired to put him on the throne. In the process, she murdered her husband, sister, and father. Tullia represented to the Roman male mind what happened when women aspired to public life.

B. In Roman male eyes, once women moved into political circles, they lost their femininity and succumbed to unfettered ambition and lethal duplicity.

II. Agrippina, like her brother Caligula, benefited from the popularity of her father, Germanicus, and her direct descent from Augustus. Her pedigree was proud, but her childhood was marred by tragedy.

A. Agrippina was the fourth child of six, born on 6 November A.D. 15 or 16 on the German frontier, in the winter quarters of the legions. Her father perished far from home when she was a toddler, but in her mother and namesake, she had a powerful and headstrong role model.

B. As a teenager, Agrippina saw that her mother's head-on approach earned her exile and premature death. Her family decimated, the 13-year-old Agrippina joined her older brother, Caligula, in Livia's care.

C. She would have learned early the need to conceal her feelings and deceive, skills that could mean the difference between life and death.

D. Agrippina's husband, Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, came from a prominent family that had a reputation for arrogance and intemperance.

E. We do not have much information about Agrippina's life under the last years of Tiberius, but when Caligula, became emperor in March 37, she began to flex her political muscles.

III. In his first months as emperor, Caligula granted to Agrippina, along with her sisters, all the rights of the Vestal Virgins.

A. On 15 December of the same year, Agrippina gave birth to a son, named Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. An astrologer declared that the child would one day be emperor but that he would kill his mother.

B. By the year 39, Caligula's relationship with the Roman elite had soured. As we saw in Lecture Ten, the governor in Upper Germany, Gnaeus Lentulus Gaetulicus, decided to act and was suppressed. Shockingly, Agrippina was also involved in this scandal.

1. Agrippina's sister Drusilla had been married to a man named Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, of impeccably noble credentials.

2. But in 38 Drusilla died, and Lepidus became Agrippina's lover. In 39, Lepidus went down with Gaetulicus, Agrippina was exiled, and several others were put to death.

C. Why was Agrippina mixed up in this plot?

1. It is significant that Agrippina's husband was dead by the year 40. If Domitius was ailing in 39, Agrippina may have been looking for a suitable replacement, and Marcus Lepidus fit the bill nicely.

2. Perhaps it was already clear to Agrippina that Caligula's behavior could only end in disaster, and she decided to be an active rather than passive party to the inevitable outcome.

3. Whatever the case, she failed, and by the end of 39, she found herself on the same small island once occupied by her mother and brother.

D. Claudius's accession in 41 saw Agrippina recalled and her property restored.

E. Her activities in the early years of Claudius's reign are not well recorded, but sometime in these years, Agrippina gained influence with Claudius's trusted freedman and secretary of finances, Pallas. Agrippina's connection to Pallas placed her in a strong position just before Messalina's fall and proved pivotal in its wake.

IV. Messalina's death left Claudius a hollow man. He needed a wife, partly because his regime was now more vulnerable than ever, alienated from the elite and stripped of the useful political links Messalina had provided.

A. Pallas advocated for Agrippina as a candidate. Given that she was Claudius's niece, his marrying Agrippina would be scandalous, but it carried political advantages. To legitimate the union, a law was passed redefining incest, and Claudius remarried—for the fifth time—in 49.

B. Signs of Agrippina's influence were made manifest immediately. Claudius's daughter, Octavia, was betrothed to Agrippina's son, Lucius.

C. In the year 50 Agrippina was conferred with the title Augusta, the first consort of a living emperor to be so honored. The title conferred on her a public prestige that no empress before her had enjoyed.

D. Agrippina's most notable achievement was the elevation of her son, Lucius, through whom she could look forward to decades of continued prominence.

1. As the great-great-grandson of Augustus, Lucius had a strong claim to the succession; he was also slightly older than Claudius's natural son, Britannicus, and was clearly popular with the masses.

2. In 50, Claudius adopted Lucius as his son, effectively eclipsing his natural son. The 12-year-old became Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus, or Nero, and the usual signs of favor followed.

V. According to Tacitus, Claudius, who by now had become a habitual drunk, declared one night that it was his fate to tolerate his wives' outrages, then to punish them. Terrified, Agrippina decided on preemption.

A. In consultation with a professional poisoner named Locusta, Agrippina prepared a slow-working potion and administered it to Claudius on a plate of mushrooms. When he survived this attempt, a fast-acting toxin was used, which did the trick, and Claudius perished on 13 October 54.

B. Suetonius and Dio tell different versions of this event. They both credit Agrippina's fear to Claudius's increased displays of affection toward Britannicus, which jeopardized Nero's dominant position in the succession. Dio then generally follows Tacitus's version of events. Suetonius, however, comments that while Agrippina is generally *believed* to have poisoned Claudius, there is dispute over the details.

C. It also must be said that if Claudius had come to suspect Agrippina or was favoring Britannicus somehow, no signs of these attitudes surface in the official record.

VI. Suetonius declares of Claudius: "Wholly under the control of his freedmen and wives, he behaved not as an emperor but as a slave." That assessment is enormously exaggerated and malicious, but it does contain a kernel of truth.

A. Claudius had been effectively debarred from the councils of state for most of his life and had kept the company of women and freedmen, on whose advice he continued to rely heavily during his reign.

B. A more difficult question is to what degree Claudius was complicit in the actions of his satellites. That is, were they acting against his wishes and on their own agendas, or were they really frontmen for the regime?

C. That question is almost impossible to answer from hard evidence, but it is noteworthy that all the ruinations perpetrated by Messalina or Agrippina worked to Claudius's political benefit by removing opponents or rivals. That is unlikely to be pure coincidence.

D. On a fair assessment, Claudius's reign must be judged successful. He was conscientious and careful, took his duties seriously, and achieved some notable results. And compared to what was to come next, Claudius was a veritable giant of statesmanship.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 60 (in epitome only).

Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, book 11.

Barrett, *Agrippina*.

Supplementary Reading:

De Imperatoribus Romanis (*DIR*), "Caligula," "Claudius."

Levick, *Claudius*, chapters 5–6.

Questions to Consider:

1. What differentiates Agrippina, if anything, from the likes of Livia, Agrippina the Elder (her mother), or Messalina?

2. Is it fair to say that Agrippina's career marks a watershed in the history of imperial women? If so, why?

Lecture Fourteen
Artist and Assassin—Nero

Scope: As with Caligula, the accession of Nero in 54 saw a young and inexperienced prince elevated to the most powerful office in the world. And as with Caligula, it was a recipe for disaster. Initially, Nero, under the influence of the powerful advisors Seneca and Burrus, ruled with moderation. At least, that was the public face of the regime. Privately, there were worrying indications. Nero chafed under what he regarded as the undue influence of his mother. He showed little interest in administration and far more in writing poetry and pursuing his artistic (and other) interests. Nero resorted to matricide to solve to his problems with Agrippina and finally gave full vent to his artistic impulses. In this lecture, we survey these impulses and discuss modern theories about the meaning of his antics.

Outline

I. Officially, Claudius died at around noon on 13 October 54. Unofficially, he died during the preceding night or just before dawn. Why the discrepancy?

- **A.** The "missing" hours were needed for Agrippina to make the proper arrangements for the smooth transition of power.
- **B.** Shortly after noon, Nero appeared, accompanied by Agrippina and the Praetorian prefect. Nero was presented to the guardsmen on duty and dispatched directly to the Praetorian camp.
- **C.** After the promise of a suitable reward, the Praetorians hailed Nero as emperor. The Senate rapidly followed suit and voted him the usual powers. Nero was several weeks shy of his 17th birthday.
- **D.** Shortly after Nero took the throne, Agrippina arranged the murder of Marcus Junius Torquatus Silanus. Silanus was, like Nero himself, a great-great-grandson of Augustus, which fact alone was enough to ensure his end. Next to die was the freedman Narcissus, an opponent of Agrippina.
- **E.** Agrippina made no effort to conceal her expectations of increased control, and for all intents and purposes, it looked as if Agrippina's dominance would continue indefinitely. But Nero had his own ideas.

II. The first years of Nero's reign (54–59) were widely regarded as excellent. The young emperor showed moderation and conscientiousness in his duties.

- **A.** The credit for this period is ascribed in our sources to the influence of Burrus, the Praetorian prefect, and Seneca, Nero's tutor.
  - **1.** Both owed their positions to Agrippina, were on friendly terms with each other, and cooperated in guiding the young prince.

2. Seneca and Burrus also checked Nero's forays into vice, indulging his relatively harmless impulses but diverting his more concerning inclinations down less threatening paths.
3. One such diversion was the freedwoman Acte, with whom Nero fell in love in 55. Seneca and Burrus tolerated the affair, but Agrippina was appalled.
4. Acte caused a schism between mother and son, and Agrippina lost no opportunity to upbraid her son for his feelings.
5. Agrippina then changed tack and began to extol the virtues of Britannicus.
6. Nero's reaction gave a hint of things to come. He had Britannicus poisoned. Agrippina was then removed to her own house, and her imperial guard was withdrawn.

B. The power of imperial women, even Agrippina, ultimately derived from the men around them. Now, Agrippina found herself deserted by her former well-wishers. Enemies—and she had many—began a whispering campaign against her, alluding in Nero's presence to plots and dangers.

C. Agrippina's influence was broken in 55. She fades from the coinage and disappears from the pages of Tacitus until the year 59. At the same time, with Agrippina sidelined, Nero's behavior grew worse.

III. The year 59 marks a turning point in Nero's reign for two reasons: First, he performed on stage for the first time and, second, he killed his own mother.

A. Since losing influence over her son, Agrippina had lived a quiet life on her estates. The reason for Nero deciding to act in 59 is unequivocally stated in our sources: the new love of his life, Poppaea Sabina.

B. According to Tacitus, Poppaea realized that marriage to Nero would be impossible while Agrippina lived. Thus, she nagged Nero into matricide. This story seems simplistic and unlikely. As we shall see, a more likely reason was demonstrated after the deed was done.

C. The decision made, Nero cast about for agents and methods.

1. An ex-slave called Anicetus suggested using a collapsible boat to make the murder look like a maritime accident. The ship was constructed, and Agrippina was invited to the Bay of Naples to meet her son.
2. After a banquet, Nero saw his mother off to the shore, where she boarded the treacherous ship. Not long into the voyage, Agrippina's cabin collapsed. Agrippina recognized the assassination attempt and swam from the wreckage.
3. Feigning ignorance, Agrippina sent a messenger to Nero when she reached the shore, reporting the accident and her miraculous survival, but she urged him not to come to see her.

D. When informed of his mother's survival, Nero panicked. It was decided to resort to more trusted methods. Anicetus, who hated Agrippina, volunteered his services.

E. Agrippina waited in her villa. Anicetus then appeared with a column of troops, who surrounded the villa. Agrippina was then hacked to death by the soldiers.

F. Officially, Agrippina had paid the price for conspiracy, but Nero was plagued by the enormity of his crime and, according to Dio, suffered from his conscience.

IV. Agrippina was murdered between 19 and 23 March, and what happened next offers the most likely reason for why the murder took place.

A. For some time, Nero had been devoting himself to playing the lyre, singing, acting, and composing poetry.

B. Lyre players were called *citharodes* and performed in long, flowing gowns, singing songs to the accompaniment of a lyre, or *cithara*. As Nero's abilities grew with this training, so did his desire to share his talents with the public.

1. To put Nero's desire to perform in perspective, we must appreciate the fact that stage performers usually came from the lower orders. The Roman aristocracy found them repellent.

2. Nero disposed of Agrippina to clear a path for himself to the stage.

C. Shortly after Agrippina's death, Nero staged various games featuring stage performances and even took the stage himself for the first time. Note, however, that although people were invited to watch, such events were staged in the private gardens and houses of the emperor.

D. In the year 59, Nero indulged his boyhood fantasy of racing chariots.

1. Despite the popularity and riches on offer for a successful driver, the charioteers themselves were of the lowest social standing.

2. For Nero to take part in *this* spectacle was, perhaps, even more revolting to aristocratic tastes than his lyre-playing and singing.

E. In 60, Nero staged the Neronia: literary, musical, gymnastic, and equestrian competitions modeled on Greek athletic festivals. In 64, Nero finally raced chariots in public at Naples.

F. In the summer of 66, Nero set out for a year in Greece to compete in the Greek festivals, where he won everything. After returning to Rome late in 67, he continued to act, sing, recite poetry, and race in public.

V. The view of the ancient sources, all stemming from the elite, is that Nero's artistic performances were the height of irresponsibility. Some modern theories see a grand political plan behind Nero's antics, especially his public performances.

A. One view is that Nero wanted to overturn the republican-toned ideals of the Augustan Principate and establish a Greek-style divine monarchy at Rome. His stage appearances are seen as part of a coherent plan to set himself above lesser mortals; to be, in short, an absolute monarch.

B. A subcategory of this line of thinking sees Nero seeking to establish a sort of populist principate supported by the common people rather than the aristocracy and the army.

C. More recently, a brilliant analysis of Nero's antics by Ted Champlin of Princeton University has argued that Nero was a rational emperor who manipulated the cultural currents of his day to convey certain messages.

1. Champlin points out, for instance, that Nero's favorite acting roles were Orestes and Oedipus, both men infamous for maltreating their mothers but blameless in that maltreatment.

2. According to this view, Nero was an artist who understood how to use the power of popular perceptions to shape political realities.

D. Nero's reign also demonstrates the fact that Roman emperors were free to do almost whatever they wanted. There was no job description for "emperor of Rome."

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 61–62.

Suetonius, *Nero*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 13–14.

Champlin, *Nero*, especially pp. 53–177.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Nero."

Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty*, especially chapters 1–7.

Questions to Consider:

1. In what ways were Caligula and Nero similar or different?

2. What do Nero's artistic antics tell us about (a) Nero himself, (b) the Roman aristocracy and its relationship to the emperor, and (c) the institution of the Principate?

Lecture Fifteen
The Trouble with Christians

Scope: In the summer of 64, Rome burned. We start the lecture with a description of the great fire, then move to its historically significant aftermath. As suspicion fell on Nero as the cause of the fire, he blamed the Christians and, thus, started the patchy history of Rome's persecution of this sect. From the Roman pagan perspective, Christianity was a strange cult. Its adherents worshiped a recently executed criminal, chose a device of degrading punishment as their symbol, and were suspected of nocturnal cannibalism. The tenets of Christianity itself did little to allay such suspicions, particularly its monotheistic insistence that the gods revered for centuries by the Roman state were not only to be denied but despised as demons and its apocalyptic doctrines of the world ending in flames. We then consider the possible guilt of Nero in causing the fire and contemplate other possibilities, as well. We end by discussing the other result of the fire: Nero's Golden House (*Domus Aurea*). This structure, excessive and fascinating in itself, carries a significance for the history of architecture.

Outline

I. On the night of 18–19 July A.D. 64, in shops near the Circus Maximus, a fire started that would be among the most devastating in Roman history.

A. Fanned by the wind, the fire raced down the Circus, then scaled the heights of the surrounding hills and swooped down into the valleys. In panic, people poured into the narrow streets and were suffocated, crushed, or roasted alive in their flight.

B. When the fire broke out, Nero was at his ancestral estates at Antium on the coast. He did not return to the city until the fire threatened his palaces on the Palatine. Once there, he threw open public buildings and his own gardens to the refugees, housed them temporarily, sailed food and supplies up the Tiber from Ostia, and reduced the price of grain.

C. Still the fire raged, and rumors began to surface: Men were seen wielding torches and, claiming official authorization, spreading the flames; the emperor had picked up his lyre and sung of the fall of Troy. It was suggested that Nero saw the fire not as a cataclysm but as an opportunity and an inspiration, which in turn, raised the possibility that he may have been to blame. These rumors, bolstered by Nero's subsequent actions, were to have significant historical consequences.

D. The scale of the fire overwhelmed Rome's force of 7,000 *vigiles*, the nightwatch who doubled as a fire brigade. The only solution was to

create firebreaks in the flames' path; buildings were torn down to isolate the fire zone. This worked. After six days, the fire subsided but began again and raged for three more days before burning out.

E. The devastation was massive: Whole residential districts had ceased to exist. The fire had also destroyed Nero's palaces on and around the Palatine and Esquiline Hills.

1. In response, Nero built a new palace called the *Domus Aurea* ("Golden House"). Its construction deepened suspicions that Nero himself had started the great fire.

2. The belief that the fire had been started deliberately became so prevalent that Nero was forced to point a finger away from himself. He singled out the strange eastern cultists called Christians.

II. The Roman Empire allowed many religious traditions to coexist side-by-side. Only those religions that threatened the public order or ran counter to Roman interests were suppressed.

A. Religious deviants were usually asked only to give up their wayward practices and demonstrate respect for the ancient pagan traditions.

B. In addition, in Roman religion, divine appeasement was a matter of ritual procedure rather than moral practice.

1. Failure to perform the required rituals risked bringing down the wrath of the gods, manifested in the form of fires, floods, famines, plagues, earthquakes, and defeat in war.

2. Thus, apostasy endangered the entire community, even the state, if practiced on a large enough scale.

C. Against this backdrop, Christian beliefs appeared absurd. Christians not only refused to recognize and respect the traditional deities, but they actively denied their existence and reviled them as demons. Christians disapproved of the rituals that were so vital to the welfare of the community and upset the social order by refusing to recognize rank in their membership. All of this was offensive to pagan sensibilities.

D. Thus, when Nero pointed the finger of blame at Christians, he chose well. The emperor contrived brutal executions for those denounced and convicted.

E. In this way, the great fire of Rome kicked off the history of Christian persecution by the Roman state, which was to continue in fits and starts until the early 4th century A.D.

III. Was the great fire of Rome an accident or a crime?

A. First, we should note that the two possibilities are not mutually exclusive. The fire may have started accidentally and then have been aggravated by looters, arsonists, Nero's agents, or others.

1. That the fire started on the night of 18 July is significant. This was the anniversary of the battle of Allia (390 B.C.), when the defeat of a Roman army by Gallic raiders had led to the capture and, according to tradition, the burning of the city.
2. Ever after, no public business could be transacted on that day.

B. The case against Nero as arsonist is circumstantial, and the scholarly consensus is to reject it. The case rests on seven chief observations.

1. First, Suetonius and Dio have no doubt that Nero was to blame for the fire; only Tacitus is unsure.
2. Second, the emperor used the devastation wrought by the fire to build his *Domus Aurea*.
3. Third, as we all know, Nero fiddled while Rome burned, displaying callousness toward his people.
4. Fourth, Nero had expressed his hatred of the old city's narrow streets and general ugliness and his desire to renew Rome and rename it Neropolis, or "Nero City." But such hearsay reported in our sources is infirm evidence on which to rest a conviction.
5. Fifth, people claiming imperial authority were seen throwing torches into buildings and impeding fire-fighting efforts.
6. The last two pieces of evidence against Nero are more compelling. In 65, a conspirator against Nero, a Praetorian officer named Subrius Flavus, charged Nero with being a murderer, a charioteer, an actor, and an *arsonist*. It is noteworthy that Flavus's other charges are all true.
7. Finally, in the months before the fire, Nero twice prepared to leave Italy, but the plans were cancelled. He then issued an edict saying that he would stay home to comfort his people in their misfortunes, though no misfortunes were yet evident.

C. The case against Nero is, at best, not proven. There is yet another possibility, however: Perhaps Nero was right. The Christians did it.

1. This case has been made by German scholar Gerhard Baudy. Baudy's case is technical and complex, but it can be distilled down to two related propositions.
2. First, 18–19 July, the night when the fire started, was a significant date in one brand of eastern Mediterranean mystical thought. This was the date in antiquity when Sirius, the Dog Star, rose in the sky. This astronomical event was associated in various brands of mysticism with the renewal of the world under better auspices. But, of course, for renewal to take place, the old order had to go.
3. The second thread of his argument is that the early Christian community harbored some fanatics, people who were apocalyptic in their outlook and virulently anti-Roman. The New Testament

contains talk of the world consumed by fire in the end times, which might be read as a call to action.

D. The possibility that a politicized group of apocalyptic Christians actually caused the great fire of A.D. 64 is very much a viable option.

IV. As we conclude this lecture, we return to the Golden House Nero built in the wake of the great fire.

A. The palace is described at some length by Suetonius, who mentions five main elements: a complex that replaced the palaces destroyed in the fire; a vestibule toward the Forum with a triple colonnade a mile long; a colossal statue of Nero; an artificial lake; and around the lake, extensively landscaped gardens. Identifying the complex among the ruins visible in Rome today is no easy matter.

B. The Golden House is cited in our sources as the embodiment of Neronian folly, arrogance, and excess. This view has recently been challenged by Ted Champlin, who says the *Domus Aurea* was a sort of Nero-centered theme park where all were welcome.

C. However, after Nero's death, starting with Vespasian, the elements of the Golden House were removed and replaced with public structures. Our sources expressly comment on the symbolism of this: The selfish arrogance of Nero was replaced by the civic altruism of his successors.

D. Despite its unpleasant associations, the Golden House is much admired and studied still. It was the work of artists working for an artist.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 62.

Suetonius, *Nero*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.

Champlin, *Nero*, especially pp. 178–209.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Nero."

Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty*, especially chapter 8.

Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, especially chapter 3.

Questions to Consider:

1. With all the evidence examined, was the great fire of Rome in 64 an accident or a crime? If the latter, who was to blame?

2. How does the Golden House fit into the reign of Nero? What was it symptomatic of: an artistic temperament, megalomania, public relations acumen, or absolutist proclivities?

Lecture Sixteen

Dynasty's End—The Fall of Nero

Scope: The last years of Nero's reign were close to chaotic, and the emperor himself was increasingly disengaged from reality. He completed his Golden House, visited Greece, and returned triumphant, with 1,808 first prizes "won" in athletic festivals. He was also increasingly paranoid and executed anyone suspected of plotting against him, especially members of his family. In 65, a conspiracy was uncovered (and suppressed), but Nero did not heed the warning. Finally, in the summer of 68, the armies in Gaul and Spain turned against him. Although the first revolt was put down, the second, in Spain, gathered force. Deserted by his armies, then by the Senate, Nero fled the city and perished after driving a dagger into his own throat. His murder of many family members as threats ensured that the Julio-Claudian house perished with him.

Outline

I. Two years before the great fire, Nero had fallen under the sway of one of his new Praetorian prefects, Gaius Ofonius Tigellinus.

A. Nero's wife, Octavia, had become a burden. His passion lay with Poppaea Sabina. In 62, with Poppaea pregnant, Nero accused Octavia of sterility, then divorced and banished her. When the Roman people came to her defense, Octavia was accused of adultery and sedition and ordered to commit suicide.

B. Nero also rid himself of Pallas, Claudius's old freedman and supporter of his mother, Agrippina. All this done, he married Poppaea.

C. Freed from his constraining advisors, there followed Nero's excesses on the stage and in the circus, as well as the staggering events of 64: the great fire, the first Christian persecution, and the Golden House.

D. The child Poppaea was carrying was born in January 63 but died within weeks. Poppaea was pregnant again in 65, but that pregnancy ended when Nero's abuse caused Poppaea's death.

E. Then an ex-slave boy named Sporus, who resembled Poppaea, was brought to the Nero's attention. He had him castrated and dressed as a woman and eventually married Sporus-Poppaea in a mock ceremony.

F. Then, in the spring of 65, a vast conspiracy against Nero was unearthed. We pause here to examine the Stoic opposition to Nero in the Senate as well as its connection to the conspiracy of 65, if any.

1. Several Greek doctrines had taken root among the Roman elite, chief among them Stoicism.

2. Stoicism advocated an acceptance of what was in accord with nature, favored monarchy, and urged its adherents to behave dutifully and bravely in both the public and private spheres.
3. The main actor in the supposed Stoic opposition to Nero was Thrasea Paetus, who had been consul in 56. Thrasea's opposition to Nero was expressed in passive abstention, likely motivated in part by his Stoic worldview. His behavior was courageous, but his luck ran out in 65, when the great conspiracy came to light.
4. A plot had formed late in 64, with Gaius Calpurnius Piso as its leader. The plot included senators, equestrians, some in Nero's staff, and some Praetorians, notably the tribune Subrius Flavus and Tigellinus's partner in the prefecture, Faenius Rufus.
5. The assassination was to take place during a festival in April, but on the day before it was enacted, the plot came to light. Most of those implicated named their co-conspirators immediately. Piso committed suicide as soon as the plot was uncovered, as did Seneca and the poet Lucan.
6. In all, some 19 people were executed, 13 exiled, and dozens tortured, although few of these victims were known Stoics. The following year, Thrasea Paetus and others in his circle were also forced to commit suicide.

G. The Pisonian conspiracy, although unsuccessful, is vitally important for revealing the scope of disaffection with Nero's regime.

II. Instead of shoring up his political position in the face of this close call, Nero staged a vast spectacle, the crowning of a king of Armenia.

A. For years, the situation in Armenia had been unstable, but ultimately, a compromise was reached: The brother of the Parthian king, Tiridates, would become king of Armenia but on the authority of Rome. This compromise endured for 50 years.

B. Nero then traveled to Greece on 25 September 66 to compete in the festivals at Olympia, Nemea, Corinth (for the Isthmian games), and Delphi. He ostentatiously declared the "freedom of the Greeks" in 67, meaning freedom from taxation, then returned to Rome with 1,808 crowns of victory.

1. Before arriving in Greece, Nero had exiled the prefect of Egypt for using special baths that had been built at Alexandria in anticipation of the emperor's promised visit.
2. While in Greece, Nero twice summoned loyal veteran army commanders and ordered them to commit suicide.

III. As prince or emperor, Nero never visited an army camp, never commanded troops, and so far as we know, never saw a Roman army in the field.

A. Despite the inherently militaristic nature of the Principate, Nero paid little attention to that aspect of his office, which proved costly.

B. Modern scholars have put together an outline of the last weeks of Nero's life, primarily from an account of Suetonius.

1. The collapse of Nero's regime started in an unarmed civilian province in Gaul under a Gallic governor named Gaius Julius Vindex.

2. By March of 68, Vindex had amassed a rebel army of some 100,000 local levies. Vindex invited the governor of Spain, Servius Sulpicius Galba, to head the revolt. Galba accepted and began raising troops.

3. The commander in Upper Germany, Lucius Verginius Rufus, mustered 40,000 professional troops and headed in Vindex's direction.

4. Hearing of Verginius's approach, Vindex met the opposition outside the town of Vesontio, where a battle in early May saw the Gauls defeated and Vindex commit suicide.

5. The legions attempted to hail Verginius as emperor, but he wisely refused. Nor did he declare for Galba, who, on hearing of Vindex's demise, fell into despair and nearly committed suicide himself.

C. When he heard of Galba's defection, the emperor planned to appeal to the army in Gaul by weeping. At the same time, he raised troops in Rome, recalled a legion en route to Alexandria, conscripted marines into a new legion, and stationed an army in northern Italy.

D. As early June approached, messages came from the north that more armies had abandoned their emperor. Nero then learned that the Praetorian Guard had declared for Galba, as had the Senate.

E. Nero made his way to a villa in the suburbs, accompanied only by four freedmen. A grave was prepared and decorated with chunks of marble, at which the emperor declared while weeping, "*Qualis artifex pereo!*"

1. These famous last words are usually rendered as "What an artiste dies in me!" meaning, "What a loss to theater my death represents."

2. A recent reinterpretation notes the context of the utterance and the fact that *artifex* in Latin also means "artisan," suggesting this translation: "What an artisan I've been reduced to in my dying!"

F. News now arrived that Nero had been declared a public enemy. As his pursuers drew near, Nero vacillated, then finally, with help, drove a dagger into his own throat.

IV. Nero wasn't alone in death: The Julio-Claudian Dynasty fell with him.

A. When Nero came to power in 54, there were six other males who traced their heritage back to Augustus or Claudius. Nero could choose to look on these relatives as a pool for the succession, as Augustus had

done, or he could regard them as threats to his position. Of course, he adopted the latter view, and these men all died during Nero's reign.

B. In addition, the disasters inflicted on the heart of the dynasty by the likes of Sejanus and Agrippina had left it hollow at the core.

1. Had the houses of Germanicus or Drusus the Younger survived, a long line of popular heirs would have been ensured.

2. With no Julio-Claudian prince left alive to replace him, Nero's death left a political vacuum that many rushed to occupy.

V. The tumultuous reign of Nero had ended and, along with it, the dominance of Augustus's family over Roman politics. Remarkably, of all the emperors of Rome, Nero had the longest afterlife in communal memory.

A. Within months of Nero's suicide, a slave or freedman (accounts differ) appeared in Greece claiming to be the dead emperor. After winning over some troops in the east, the pretender was executed.

B. Nero entered the apocalyptic tradition of the eastern Mediterranean as an avenging angel who would erupt from across the Euphrates at the head of Parthian hordes and wash away the hated Roman Empire. He is also seen as the Antichrist in the New Testament's Book of Revelation.

C. Clearly, the opprobrium Nero elicited from the Roman elite was not shared by everyone. In fact, both Otho and Vitellius, short-lived successors to Nero in the year 69, tried to cash in on Nero's popularity to bolster their regimes. Only with the advent of the emperor Vespasian late in 69 did Nero's memory become less acceptable.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 63.

Suetonius, *Nero*.

Tacitus, *Annals*, 15–16.

Champlin, *Nero*, especially pp. 1–52 and 210–237.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Nero."

Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty*, especially chapters 9–10.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did the Pisonian conspiracy fail? Were its members courageous or craven? How might Nero have learned from its discovery?

2. To what extent was the dynastic problem faced by Nero structural or of his own making? What alternatives did he have open to him?

Lecture Seventeen
The Long Year, A.D. 69

Scope: Given that Nero had eliminated most of his male relatives, left no heirs, and made no provisions for a successor, his death threw open the matter of the succession. Initially, the leader of the Spanish rebellion, Servius Sulpicius Galba, was the accepted replacement. But the sole basis of his regime was his soldiers' support, and when they turned against him in January 69, he was murdered. Thus began the so-called Year of the Four Emperors. Nero's friend Otho attempted to take Galba's place, but he was immediately challenged by the legions on the Rhine, who wanted their commander, Vitellius, installed as emperor. The German legions invaded Italy and toppled Otho in April. In Syria-Palestine, a vicious war against Jewish rebels was coming to a climax, and the troops there proclaimed their general, Vespasian. Another invasion of Italy followed, Vitellius was removed, and Vespasian became emperor in December 69. These events illuminated a long-concealed secret of power: Emperors depended on the army for their position.

Outline

I. In the 12 months following Nero's death, no fewer than four emperors held power, successively elevated and toppled by the troops. Nero's initial replacement was Servius Sulpicius Galba, governor of a province in Spain.

A. Galba had reached the consulship under Tiberius and served as commander in Germany. Following a proconsulship in Africa in A.D. 45, Galba largely disappeared from public life until appointed governor of Spain by Nero in 60.

B. Despite his wealth, Galba had a reputation for frugality and discipline, which ultimately came to be viewed as stinginess and cruelty.

C. Galba's motives for joining Vindex's revolt against Nero in June 68 remain unclear, and when the revolt was crushed by the German legions, Galba contemplated suicide. But then it was reported that Nero was dead and that Galba had been recognized as emperor by the Senate. His political position now secure, the new emperor headed for Rome.

D. From the beginning, Galba faced the problem of rivals. Further, Galba's old age (he was already 70 during the revolt) suggested that a brief reign was ahead, and plans were made early to replace him.

E. But it was Galba's stinginess that ultimately ruined him. Attempts to show moderation and discipline, what the Romans called *severitas*, were perhaps a deliberate choice on Galba's part to contrast his regime

with that of Nero's, but if so, they backfired and came to be viewed as obduracy and meanness. One error in particular proved fatal.

1. In the final weeks of Nero's reign, the soldiers in Rome had been persuaded to back Galba with promises of cash handouts once the new *princeps* was installed. The German legions also expected cash rewards. Galba refused to pay these donatives.
2. On 1 January 69, the legions in Upper Germany refused to swear their annual oath of allegiance to Galba; on the following day, the soldiers proclaimed as emperor the commander of the Lower German armies, Aulus Vitellius.
3. Seven of the strongest legions of the empire were now in revolt, and the armies in Britain, Gaul, and Spain quickly joined. To shore up his regime, on 10 January 69, Galba adopted the young nobleman Lucius Calpurnius Piso Frugi Licinianus as his son and heir.
4. Marcus Salvius Otho, an intimate of Galba's who had hoped to be the emperor's successor, was incensed. He organized a cabal among the Praetorians to remove Galba and elevate himself.

F. Shortly after dawn on 15 January 69, Galba attended a sacrifice on the Palatine. Also in attendance was Otho, whose plot was about to unfold.

1. Otho descended to the Forum, where he was met by 23 soldiers who proclaimed him emperor. Appalled by the paucity of his support, Otho thought he was finished, but as he was carried to the Praetorian camp, the small band of rebels grew into a throng.
2. Galba, meanwhile, received contradictory reports, first of Otho's elevation, then of his murder. Against advice, Galba decided to go down to the Forum to shore up the situation before it got out of hand. He entered the Forum and was surrounded by a mob.
3. Hearing this, Otho sent infantry and cavalry to disperse the crowd. The troops with Galba now deserted him. His litter was overturned, and he tumbled to the ground before being assassinated.

G. In assessing Galba's reign, we are tempted to follow the main thrust of our sources and consider him a political incompetent. Yet there was more to Galba than this. The messages on his coins suggest that he saw himself as a constitutionalist, a genuine restorer of the Augustan vision.

H. In one respect, Galba's brief reign was of paramount importance: He was the first *princeps* from outside the family of Caesars to be elevated by the provincial armies.

II. Otho had enjoyed a colorful career before his rise to power. He came from a senatorial family and had been an intimate of Nero's.

A. Around 59, Otho had been dispatched by Nero to govern Lusitania in Spain, where he remained in effective exile until 68. He was the first

governor to join Galba's cause in the spring of 68. Otho paid special attention to the soldiers, and his standing grew in their eyes.

B. When news of Galba's murder reached the Senate, the senators capitulated instantly and proclaimed Otho *princeps*.

C. From the start, Otho had a problem in Aulus Vitellius, governor of Lower Germany, who commanded the allegiance of the seven German legions, as well as troops in Gaul, Spain, and Britain. Otho's de facto military support was largely limited to the troops in and around the city.

1. When the German forces began to march south, Otho marshaled what forces he could and went north to meet them.

2. After some preliminary successes, Otho's army met the Vitellians on 14 April near the town of Bedriacum in northern Italy. The Othonian troops were crushed.

3. Otho did not want civil war, and when he heard of his army's defeat, he immediately settled on suicide. His reign had lasted 92 days, during which time nothing notable was achieved.

III. Power now passed to Aulus Vitellius, a glutton and a drunk.

A. Vitellius, interestingly, did not accept the title Caesar extended to him by the troops, taking instead, the name Germanicus. Tacitus states that he finally accepted the title in November 69; he may have initially rejected it to distance his regime from Nero's or Otho's or both.

B. By early March, the Vitellian forces occupied the Alpine passes into Italy. Vitellius, lacking military experience, held back in Gaul while his generals, Flavius Valens and Aulus Caecina Alienus, took charge.

C. On 19 April, the Senate recognized Vitellius as Aulus Vitellius Germanicus Imperator Augustus. He was still north of the Alps, in the vicinity of Lugdunum (modern Lyons), and did not enter Rome until mid-July.

D. During his time in Rome between July and December, Vitellius delegated most imperial duties to Caecina and Valens, whose mutual animosity did not make for smooth governance. The Praetorians who had supported Otho were replaced by recruits loyal to Vitellius.

E. In Judaea, the general Titus Flavius Vespasianus (Vespasian) was in command of three legions suppressing a great Jewish revolt, which had raged since 66. He was accompanied by his 29-year-old son, Titus.

1. Vespasian was declared emperor by the troops in Egypt on 1 July 69, and within a day, Vespasian had secured the backing of legions in Syria, in Egypt, along the Danube, and in Judaea.

2. Matters came to a head in late October, when Vespasian's forces (termed *Flavian* after Vespasian's middle name, Flavius) invaded Italy from the Danube frontier zone.

3. The major engagement took place again outside Bedriacum, on the night of 24–25 October. The Vitellians were defeated.
4. The war dragged on until mid-December, but the Flavian victory at second Bedriacum was decisive. Valens was executed; Caecina went on to a career under Vespasian but was killed in the year 79.

F. When the Flavians entered Rome on 20 December, the city was filled with butchery.

1. Vitellius barricaded himself into a doorkeeper's cell but was discovered and taken to the Gemonian steps; his body was mutilated and abused by the populace, then hurled into the Tiber.
2. Vitellius had reigned not even a year.

G. As with all the failed regimes of A.D. 69, an assessment of Vitellius's is difficult. The sources are universally hostile, and we cannot discount the impact of Flavian propaganda in shaping the traditions about Galba, Otho, and especially Vitellius.

IV. With Vitellius dead, Vespasian became the fourth emperor in 12 months.

A. Armies from all three major frontiers zones had converged on Italy to press the claims of their commanders. The true source of the emperor's power could not have been made any clearer: Emperors ruled on the sufferance of the soldiery.

B. Worse, the troops themselves were volatile. Tiberius had long ago designated the emperor's relationship with the army, which he knew from experience, as "holding a wolf by the ears." The long year, A.D. 69, demonstrated what happened when the emperor's grip faltered.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 64.

Plutarch, *Galba*, *Otho*.

Suetonius, *Galba, Otho, Vitellius*.

Tacitus, *Histories*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Galba," "Otho," "Vitellius."

Morgan, *69 A.D.: The Year of the Four Emperors*, pp. 1–169.

Murison, *Galba, Otho, and Vitellius: Careers and Controversies*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Could any of the short reigns of A.D. 69 have been successful? What could the emperors have done differently to secure their regimes?
2. How do we account for the instability of this terrible year? What factors—political, social, military—were involved?

Lecture Eighteen
The First Flavian—Vespasian

Scope: Vespasian started the first dynasty of emperors who had no family connection to Julius Caesar or Augustus. From a modest, rural Italian background, Vespasian was an able and conscientious ruler, with a reputation for frugality bordering on stinginess. He had ample military and administrative experience before coming to power during the civil wars of A.D. 69. We examine his rise in detail, along with the inscription called the "Law Concerning Vespasian's Power," apparently the first attempt to legally define an emperor's position. Once in power, Vespasian initiated the building of the first all-stone amphitheater in Rome (completed after his death), the Colosseum, the most famous symbol of ancient Rome. Recent research has shown that the Colosseum was funded by loot from the spoils of war. Vespasian's reign was largely tranquil, but it set the stage for the more openly autocratic rulers of the next century.

Outline

I. The sources of Vespasian's reign and, indeed, for all three Flavian emperors are comparable to those for Caligula's.

A. Tacitus's account, *The Histories*, breaks off early in the year 70; thus, it covers only Vespasian's rise to power and a native revolt along the Rhine. We also have a contemporary account of Vespasian, penned by a turncoat Jewish general from Judaea, Flavius Josephus.

B. Dio's *Roman History* at this point exists only in summaries of Byzantine date. We are forced back on Suetonius's brief biographies of Vespasian and his two sons, along with scattered references elsewhere.

II. The Flavians were of unremarkable lineage; Vespasian's father, Titus Flavius Sabinus, was a financier and probably of equestrian status.

A. Vespasian was born on 17 November A.D. 9 at a hamlet outside Reate in Umbria; he was raised there and in the vicinity of Cosa.

B. Vespasian's pre-imperial career illustrates the vicissitudes of seeking political advancement under the Principate.

1. He held junior posts under Tiberius. Under Caligula, he reached the praetorship.

2. Under Claudius, Vespasian enjoyed further advancement as a legion commander. Vespasian distinguished himself in 43 in leading his legion's drive along the southwest coast of England.

3. Vespasian rose to a suffect consulship in 51. His career stalled until 63, when he was appointed proconsul of Africa. He was with

Nero during the Grecian tour of 66 but earned the emperor's ire and was forced to go into hiding.

4. In 67, Vespasian was put in command of the Roman forces assembled to put down the Judaean revolt. Together with his son Titus, Vespasian prosecuted the war vigorously.

III. By mid-69, Vespasian's war in Judaea was winding down. The news of Nero's death and Galba's accession had led to a pause in operations.

A. According to Suetonius, a detachment of 2,000 men from the forces on the Danube was en route to assist Otho against Vitellius at Bedriacum. Arriving in Aquileia, they instead elevated Vespasian, and the other armies followed suit. This story takes all responsibility for events off Vespasian's shoulders.

B. Vespasian made his move on 1 July 69, when the governor of Egypt had his two legions in Alexandria swear an oath of loyalty to Vespasian.

1. Two days later, the Judaean legions also took an oath to Vespasian at the provincial capital of Caesarea. Clearly, matters had been carefully coordinated in advance.

2. The death of Galba, the installation of Otho, and the rise of Vitellius all took place in the space of two weeks in January 69; we may estimate, then, that Vespasian was planning his move as early as February, when news of events in Italy would have reached him.

C. Vespasian pressed his claim militarily through agents, principally Mucianus, the governor of Syria. The Danubian legions, which had been loyal to Otho, were induced to join the anti-Vitellian crusade. This development added another prime mover to the Flavian roster: Marcus Antonius Primus, commander of a legion stationed in Pannonia. Vespasian's generals could now threaten to land in Italy from across the Adriatic or to invade overland from the northeast.

D. In the end, the land option was taken, giving prominence to Primus, who marched into Italy, accepting the surrender of the towns and cities of the north. Within 24 hours of Vitellius's murder, Vespasian became emperor and would rule as Imperator Caesar Vespasianus Augustus.

IV. Given our poor sources, we can examine only some key moments and pieces of evidence regarding Vespasian's regime's.

A. He did not enter Rome until July or September 70. At the same time, he paid outstanding donatives to the troops and adopted Augustan habits; a change that hit just the right chord.

B. Vespasian also benefited from another Augustan echo: the restoration of peace and order after civil war. Among his major building projects was the Temple of Peace and, of course, the Colosseum.

1. The Colosseum was built on the site of the Golden House's artificial lake, a masterstroke of propaganda on Vespasian's part.
2. Recently, the original building inscription of the Colosseum was deduced by a German scholar, Giza Alföldy. The text reads simply: "Imperator Caesar Vespasianus Augustus ordered the new amphitheater built from the spoils of war."
3. The habit of funding public construction with loot from foreign foes went back to the republic and was continued by Augustus. In specifying *this* source for funding the Colosseum, Vespasian was again echoing Augustan precedents.

C. Vespasian advanced his sons, especially Titus, both to highlight the promise of dynastic stability and as a warning to would-be assassins. In July 71, Titus was granted tribunician power.

D. At the same meeting that conferred official recognition on Vespasian, Titus and his brother, Domitian, were named Caesars; awarded a consulship and a praetorship, respectively, for the year 70; and named *Principes Iuventutis*, "leaders of the youth."

E. We get an idea of how all this played out with the elite from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. In the work, Pliny writes: "[To help mortal men] is the road that Roman leaders have taken, and it is this road that the greatest ruler of all time is treading, at a pace favored by heaven, along with his offspring, as he brings relief to an exhausted world."

F. Part of another interesting inscription, from perhaps December 69 or January 70, tells us much about how far the Principate had evolved.

1. The inscription is part of a senatorial decree on a series of bronze plaques. Called "The Law Concerning Vespasian's Power" (*lex de imperio Vespasiani*), it represents the first attempt (that we know of) to delineate the emperor's position in legal terms.
2. What survives addresses a series of rather minor rights: to conclude treaties, to convene the Senate, to nominate people for office, etc.
3. One all-embracing clause affords Vespasian the legal right to take any action he deemed advantageous to the state.
4. Just as interesting is the symbolic force of the decree, putting an official imprimatur on Vespasian's successful rebellion. For each right, precedent is called on as justification, with reference always to Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius.

G. Vespasian, like any emperor, was not without opponents, both at home and abroad. The war in Judaea was left unfinished as he pressed his imperial claim; it was completed by Titus in 70. There was a revolt of German and Gallic tribesmen on the lower reaches of the Rhine that dragged on into late 70, and Sarmatians and Dacians harried the undermanned Danubian frontier north of the Balkans.

H. At home, the early months of 70 saw various pro-Vitellians liquidated. The Stoic philosopher Gaius Helvidius Priscus was exiled in 71, then executed in 75.

1. It's possible that Priscus was pushing to insert the Senate into Vespasian's decision-making about the succession when, in fact, that decision had long been made: Titus was next.

2. Another fatality was Alienus Caecina, Vitellius's turncoat general, who perished in 79—detected in a supposed conspiracy by Titus.

I. Some disparagement was thrown the emperor's way, particularly the accusation that he was a money-grubber, an unbecoming trait to aristocrats of the landed gentry.

J. As far as we can tell, Vespasian remained in Rome for the duration of his reign after July 70. In 79, he fell ill while in Campania and died on 24 June, at the age of 69.

V. Vespasian comes across in the sources as plain in speech and habits, affable, and self-deprecating. He was also an astute and conscientious ruler.

A. His achievement in ending the cycle of civil wars that had brought him to power ranks alongside that of Augustus.

B. Vespasian's two sons strengthened his political position and offered the hope of a stable dynasty. He planned carefully, raised troops to ensure his strength, paid donatives, and surrounded himself with (mostly) able advisers. He ruled moderately and sensibly and was mindful of the soldiers' interests.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 64–66.

Suetonius, *Vespasian*.

Tacitus, *Histories*, books 2–5.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Vespasian."

Levick, *Vespasian*.

Morgan, *69 A.D.: The Year of the Four Emperors*, pp. 170–268.

Questions to Consider:

1. What factors in Vespasian's pre-imperial career prepared him well for the throne?

2. How is our understanding of Vespasian's reign hampered by the nature of the sources for it?

Lecture Nineteen

The Last Flavians—Titus and Domitian

Scope: Titus was relatively young (only 38) when he came to power. But unlike his young predecessors, he had plenty of military and administrative experience and was well known to his soldiers. His reign, however, was unnaturally brief and marked by the eruption of Vesuvius on 24 August 79. Titus's response to the crisis suggests that he was a conscientious and caring ruler, although there are some indications that had he lasted longer in power, matters may have taken a downward spiral. His brother and successor, Domitian, was not so fortunate. Once more, a young and inexperienced man held the reins of power. His autocratic impulses meant that relations with the Senate deteriorated sharply and rapidly, leading to the now-familiar pattern of rising paranoia on the part of the emperor. Domitian made the right moves with the provincial troops, leading them against the Germans, but they were insufficient to save him from assassination in 96.

Outline

I. Titus was born on 30 December A.D. 39. He was brought up in the company of Claudius's son Britannicus, whose memory he later honored.

A. Titus was a military tribune in Germany and Britain in 60 or 61, then returned to Rome to practice law.

B. In 66, Titus was appointed commander of a legion sent as part of the forces to quell the rebellion in Judaea. His appointment to serve under his father demonstrates Nero's confidence in the Flavian family.

II. Roman forces moved into Judaea from Syria in the early summer of 67. The first major action was a siege at Jotapata in Galilee, where the fighting was so fierce that Vespasian himself was wounded.

A. At the siege of a neighboring town, the Roman commander, having laid the groundwork for a final assault, summoned Titus to take command and complete the victory. Titus then led the final assault at Jotapata.

1. The Jewish commander at Jotapata, Josephus, hid in a cave with 40 other rebels, who decided on a suicide pact.

2. As a solution, Josephus proposed that lots be drawn for each man to kill the one next to him until only two were left. Josephus was one of the last two and persuaded his companion to surrender.

3. When Josephus was brought before Vespasian, he prophesied the commander's elevation to the throne, and his life was spared. He became Flavius Josephus and wrote an account of the Jewish rebellion (*Jewish War*) and Jewish history (*Jewish Antiquities*).

B. Meanwhile, Titus tore through Galilee in 67 and 68. The ultimate target for the Romans was the city of Jerusalem, but the region around Jerusalem had to be secured first. When news arrived of Nero's suicide in June 68, however, military operations in Judaea ground to a halt, and Vespasian dispatched Titus to greet the new emperor, Galba.

C. Titus continued to represent his father's interests down to the bid for empire on 1 July 69.

III. As Vespasian's generals pressed his claim in Italy, Titus returned to Judaea, now the supreme commander both there and in Syria. Operations against the Jewish rebels resumed and quickly focused on Jerusalem itself.

A. The siege of Jerusalem began in the early summer of 70 and lasted 140 days. The Romans build a series of huge terraces, ramps, siege towers, and rams to smash through the successive circuits of the city walls.

B. The defenders had no prospect of relief and rejected all offers of terms. Their stand was final, absolute, and utterly tragic. Thousands were slaughtered by the Romans, and the Temple, the center of Jewish life for centuries, was burned to the ground.

IV. On his return to Rome in the summer of 71, Titus celebrated a triumph with this father, was granted tribunician power for five years, and was named consul for the year 72 with Vespasian as colleague. He was also granted proconsular power and became Praetorian prefect.

A. Undoubtedly, Titus would succeed Vespasian.

B. Under Vespasian, Titus's role was similar to that of Tiberius in the last decade of Augustus's life: He was a "partner in power," who looked after issues of administration and drafted edicts, although there were some worrying signs in his character in these years.

C. Just before Vespasian's death in 79, Caecina Alienus, the Vitellian turncoat, was executed; this was undoubtedly Titus's doing. Another man, Eprius Marcellus, died along with Caecina. There are good indications of a conspiracy in all this, probably aimed at killing Titus.

D. When Vespasian died, Titus was entrenched at the heart of power. When his titles, powers, and privileges were conferred, the 39-year-old emperor settled down for what was assumed would be a long reign.

E. Catastrophe struck, however, on 24 August 79, when the top of Mt. Vesuvius exploded. Tens of thousands perished. Titus showed enormous generosity of spirit in the relief efforts, but contemporary minds can only have viewed the cataclysm as the worst possible omen.

F. During the rest of his short reign, Titus was universally loved. Unfortunately, he fell ill in the summer of 81 and died on 3 September.

V. While Titus had enjoyed the limelight, his younger brother, Domitian, lived mostly in the shadows.

A. Domitian had been born on 24 October 51. When his father claimed the throne in 69, the Domitian was in Rome and was declared Caesar as part of the Flavian movement's maneuverings. He escaped the holocaust on 19 December by hiding and then slipping away.

B. Domitian was praetor in 70 and consul six times under Vespasian and twice under Titus. Perhaps because Titus entertained hopes for a son, he did not bestow tribunician power on his brother. Even more pointedly, under both Vespasian and Titus, Domitian held no army commands.

VI. Domitian secured the support of the Praetorians and was voted the usual slate of powers, privileges, and honors by the Senate on 14 September 81. He then turned his attention to earning military credentials.

A. Domitian fought several wars and earned 22 acclamations as *imperator* during his 15-year reign. In 83, two years after ascending to the throne, he recalled the governor of Britain, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, who seems to have taken Roman arms to the edges of the Scottish Highlands.

B. Tacitus chalks up the pull-back to Domitian's jealousy of Agricola's successes in the field, but good reasons can be found along the Rhine-Danube frontier, where manpower was sorely needed.

1. Although our sources are scant for Domitian's wars in Germany and Dacia, an outline of events has been established. Sometime in 82 or 83, war broke out along the central sector of the Rhine frontier with the powerful tribe of the Chatti.

2. Domitian took the field personally and celebrated a triumph over the Chatti in the summer of 83, despite the fact that the war dragged on in his absence until 85.

3. In 86, Domitian celebrated a triumph over the Dacians, who occupied modern Romania across the Danube.

4. Domitian's settlement in Germany lasted until the mid-3rd century.

C. At home, Domitian was a prodigious builder. His most famous monument was his own house, the *Domus Augustana*.

D. Like his father and brother, Domitian held numerous consulships during his reign. This suggests a desire to be involved in senatorial business, possibly to monitor potential rivals.

1. In 85, he was appointed censor for life, empowered to expel or add men at will to the roster of senators. This prerogative was so potentially odious to the nobility that previous emperors had wielded it only for limited periods.

2. Other indications of his autocratic proclivities point in the same direction. He allowed only golden statues of himself to be erected and renamed September and October after himself.

VII. Early in 89, word arrived that Lucius Antonius Saturninus, commander of the Upper German legions, was in revolt.

A. As Domitian hastened to the scene, the commanders in neighboring provinces intervened and killed Saturninus in battle.

B. Even though the danger had passed, it was clear that Saturninus had not acted alone. Domitian became increasingly suspicious and the only target for his paranoia was the Senate.

C. Domitian's regime degenerated in an agonizing round of denunciations, interrogations, and executions.

VIII. Suetonius gives only the bare bones of the plot that killed Domitian. The most surprising element is the identity of the conspirators, who were members of Domitian's own domestic staff.

A. Stephanus, a steward, concealed a dagger in bandages on his arm, and with the help of the chamberlain, lured Domitian to his bedroom.

B. Without warning, the motley crew of assailants then fell on the emperor. Domitian is reported to have put up a good fight before dying of his wounds on 18 September 96. The Senate gleefully damned his memory and consigned him to oblivion.

C. With the childless Domitian dead, the Flavian Dynasty came to an end.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 66–67.

Josephus, *The Jewish War*, books 4–6.

Suetonius, *Titus*, *Domitian*.

Tacitus, *Agricola*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Titus," "Domitian."

Jones, *The Emperor Titus*.

Southern, *Domitian: Tragic Tyrant.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Titus fit to be emperor? To what extent did his memory benefit from his early death? What warning signs can you detect in his life story?

2. How could Domitian have strengthened his position and avoided assassination, if at all? Who was ultimately responsible for his demise, the Senate, the army, or himself?

Lecture Twenty

Pax Augusta—Nerva and Trajan

Scope: The murder of Domitian terminated the Flavian Dynasty, creating the potential for civil war. On this occasion, the Senate picked one of its own, the aged Nerva, as the new emperor. Nerva was unknown to the soldiers, and over the course of his brief reign, their grumblings grew louder. To obviate the threat of violent usurpation, Nerva adopted the popular governor of Upper Germany, Trajan, as his son and successor, then had the good sense to die. With Trajan's adoption came the period of the Roman Empire's greatest strength and stability under the so-called Antonine (or Adoptive) Dynasty. From 98 until 180, emperors tended to adopt their successors from among able and recognized army commanders. Trajan himself was moderate at home and warlike abroad, a perfect mix for Roman sentiments. He embarked on a major campaign in Dacia (modern Romania), which is depicted in one of the most remarkable monuments to survive from Roman antiquity: Trajan's Column in Rome. The lecture ends with a description of the column and an assessment of its value as evidence for Trajan's Dacian wars.

Outline

I. With the end of the Flavian Dynasty in 96, we lose the continuous literary histories and biographies that allowed us such a detailed view of Augustus and his successors.

A. Dio's books dealing with the period survive only in mutilated form. Historians must rely on such sources as inscriptions, coins, and papyri.

B. For Nerva, Trajan, and the rest, we cannot track the shifting currents of court politics or contemplate the courses of conspiracies, but we must not think that such events no longer took place.

II. Domitian's assassination was a profoundly destabilizing event. Because the emperor had no obvious successor, the threat of return to civil war was real.

A. For the first time, the Senate was left unmolested to choose an emperor. It selected the sexagenarian Marcus Cocceius Nerva.

B. He became Nerva Caesar Augustus on 19 September 96. Two details support the theory that a quorum of senators, along with Nerva himself, was in on the plot to kill Domitian.

1. First, when Nerva heard a rumor that Domitian had survived the plot, he almost fainted.

2. Second, Dio baldly states that Domitian's successor had been selected *before* the assassination took place and that "various

men," who must be senators, refused the throne before Nerva accepted it.

D. Various laws and initiatives are ascribed to Nerva, notably the *alimenta* ("nourishments") scheme.

1. Under this scheme, landowners borrowed money from the state at a low interest rate. The interest earned was then distributed every month to poor children in Italy.

2. Nerva also performed the usual acts of a new emperor—recalling exiles and restoring property confiscated by Domitian.

E. But Nerva was elevated largely without the complicity of the Praetorians or the provincial armies, rendering his regime fragile.

1. In 97, the emperor was bullied into giving up Domitian's killers.

2. In the same year or a little earlier, a plot was formed against Nerva, but it was uncovered, and its main mover was exiled.

F. Nerva's eagerness to appease the soldiers is clear from his early coin inscriptions and from his choice of consular colleague for 97: Lucius Verginius Rufus, the respected former governor of Upper Germany.

G. When news arrived in Rome late in October 97 that Nerva's governor in Upper Germany, Marcus Ulpius Traianus, or Trajan, had won a victory, Nerva wisely adopted him.

H. Within 12 weeks of adopting Trajan, Nerva died, apparently of natural causes. His brief stint as emperor was a pivotal reign, for two reasons.

1. First, the threat of civil war attending the end of the Flavian Dynasty was averted.

2. Second, Nerva's reign initiated the practice of emperors adopting worthy army officers as their successors, a practice that gave the empire its longest period of peace and prosperity.

III. Trajan, the first non-Italian emperor, came to power on 28 January 98. His family hailed from the town of Italica in southern Spain.

A. Trajan's ancestors, the Ulpii, had been ennobled only in the generation of Trajan's father.

B. Trajan reached the consulship in 90 and was assigned the command in Upper Germany shortly after Nerva's elevation in 96. He was respected by the troops, noble, well-connected, popular, and young.

C. After Nerva's death, Trajan took the name Imperator Caesar Nerva Traianus Augustus.

D. On his adoption in October 97, Trajan was in Germany, near his troops. The emperor finally entered Rome in October 99, to a rapturous reception.

IV. The first part of Trajan's reign was dominated by events on the northern frontier, where the Danube remained a problem.

A. When Domitian was murdered in 96, a major war across the Danube had been in preparation for three years.

1. In the provinces of Pannonia and Moesia (incorporating parts of modern Austria, Hungary, and Serbia), a huge force totaling some 70,000 men had been mobilized before Domitian was killed.

2. After his death, the war continued, but we know nothing of its course, other than it does not seem to have gone well; no final victory or peace was declared.

3. By 99, this trans-Danubian war was over, and the situation on the frontier remained as unresolved as ever. Deflected in the Pannonian sector, Trajan settled on the military conquest of Dacia.

B. In 89, Domitian had secured a treaty with the Dacian king, Decebalus, under which Rome paid Dacia subventions and sent technical experts to the impressive Dacian capital, Sarmizegethusa.

C. The Dacians did nothing in particular to provoke the war of 101–102.

D. The Dacians' territory covered the Carpathians, where Decebalus had placed forts on strategic heights, built to resist battering rams.

E. Although the Dacian army was no match for the disciplined Roman legions, it was not to be sniffed at: Decebalus had killed two of Domitian's commanders and destroyed their armies in the 80s. As well, their *falx* was a formidable weapon.

F. The first Dacian war (101–102) ended with a Roman victory and Decebalus's submission to Roman authority.

G. When a second invasion was necessary (105–106), Trajan's chief architect, Apollodorus of Damascus, built a bridge across the wide expanse of the Danube, and the emperor led his army across.

1. The Dacians avoided pitched battle. Decebalus attempted to assassinate Trajan in his camp and to extract a settlement by capturing and ransoming senior officers.

2. Eventually, Sarmizegethusa itself was captured. Decebalus slit his own throat as a Roman cavalryman bore down on him.

V. Dacia became a Roman province, and the emperor earned the title *Dacicus*, "of Dacia," and two triumphs, celebrated in 102 and 107.

A. A stunning visual record of the Dacian campaigns is preserved on Trajan's Column in Rome, dedicated on 12 May 113.

B. Dio and the column's dedicatory inscription inform us that the height of the column corresponded to the height of a nearby hill.

C. A carved spiral of relief sculpture 656 feet long wraps around the exterior of the column 23 times, depicting events of the Dacian wars.

1. Figures numbering 2,600 populate 155 discrete scenes.

2. Starting at the bottom, the frieze unwinds progressively and portrays the course of the two wars in remarkable detail.
3. The message is one of discipline, the good order of the Roman army prevailing over all obstacles.
4. The emperor appears in 59 scenes, supervising construction projects, consulting his generals, addressing the troops, and more.
5. The Dacians are portrayed as worthy adversaries but lacking discipline. The tragedy of war is not concealed.

D. How realistic are such scenes? Undoubtedly, the column attempts to depict events as they transpired. Two details confirm this assertion.

1. First, the column echoes accounts that the Dacian wars came in two phases. The end of the first war is marked by a figure of the goddess Victory. The second war ends with Decebalus's suicide, the pursuit of fugitive Dacian leaders, and mass deportations.
2. In addition, the column shows Apollodorus's bridge across the Danube for the second war.

E. Is the column, then, a sort of cinematic portrayal of actual events?

1. Many of the scenes look remarkably similar, stock images drawn from the established repertoire of Roman art.
2. Further, the Dacian walls depicted on the column are not Dacian but of a style called *Gallic*. It's unlikely that the column was crafted by field artists accompanying the Roman army.

VI. Trajan did not solve Rome's problems on the Danube frontier. If anything, he added to them because now the legions had to protect a province that jutted out beyond the Danube, with hostile territory on three sides.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 68.

Dio Chrysostom, *Orations*, 1–4.

Pliny, *Panegyric*.

Bennett, *Trajan Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times*, especially chapters 1–8.

Supplementary Reading:

Coarelli, *The Column of Trajan*.

DIR, "Nerva," "Trajan."

Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Titus fit to be emperor? To what extent did his memory benefit from his early death? What warning signs can you detect in his life story?

2. How could Domitian have strengthened his position and avoided assassination, if at all? Who was ultimately responsible for his demise, the Senate, the army, or himself?

Lecture Twenty-One
Trajan in Rome and in the East

Scope: After the Dacian wars, Trajan returned to Rome to carry out various good works, including the opening of his great bath complex and his magnificent Forum. Not satisfied with domestic affairs, however, the emperor again embarked on a military expedition, this time to Armenia and Parthia. We pause here in our narrative to examine an extraordinary correspondence from the years 110 and 111, when Pliny the Younger was Trajan's special envoy to the province of Bithynia-Pontus on the northern coast of Turkey. Pliny wrote letters to the emperor on various matters and subsequently published them, along with Trajan's replies, in the 10th book of his collected *Epistles*. This unique volume provides fascinating insights into the personalities of Pliny and Trajan, life in a Roman province, and the workings of the imperial administration. We pay particular attention to the missive concerning the spread of Christianity in Bithynia-Pontus. Meanwhile, Trajan's campaigns in the east (113–116) met with equivocal success. Weakened by his hardships, Trajan fell ill in 116 and died in Turkey in 117.

Outline

I. Until 106, Trajan was occupied in the north conquering Dacia. In 107, he returned to Rome and remained in the city until the autumn of 113.

- **A.** Trajan always treated the Senate with respect.
- **B.** Another indication of Trajan's appreciation for elite sensibilities was his replacement of imperial freedmen with respectable equestrians.
- **C.** His treatment of the upper echelons of society earned Trajan the title *optimus princeps*, "best emperor."

II. The Dacian Wars had earned vast sums of money for the empire, which Trajan used for major building projects, two of which stand as exemplars.

- **A.** On 22 June 109, Trajan dedicated and opened to the public the largest set of public baths the city had yet seen, covering some 27.7 acres.
- **B.** Three years later, Trajan dedicated his Forum complex. The remains of the Forum today are still impressive, and the associated market complex is a superlative example of Roman concrete vaulted architecture.
  - **1.** The open piazza of the Forum encompassed more than 112,600 square feet. In the center of the square stood a statue of Trajan on horseback, in gilded bronze.

2. This complex covered almost 14 acres and was large enough to house all the other imperial Fora together.

C. In addition to these two major projects in the city, both the work of Trajan's architect Apollodorus of Damascus, Trajan built a new harbor at Portus near Ostia and another one further north at Centum Cellae (now called Civitavecchia and still the port for modern Rome).

D. Trajan's projects mark him as one of the most prolific emperor-builders in Roman history.

III. Trajan pursued his building program during his time in Rome between 107 and 113. His attention, however, was increasingly directed east.

A. In 109 or 110, Trajan appointed Pliny the Younger as a special envoy to Bithynia-Pontus, along the southern shore of the Black Sea.

B. The exchange of letters between Pliny and Trajan while the former was in his province is preserved. It is an invaluable record for Roman provincial administration and the modes of communication between the emperor and his representative.

C. Pliny was given propraetorian rank and consular power in Bithynia-Pontus. His mandate was to audit the troubled finances of the province's communities and seek solutions.

D. Pliny comes across as kindly, loyal, and conscientious. Trajan, who probably dictated his responses, often seems rushed and, at times, terse.

E. In the most famous letter (96), Pliny reports that, in traveling about his province, people have been accused before him of being Christians. Once news got out that he was hearing such cases, more and more people were so accused, many by means of anonymous denunciations.

1. Pliny says that he has set up a system under which the accused are required to renounce their Christianity. If they do so, they are released. If not, they are sent off for execution.

2. Trajan replies that Christians are not to be hunted out but dealt with as their cases arise. If they don't repent, they are to be punished.

3. Trajan's reply ends by rejecting anonymous denunciations, affirming contemporary writers' praise for the emperor's fairness.

F. Pliny did not live to see the emperor's personal involvement in the east. That involvement was precipitated by the collapse of the Neronian settlement in Armenia, territory disputed by Rome and Parthia.

IV. Nero's settlement of the Armenian problem had endured until Trajan's reign, when the Parthian king set his own nominee on the Armenian throne.

A. In response, Trajan chose to invade Parthia. Planning for the war had likely been in progress for some time. In September or October 113, Trajan, now about 60 years old, set out for the east.

B. The Parthians had emerged in the 3rd century B.C., and by the early 1st century, had taken over the lands of the Hellenistic kingdom of Syria.

1. The Parthians were based in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq).

2. The realm was ruled by an extended dynasty, the Arsacids, but the selection process for the throne led to grievances, and the Parthian Empire was often racked by internecine struggles and civil wars.

3. Relations between Rome and Parthia had been lukewarm since the "diplomacy" of Augustus and Nero had neutralized Armenia.

C. The Parthian war seems to have been an unprovoked assault, designed more to glorify Trajan than to achieve any strategic or geopolitical goal.

D. Having left for the east in the autumn of 113, Trajan arrived in Antioch in Syria in January 114. He then moved north, assembling a vast army, perhaps 80,000 men, from the eastern and Danubian border garrisons.

E. By the spring of 114, Trajan was on the border of Armenia. He rejected three diplomatic initiatives from the Parthian king, who proposed that Trajan crown the Parthian nominee to the Armenian throne.

F. For the rest of 114, Trajan consolidated Armenia. Subsequent events demonstrate that he was bent on conquest down to the Persian Gulf.

V. In 115, the emperor advanced into northern Mesopotamia and, in a letter that reached Rome early in 116, announced the establishment of the new provinces of Armenia and Mesopotamia.

A. In the spring of 116, Trajan pressed further south into Mesopotamia and declared another new province formed, that of Assyria.

B. Thus far, Trajan had not met concerted resistance. Two events mark the highlights of this year.

1. The first was the bloodless capture of the Parthian royal cities of Babylon and Ctesiphon.

2. The second major event was Trajan's reaching the Persian Gulf near the modern town of Basra.

C. Up to this point, Trajan's forces had seen no major engagements, despite the emperor's braggadocio about forming new provinces. Word now arrived of uprisings in Armenia and central Mesopotamia.

D. The emperor hastened north and scored successes against the rebels, but the weakness of the Roman strategic position was revealed when he accepted an armistice in return for relinquishing parts of Armenia. Further, he handed Mesopotamia over to a client king. Widespread uprisings of Jews in cities of the Roman east added to his difficulties.

E. Trajan attempted to reduce the trading city of Hatra to secure a strategic base in central Mesopotamia but was foiled by the foul climatic conditions around the city, which sickened his troops.

F. When Trajan withdrew to Antioch, probably late in 116 or early 117, he was ill. The ship conveying him back to Rome suddenly pulled into the Turkish port where Trajan died in early August 117.

G. Trajan was the first emperor to die outside Italy. His remains were conveyed in a golden urn to Rome and placed at the base of his column.

VI. An assessment of Trajan's legacy must be a mixture of earlier sources' veneration and the claim of a recent biographer that his reign was "a well-managed confidence trick" (Bennett, p. 208).

A. Trajan's autocracy may have been no less absolute than Domitian's, as Bennett argues, but the Principate had always been a matter of presentation, and like Augustus, Trajan struck the right balance.

B. In his dealings with the Senate and the elite, Trajan was tactful and smart, and we cannot discount the evidence of contemporaries that the era of Trajan was a relief.

C. Nonetheless, the eastern campaigns on which Trajan embarked at the end of his reign achieved very little.

D. In one area was Trajan negligent: the succession. Despite his age, his military campaigning, his childlessness, and the manner of his own accession, he left the matter unaddressed.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 68.

Pliny, *Epistles*, book 10.

Bennett, *Trajan Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times*, especially chapters 9–14.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Trajan."

Questions to Consider:

1. What symbolic values did Trajan's building program in Rome carry for the emperor and his regime?

2. What can you deduce about the personalities and mutual relationship of Pliny and Trajan from their correspondence in Pliny's *Epistles*, book 10? Does Trajan strike you as overtly autocratic?

3. Were Trajan's campaigns in the east in 114–117 a waste of time and effort?

Lecture Twenty-Two
The Eccentric Emperor—Hadrian

Scope: Hadrian was one of ancient Rome's strangest emperors. The sources for his reign are not good, but there are some indications that his accession was less straightforward than many assume. Once in power, Hadrian set about a massive push at consolidation: Trajan's eastern provinces were abandoned, and the frontiers were fortified and crystallized, most notably with Hadrian's Wall in England. Hadrian's was a reign of retrenchment, a repudiation of Rome's former mission of eternal conquest. He traveled to most provinces of the empire during his reign and openly honored one of his male courtiers, the teenaged Antinoos. The reign was not untroubled, as the great Bar Kochba Revolt (132–135) in Judaea makes clear. We end the lecture by reviewing the course of this revolt and glancing at the magnificent villa Hadrian built outside Rome at Tivoli, an architectural diary of his empire-wide wanderings.

Outline

I. As sources for the reign of Hadrian, we have the ravaged text of Dio, coins, inscriptions, and a variety of contemporary authors.

II. Both Hadrian and Trajan came from the same Roman settlement of Italica in southern Spain; their families had intermarried and were wealthy and prominent.

- **A.** Hadrian was born on 24 January 76 in Rome. On losing his father, Hadrian was taken in by Trajan.
- **B.** Hadrian accompanied Trajan on his first Dacian campaign. He commanded one of the legions Trajan took into Dacia in the second Dacian war of 105–106. He then governed provinces and rose to the consulship in 108, at age 32.
- **C.** In 112, he became both an Athenian citizen and the city's chief *archon*, the ruling magistrate, now reduced to a sort of mayoral post.
- **D.** Hadrian was called away from Athens in 113, when Trajan arrived, en route to the east for the coming Parthian war. Hadrian joined that effort as a staff officer. In 117, he was put in charge of Syria.
- **E.** By this time, Hadrian was the closest living male relative to Trajan, but the emperor had not adopted him or conferred on him *imperium* or tribunician power.
- **F.** The official story was that Trajan adopted Hadrian on his deathbed.

1. It was rumored that Trajan intended to leave the choice of the next emperor to the Senate, but his wife was known to favor Hadrian. Hadrian was acclaimed on 11 August by the armies of Syria.
2. Not long afterward, four ex-consuls were executed for conspiracy. This "conspiracy of the four consulars" suggests doubts about the legitimacy of Hadrian's accession.

III. Hadrian celebrated his elevation with gifts of money to the troops. Then, he ordered the abandonment of all of Trajan's eastern provinces.

A. The Senate conferred all the required powers on Hadrian, who did not enter Rome until 9 July 118.

B. The provinces are the defining characteristic of Hadrian's rule; Hadrian probably visited every Roman province during his 21-year reign.

C. Hadrian built a couple of new structures, but most of his work involved restoring older buildings, in particular, the Pantheon. The overriding theme of his reign, in art as well as in policy, was consolidation.

IV. Frontier installations around the empire also show Hadrian's influence. In some places on the Rhine-Danube, palisades went up to physically demarcate the limits of empire, setting the frontiers in stone.

A. Hadrian also wanted the province of Britain to have a visible frontier. Given that no natural boundary was available in Britain, the emperor erected an artificial one—Hadrian's Wall.

B. The wall ran 73½ miles, from Wallsend on the Tyne River in the east to Bowness on the Solway Firth in the west. It was built of stone, initially 10 feet wide and 14 feet high.

C. A roadway, dubbed the "Military Way," linked all the forts along the length of the wall.

D. The wall, built in sections by military units, seems to have been not so much a military barrier as a means to regulate traffic in and out of the empire, to levy the proper taxes on goods, and to monitor comings and goings.

V. Hadrian's marriage to Sabina was a loveless union. Because his wife was too politically volatile to leave unattended, Hadrian took her on his provincial tours.

A. Hadrian's marriage wasn't helped by the fact that he was homosexual. When he visited northern Turkey, probably in 123 or 124, he met a handsome young teenager named Antinoos. For the next seven years, the emperor kept Antinoos with him constantly.

B. In late October of 130, while Hadrian was in Egypt, Antinoos drowned in the Nile. There are various explanations as to how this came about, but whatever the case, he was dead at not much older than 20.

C. The emperor founded a city on the spot where Antinoos died. It is safe to say that Hadrian never really recovered from the death of Antinoos.

VI. In the last year of Trajan's reign, the Jews of the east had caused serious problems for Rome. In response, Hadrian took a hard line.

A. Hadrian had decided to rebuild Jerusalem as a pagan city named Aelia Capitolina. The Jewish reaction was entirely predictable: In 132, a massive uprising started across the east, called the Bar Kochba Revolt after its leader, Simon bar Kochba.

B. The Jews had learned from their defeat in the first Great Revolt of 66–70 to avoid open conflict with the legions. Instead, they conducted a guerilla war from a network of tunnels and subterranean bases. Soon, all of Judaea was in rebel hands and remained so for three years.

C. Letters from Bar Kochba to his subordinates have been found recently, revealing a stern authoritarian. The situation was so serious that Hadrian himself went to Judaea in 132; he did not stay long but handed the war over to his best general, who was summoned from Britain.

D. The war finally ended in a siege of the main rebel stronghold at Bethar, six miles southwest of Jerusalem, in 135. Here, Bar Kochba perished and hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed or sold into slavery.

E. Hadrian earned a salutation as *imperator*, and his generals were rewarded, but celebration of this victory was muted. The province of Judaea was renamed Syria Palestina, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina continued.

VII. Starting around 118, Hadrian embarked on the construction of a vast villa at Tibur (modern Tivoli) outside Rome. The sprawling complex, completed in 134, covered some 250 acres.

A. Hadrian's pleasure in his villa was soured by personal schisms with old friends. We are not told why these schisms occurred, but the issue of succession is a probable explanation.

B. By 136, the emperor, now 60 years old, found his health flagging. Late that year, he announced the adoption of the senator Lucius Ceionius Commodus, whose qualifications for successor appear to have been youth and beauty. Even more bizarrely, Ceionius had tuberculosis and regularly coughed blood. Regardless, he now became Lucius Aelius Caesar.

C. Pedanius Fuscus, the grandson of Hadrian's brother-in-law, was 24 in 136 and had hoped to be named successor. Fuscus and his grandfather felt cheated by Aelius Caesar's elevation. In 137, they made a move (an attempted coup or assassination), and both paid the predictable penalty.

D. Probably in December 137, Sabina died and was deified. Then, Aelius Caesar died on 1 January 138. Hadrian was without a successor and was himself ailing. He then announced the adoption of the senator Titus Aelius Aurelius Antoninus, who became Titus Aelius Caesar Antoninus.

E. The 51-year-old Caesar was conferred with tribunician power and a consulship for 139. Antoninus was obliged to adopt, in turn, the teenager Marcus Annius Verus (one of Hadrian's favorites) and the deceased Aelius Caesar's son, named Commodus. These arrangements show Hadrian thinking the succession through to the third generation after himself, but doing so hastily, at the last possible minute.

F. Hadrian succumbed on 10 July 138, near Baiae in Campania. He had bungled several suicide attempts but finally perished by ignoring his doctors' advice.

VIII. Hadrian was probably one of the most talented of Rome's emperors, an accomplished architect and writer, an able politician, and a competent commander, but he was also an eccentric, devoted to astrology and prone to bucking established procedures.

A. He was mild-mannered but also vicious: A dabbler in various arts, he resented expertise as a personal slight. The architect Apollodorus had insulted Hadrian's efforts at designing buildings and was executed.

B. Unlike Nero, however, Hadrian's eccentricities were, for the most part, not combined with a towering sense of self-importance.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 69.

Historia Augusta (*HA*), *Hadrian*.

Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Hadrian."

Schäfer, *Bar Kochba War Reconsidered*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What evidence is there that Hadrian's elevation was a fraud? Why did Trajan leave the succession issue largely unaddressed?
2. What eccentricities can you detect in Hadrian's character and behavior?
3. On the whole, was Hadrian's reign a failure or a success? Did it initiate a period of stagnation that ended, ultimately, in the fall of the empire in the west?

Lecture Twenty-Three
Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus

Scope: The reigns of Antoninus Pius and his successor, Marcus Aurelius, represent the high point of Roman power, peace, and prosperity. In the course of Marcus's reign, however, signs of trouble became evident that would intensify. Pius could not present a greater contrast to Hadrian. Whereas Hadrian traveled the empire, Pius never left Italy during his reign. He was a conscientious and careful ruler, mild by nature and lenient by temperament, but quite inert. He made careful plans for the succession, grooming Marcus Aurelius, his adoptive son, for the purple. We examine Marcus's early life; his correspondence with his tutor, Fronto, and his own philosophic *Meditations*; and his sharing of power with his adoptive brother, Lucius Verus—an unprecedented situation to date in imperial history. It was an unsettled and difficult time, and Marcus and Lucius were kept busy with serious external threats.

Outline

I. There are no documented instances of regency in the history of the Roman Empire, but we still find, in modern scholarly analysis of Hadrian's succession arrangements, the idea that Hadrian adopted Antoninus as a stopgap to hold the throne for the 15-year-old Marcus Annius Verus. Antoninus, however, held the throne for 23 years and died in office.

A. The sources for Antoninus's reign are dismal, but as it turns out, his time in office was uneventful. He never left Italy during his reign.

B. Antoninus was born on 19 September 86. His pre-imperial career was unremarkable.

C. The Senate met to confirm Antoninus in July 138. He took the name Imperator Caesar Tiberius Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus; to this appellation, the Senate soon added Pius, meaning "the dutiful one."

D. Antoninus Pius was the embodiment of the Augustan concept of the *civilis princeps*, "citizen prince."

E. Antoninus devoted his time to hearing petitions, issuing new laws and rescripts, and seeing to religious matters.

F. Antoninus also gave out cash to the plebs nine times and completed many Hadrianic building projects. These acts reinforced the emperor's central position in the state and stressed his beneficence.

G. Despite his relative lack of military experience, Antoninus was readily accepted by the armies.

1. In Britain, Antoninus abandoned the line of Hadrian's Wall and adopted a more forward position, one that absorbed the Scottish Lowlands. On this line, the Antonine Wall was constructed, which was occupied and abandoned on and off into the 180s.
2. Antoninus faced uprisings in North Africa, Germany, Egypt, Greece, and Dacia, but all were suppressed.

H. Antoninus died in his bed on 7 March 161, aged 74. Marcus Aurelius wrote an assessment of him in which the emperor's diligent attention to duty predominantly shines through.

II. Hadrian insisted that Antoninus adopt Marcus Annius Verus, the teenaged nephew of Antoninus's wife, as well as Lucius Ceionius Commodus, the son of Aelius Caesar. Ceionius became known as Lucius Verus.

A. Marcus was born on 26 April 121 in Rome. The doctrines of the Stoic school of philosophy were to have a profound impact on Marcus, prompting him later in life to compose his *Meditations*, one of only two substantial works written by a Roman emperor.

B. For the duration of Antoninus's reign, Marcus was clearly and unequivocally marked as the next emperor.

C. In 145, Marcus married Antoninus's daughter, Faustina. In 147, at age 26, he was granted tribunician power and greater proconsular power. For the next 14 years, he never left Antoninus's side.

D. In 138, Lucius Verus was married to Marcus's daughter He seems to have been the insurance prince, who could step in for Marcus should anything happen to prevent his accession on Antoninus's death.

III. When Marcus entered the Senate in March 161 to accept the supreme office, he insisted that Lucius Verus receive the same powers and titles as himself.

A. Marcus became Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, and Lucius became Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Verus Augustus. For the first time, the Roman Empire had *two* legitimate emperors at once.

B. Perhaps Marcus was drawing on the model of the paired consuls of the republic as his inspiration, but he must also have been motivated by the pragmatic desire to have help in ruling the vast realm.

C. Lucius was already betrothed to Marcus's daughter, Lucilla, and Marcus's wife, Faustina, gave birth to twin boys on 31 August 161.

D. Neither Marcus nor Lucius had been dispatched to the armies during Antoninus's reign and were unknown to the troops.

IV. Rome now paid a heavy price for Antoninus's military negligence. The Parthians invaded Armenia, installed their nominee as king, and destroyed a

Roman legion sent in to restore order. War was brewing in Britain, too, and Upper Germany was assailed from the forests across the Rhine.

A. When news arrived of a second defeat at Parthian hands, Lucius was dispatched in 162.

B. Increasingly, emperors were forced to spend more time abroad, securing harried frontiers and serving as generals. Under these pressures, the civil Principate was gradually transformed into a military autocracy.

C. Lucius's generals drove the Parthians out of Armenia, and he was hailed *imperator*.

D. Lucius devoted some time to training troops, but he does not seem to have led any in battle.

E. Marcus, meanwhile, stayed in Rome and attended to legal duties, at which he excelled.

V. After a lull in 164, the war in the east resumed in 165, when the Romans pressed into Mesopotamia and captured and burned Parthian royal cities.

A. The main architect of these victories was the general Gaius Avidius Cassius. In celebration of his successes, Marcus and Lucius accepted another imperatorial salutation, and Lucius styled himself *Parthicus Maximus*, "the greatest conqueror of Parthia."

B. In 166, Avidius Cassius took Roman legions into Media beyond the Tigris, further east than any Roman army had ever penetrated. Lucius promptly declared himself *Medicus*, "of Media."

C. The war ended and Avidius Cassius was given the job of governor of Syria. Lucius then returned to Rome, arriving in the fall of 166.

D. On 12 October 166, Marcus and Lucius celebrated a triumph over the Parthians.

1. The cheering crowd could not have known that the soldiers parading through the streets carried the worst plague in antiquity.

2. Where manpower suffered, of course, the ability of the empire to withstand human threats was all the more diminished.

E. No sooner had the east been settled than the situation in the north became critical. Here, especially in central Europe, the populations had outstripped the carrying capacity of their agricultural techniques.

1. Worse, population movements were afoot deep in the forests of Poland and the Ukraine, as new tribes pushed westward, running into the tribes bordering the Roman Empire.

2. In the winter of 166–167, a horde of 6,000 barbarians poured across the Danube into Pannonia. They were driven out by prompt military action, but negotiators soon arrived representing some 11 tribes, and a peace was made.

F. In 168, Marcus and Lucius hastened north of the Alps to address the problems on the Danube.

1. Plague appears to have struck the imperial party. Lucius wanted to return to Rome, but Marcus insisted on pressing on to the Danube.

2. After touring the frontier zone, the emperors settled into Aquileia (the ancient ancestor of Venice) for the winter of 168–169. On the advice of their doctor, Galen, they ultimately went back to Rome.

3. Two days into the journey, which probably got underway in January or February 169, Lucius suffered a stroke; three days later, he died. Marcus was left in sole command of the empire.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 71–72.

Fronto, *Letters to Marcus Aurelius* and *Letters to Lucius Verus*.

HA, *Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus*.

Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography*, especially chapters 1–7.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Antoninus Pius," "Marcus Aurelius," "Lucius Verus."

Questions to Consider:

1. Was the reign of Antoninus Pius the beginning of the end for the Roman Empire in the west? Did he allow the state to stagnate?

2. Why did Marcus insist on Lucius Verus being co-emperor with himself?

3. "Lucius Verus was all but useless to Marcus's rule of the empire." Discuss this statement after reading all the relevant sources.

Lecture Twenty-Four
Marcus in the North and Commodus

Scope: Following Lucius's premature death 169, Marcus was forced to confront the growing Germanic threat on the Rhine-Danube frontier, where his life ended in the camp and at war. In a break with Antonine tradition, Marcus reverted to the old dynastic principle last employed by the Flavians and chose his natural son, the 19-year-old Commodus, to be the next emperor. Commodus proved a disaster. Like Caligula and Nero, he devoted himself to private pursuits, and Praetorian prefects and even chamberlains held sway in the emperor's absence. His extreme megalomania is well documented. He was assassinated on the last day of 192.

Outline

I. Marcus Aurelius's presence was required on the Rhine-Danube frontier, and no later than September or October 169, he was back at his post.

- **A.** Before his departure, he decided to auction off property from the palaces in the Forum of Trajan to raise money for the war. He also saw to it that Verus's widow was married to one of his own advisers.
- **B.** Just prior to heading north, Marcus lost his seven-year-old son, leaving him with four daughters and Commodus, who was just nine years old.

II. Because the sources are so poor for Marcus's northern wars, we can piece together only an outline of events from bits and pieces of data.

- **A.** In 169, Marcus raised new forces for his wars. Because of the plague, he was forced to draw recruits from new sources.
- **B.** Clearly, the threat faced by the Romans in the north had changed. Previously, relatively small Germanic tribes had sought pillage and loot, but now much larger confederations sought land for settlement.
- **C.** In 170 and 171, it seems that the Romans suffered the destruction of an army of 20,000. Barbarians poured across the Danube; some also penetrated into the Balkans, as far south as Athens.
  - **1.** The experience of invasion highlighted a weakness in Rome's defensive posture in the north.
  - **2.** Now it had been shown that, if the frontier forces were overwhelmed or bypassed, the hinterland lay open and undefended.
- **D.** Along with the mangled text of Dio and some bits in the *Augustan History*, we have the Column of Marcus Aurelius in Rome, now in the Piazza Colonna, as a source for these northern wars.

1. This column stood 100 Roman feet high and was carved with a spiral relief, depicting wars against the Marcomanni (172–173) and the Iazyges (174–175).
2. The coincidence of literary anecdote and sculptural depiction shows that an effort was made to portray actual events.
3. Marcus is omnipresent on the column, as Trajan was on his, but here emphasis is on fighting and killing.

E. Marcus also engaged in diplomacy by making pacts with neighboring tribes.

III. By 175, the wars in the north had produced a settlement, but just at this time, Gaius Avidius Cassius, the governor of Syria and commander of the entire eastern empire, had declared himself emperor. Faustina, Marcus's wife, was rumored to be involved.

A. Cassius enjoyed some support in the east, but he won no support in Europe and was declared a *hostis*, a public enemy, by the Senate.

B. Marcus summoned Commodus from Rome, and before the soldiers, on 7 July 175, the 13-year-old took up the toga of manhood and was hailed as *Princeps Iiuventutis*.

C. After Cassius was murdered by one of his own centurions, Marcus concluded a peace with the Iazyges and headed east.

D. Marcus, along with Faustina and Commodus, toured the east until November 176. During this tour, Faustina died in Turkey.

IV. Marcus returned to Rome late in 176.

A. Commodus, not yet 16 years old, was granted *imperium* and nominated consul for the year 177.

B. In 177, Commodus was given proconsular and tribunician powers, the name Augustus, and the title *pater patriae*. As Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Commodus Augustus, he was co-ruler of the empire. However, the boy showed worrying proclivities.

C. With trouble brewing again in the north, Marcus and Commodus headed out on 3 August 178. In March 180, Marcus took seriously ill, possibly with the plague. He died in camp on 17 March 180.

D. Marcus Aurelius was regarded by his contemporaries and by Roman posterity as virtually the perfect emperor.

V. For the reign of Commodus, we have the eyewitness testimony of Cassius Dio and of Herodian.

A. As the new emperor, Commodus immediately reversed any plan to annex trans-Danubian territory for the empire and pulled back to the river line.

B. Dio says that Commodus was not inherently wicked but unintelligent, lacking in guile, and easily manipulated. Further, he was only 19 years old and had little experience in administration or command.

C. In 181 or 182, a conspiracy was unearthed involving Commodus's sister Lucilla. The plot soured relations between the emperor and the Senate and launched dreadful rounds of inquisition.

D. Commodus gave himself over to gladiatorial combat and chariot racing. He forged a divine connection with Hercules, and eventually, he thought he *was* Hercules.

E. At the end of his life, Commodus renamed Rome *Colonia Lucia Aelia Nova Commodiana*, which means, "the New Colony of Commodus."

F. This megalomania made Commodus unpopular in traditionalist circles but amused the masses.

VI. In the end, though, Commodus's death was caused by those closest to him.

A. He was strangled in his bath on 31 December 192. Commodus was 31 years old and had ruled almost 13 years.

B. With Commodus died the Antonine Dynasty. The good years were over, and civil war once more threatened.

C. Commodus shared his birthday with Caligula. He does resemble Caligula, not least in his megalomania and quest for divinity.

D. Unfortunately, Commodus also represented the future of the Roman emperorship. In future years, the Augustan model of the "citizen prince" was to give way to more military and openly autocratic regimes.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, book 73.

HA, *Marcus Aurelius*, *Avidius Cassius*, *Commodus*.

Herodian, *History of the Empire*, book 1.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Marcus Aurelius," "Avidius Cassius," "Commodus."

Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180–395*, especially pp. 83–124.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were Marcus's options in dealing with the northern barbarians? What do you think was the ultimate goal of his campaigns of 169–180?

2. To what extent was Commodus a throwback to the bad days of Nero or Caligula? Can you catalogue the similarities between Commodus and earlier "bad" emperors? What was new in Commodus's behavior?

Biographical Notes

Main Ancient Authors

Augustan History. See below, *Historia Augusta*.

Aurelius Victor, Sextus (fl. late 4th c. A.D.). Imperial administrator of African extraction, governor of Pannonia in A.D. 361, and urban prefect in A.D. 389. He published the *Caesares*, a survey of emperors from Augustus to Constantius that now exists mostly in epitome form. The work was supposedly based on Suetonius and was interested in moralizing and religious omens and prodigies.

Cassius Dio (c. A.D. 164–230). Lucius Cassius Dio was a Greek senator from Asia Minor who composed an 80-book history of Rome, of which all survives, in full or summary (*epitome*) form. More useful for imperial than republican history, Dio is especially illuminating when addressing contemporary events under the Severans.

Dio Chrysostom (c. A.D. 40–after 110). A Greek orator and Stoic-Cynic philosopher who began his career in Rome but was banished after being involved in a political scandal in the early part of Domitian's reign. He was later reconciled and became friends with Trajan. Throughout his career, he traveled widely and gave speeches on morality, mythology, and literary criticism, in addition to his speeches before the assembly dealing with real situations.

Diodorus Siculus (fl. c. 60–30 B.C.). Greek writer from Sicily who wrote a universal history in 40 books, of which 15 survive intact. Diodorus focuses on Greek and Sicilian affairs down to the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.) and thereafter on Roman affairs. He is particularly useful for Philip II and the Hellenistic era.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. A.D. 260–339). Important Christian functionary and church historian of the time of Constantine; served as bishop of Caesarea (c. 314) and, for a time, supported Arian doctrine. Exonerated at the Council of Nicaea (324/5), he participated in all the important church councils of the time. His most important works are the *Ecclesiastical History*, which was much imitated by later writers, and the *Life of Constantine*.

Fronto, Marcus Cornelius (c. A.D. 100–166). Rhetoric tutor and lifelong friend of Marcus Aurelius and the foremost orator of his day. He rose normally through the *cursus honorum* and reached consul *suffectus* by A.D. 143. His letters to Marcus Aurelius reveal much of the character of other members of the imperial court, as well as his own views on rhetoric.

Herodian (fl. early to mid-3rd c. A.D.). Likely an ex-slave (of eastern extraction) in the imperial service, Herodian wrote an eight-book history of Rome covering the period from the death of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 180) to the reign of Gordian III (A.D. 238). His work constitutes one of the few extant historical sources for the Severan era, even though his tone is often perfunctory

and moralizing. His eyewitness account of events during his adult life provides a good counterweight to the more sensational *Historia Augusta*.

Historia Augusta (c. A.D. 400), a.k.a. the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* ("writers of imperial history"), or *Augustan History*. A collection of biographies of emperors from Hadrian to Carinus (A.D. 114–284) allegedly composed by six different authors and dedicated to the emperors Diocletian and Constantine. In actuality, this collection is likely the product of a single author writing around the year A.D. 400. Many of the primary "documents" cited in this work are known to be crude forgeries, so that its usefulness is called into question. Despite these problems, it constitutes some of the only extant narrative of imperial events during the tumultuous 3rd century.

Josephus, Flavius (b. A.D. 37/8). A Jewish priest and a Pharisee who was put in command of the Galilee by the Sanhedrin at the start of the Jewish Revolt of A.D. 66–70. Besieged at Jotapata, Josephus surrendered, then prophesied that his captor, Vespasian, would become emperor. Later used as a translator and mouthpiece during Titus's siege of Jerusalem, he was afterward taken to Rome and given citizenship by the Flavians. He became a historian attached to the imperial court, and his surviving works aim at both explanation of Jewish history to a Greco-Roman audience and reconciliation of Rome to a Jewish audience. These works are the *Bellum Iudaicum*, the *Antiquitates Iudaicae*, his autobiographical *Vita*, and his vituperative apologetic, *Contra Apionem*.

Lactantius (c. A.D. 240–320). A native of North Africa who taught rhetoric in Nicomedia during the reign of Diocletian. He lost this position when he converted to Christianity sometime before 303. Lactantius later became the tutor of Constantine's son Crispus. His work *Divine Institutions* addresses criticisms of the Christian religion, and *On the Deaths of Persecutors* describes the grisly fates of persecutors. He also wrote on the human body and the anger of God.

Papinian (d. A.D. 212). Legal scholar and close associate of Septimius Severus. After the fall of Plautianus (A.D. 205), he became Praetorian prefect, along with Quintus Aemilius Laetus. Upon Severus's death, he was dismissed from his position by Caracalla. He was later prosecuted by the Praetorians after the murder of Septimius Geta and put to death (A.D. 212). He is best known for his 37 books of *Quaestiones* (*Problems*), written in the 190s, and the *Digesta responsa* (*Ordered Opinions*), written between 206 and 212. In these, he explored the ethical basis of laws, thus aiding in his reputation as a just man. He was later honored as the greatest Roman lawyer and was studied by all third-year law students.

Pliny the Younger (c. A.D. 61–112). Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secondus was a senator from Como in Italy who attained the consulship under Trajan in A.D. 100. He was raised in part by his uncle and adoptive father, Pliny the Elder, and followed him in rhetorical and advocacy training. His career and progression through administrative offices is the best documented model for aristocrats of the Principate, and his loyalty to the imperial regime never wavered (though he

did criticize some emperors after their deaths). His major surviving works are 10 books of letters and a eulogizing speech, the *Panegyricus* (of Trajan). These are excellent sources for the Roman senatorial lifestyle and elite sensibilities of the period of Domitian and Trajan.

Plutarch (c. A.D. 50–120). Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus is an excellent example of the truly Greco-Roman culture that the Romans forged in the imperial period. Born and raised in Chaeronea in central Greece, he traveled widely in the empire (including to Egypt and Rome) but lived most of his life in Greece. Yet he considered himself Roman. His voluminous writings include his very useful series of *Parallel Lives* of famous Greek and Roman historical figures. He also wrote rhetorical and philosophical treatises, dialogues, and antiquarian investigations (*Greek Questions* and *Roman Questions*), mostly of a religious bent (Plutarch spent his last 30 years as a priest at Delphi in Greece). His biographies of major Romans, however, constitute his most useful contributions to this course.

Seneca (c. 4 B.C.–A.D. 65). Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a native of Corduba in Spain, became a prominent author during the period of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty and was deeply involved with the imperial family. An orator, Stoic philosopher, playwright, and poet, Seneca's literary output was considerable, and many of his works survive. He was also the tutor of Nero and enjoyed a special connection with Nero's mother, Agrippina the Younger. Nevertheless, his relationship with the Julio-Claudians was always rocky and, at times, precarious, and he was eventually forced to commit suicide for allegedly plotting against his former imperial pupil.

Suetonius (c. A.D. 70–130). Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus came from an equestrian background, probably from North Africa. He was a friend of Pliny the Younger and became a secretary in the imperial service of Hadrian but was dismissed circa 120. Among other things, he wrote biographies of the *Twelve Caesars* (Julius Caesar–Domitian) that are racy and entertaining to read but not the most reliable as historical sources.

Tacitus (c. A.D. 56–120). So little is known of Cornelius Tacitus's life that his *praenomen* is not recoverable with any certainty (it may have been Publius or Gaius). He had a successful senatorial career under the tyrant Domitian and reached the governorship of Asia under Trajan. He wrote several monographs, but his masterpiece was the *Annals*, covering the reigns of the Julio-Claudian emperors; he also wrote the *Histories*, describing the civil wars of A.D. 69 and the Flavian Dynasty. Neither work survives intact. Tacitus wrote in a clipped, acerbic style and, possessed of an acute intelligence and republican inclinations, presents a dark and gloomy picture of life under the emperors.

Tertullian (c. A.D. 160–240). A Christian writer from Africa. He is known for his support of the Rigorist party among the Carthaginian Christians. His many writings defend Christianity against pagan charges, attempt to solve Christian ethical problems, and attack dualistic thought. His sole source for his teachings

was the Bible. He was the first Latin churchman and had great influence on the development of Western Christian thought.

Ulpian, Domitius (d. A.D. 223). Famous jurist from Tyre. He followed an equestrian career in Rome, beginning under Septimius Severus. After Caracalla's extension of citizenship to all freeborn people in the empire (A.D. 212), Ulpian wrote more than 200 books expounding Roman law for the benefit of the new citizens. Under Severus Alexander, he was made Praetorian prefect and was set over two other existing prefects (A.D. 222). His lack of authority led to tension within the guard, and the soldiers mutinied and murdered him in the following year. Ulpian also wrote commentaries on the praetor's edict (*Ad edictum praetoris*) and the civil law (*Ad Sabinum*), tracts on the duties of various officials, and manuals for both elementary and advanced students. His works were used more widely than those of any other lawyer and presented Roman law in a way that allowed it to be adapted easily to the different needs of later historical periods.

Velleius Paterculus (c. 20 B.C.–A.D. 31 or later). This provincial of equestrian and, later, senatorial status served in the Roman army under the emperor Tiberius in A.D. 4–12. His *Compendium of History* in two books was published in A.D. 30 or early in 31 and is widely excoriated for its sycophantic praise of Tiberius (emperor at the time of publication) and poor Latinity. The date of his death cannot be established with any certainty.

Zosimus (early 6th c. A.D.). A Byzantine scholar who wrote a history of the Roman Empire from Augustus to A.D. 410. He is our most important source for the later parts of the empire, especially the years 395–410.

Historical Figures

Note*:* The biographical sketches in this appendix cover nonimperial personages (including empresses and princesses) who figure prominently in the history of the emperors of Rome covered in this course. As well, the names are listed according to their usage in the lectures, rather than according to a forced conformity to any one convention. Thus, Agricola appears as "Agricola, Gnaeus Julius," whereas Verginius Rufus appears as "Verginius Rufus, Lucius."

Aelius Caesar, Lucius (c. A.D. 100–138). Lucius Ceionius Commodus, adopted by Hadrian in A.D. 136. He had risen through the ranks of administrative offices and was granted *tribunicia potestas*. He governed well the two Pannonias during the last two years of his life.

Agricola, Gnaeus Julius (A.D. 40–93). Prominent commander of senatorial rank who held a number of military offices (as both tribune and legate) before reaching the consulship in A.D. 77. Imperial legate of Britain from A.D. 78, he was recalled by Domitian in A.D. 83. Particularly effective in this province, he was famous for five successful campaigns and a circumnavigation of all of Britain. He was the father-in-law of Tacitus, who wrote his eulogizing

biography. According to this work, had he not been recalled, Agricola would have completed Roman conquest of the island, including Scotland.

Agrippa (c. 63–12 B.C.). Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, of obscure birth, was an adherent and lifelong friend of Augustus. He joined Octavian at the very outset of his career, orchestrated the victory at Actium, and undertook several important military commands on behalf of Augustus. From 23 B.C. onward, he was Augustus's chosen successor, married to the emperor's daughter, and from 18 B.C. until his death in 12 B.C., virtually co-emperor with Augustus. He had five children by Julia, and all three of his sons (Gaius Caesar, Lucius Caesar, and Agrippa Postumus) were adopted by Augustus as his own at various stages.

Agrippa Postumus, Marcus Vipsanius (12 B.C.–A.D. 14). Third son of Agrippa and Julia, adopted by Augustus in A.D. 4. His depraved character got him exiled in A.D. 6, and a later conspiracy to put him at the head of a military coup was foiled. He was executed immediately after Augustus's death.

Agrippina the Elder (14 B.C.–A.D. 33). Agrippina Major, daughter of Julia (2) and Marcus Agrippa, granddaughter of Augustus, who married Germanicus and was the mother of Caligula. Under Tiberius, she became the rallying point of those senators who opposed Sejanus. Arrested in A.D. 29, she was banished to Pandateria, then starved herself to death in A.D. 33.

Agrippina the Younger (A.D. 15–59). Agrippina Minor, eldest daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina Major, she later married Ahenobarbus, then Claudius, and was the mother of Nero (see Lecture Thirteen).

Ahenobarbus, Gnaeus, Domitius (d. A.D. 40). First husband of Agrippina the Younger and father of the future emperor Nero. He died of dropsy.

Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.). Son of Philip II of Macedon and Olympias. He was educated by Aristotle and proclaimed king of Macedon after his father's death (336 B.C.). In 334, he led his army across the Hellespont and began a 10-year war, during which he conquered the Persian Empire and journeyed as far east as the Indus River. He was finally defeated in India (325 B.C.) and retreated westward. He set up governors throughout his empire to rule in his stead and considered himself the king of Asia. Alexander's rule was resisted by many, including his soldiers and the members of the court. His death in 323 B.C. is surrounded by suspicion, but his contemporaries claimed that the 10-day sickness preceding his death was the result of poison.

Anicetus (c. A.D. 40s–50s). Boyhood tutor of Nero who later became prefect of the fleet at Misenum. He was used by Nero to murder Agrippina, then forced to confess to an illicit affair with Octavia. He was exiled to Sardinia in A.D. 62.

Antinoos (A.D. 110–130). Handsome young favorite of Hadrian from Bithynia. While accompanying the imperial barge on the Nile, he drowned and was later deified and worshiped with cult, festivals, and statues. a Hadrian also named a city after him in Egypt.

Antonia (36 B.C.–A.D. 37). Youngest daughter of Marcus Antonius and Octavia, who became the wife of Drusus (1). Their children were Germanicus, Livilla, and the emperor Claudius. She abjectly refused to remarry after Drusus's death in 9 B.C. Later, in A.D. 31, she revealed Sejanus's nefarious doings to Tiberius via a letter. The beloved grandmother of Caligula, she was given numerous honors upon his accession. It was rumored that later he drove her to commit suicide.

Antonius, Gnaeus Arrius (mid- to late 1st c. A.D.). Prominent senator who was consul *suffectus* in A.D. 69, proconsul of Asia under Vespasian, and consul under Nerva. He was also a friend of the younger Pliny, who praised his Greek poetry, and the maternal grandfather of the emperor Antoninus Pius.

Antony, Mark (83–30 B.C.). Marcus Antonius, of distinguished birth, fought under Caesar in Gaul and became an ardent and trusted supporter. As a close friend of Caesar's and consul in 44 B.C., he expected death with his patron but was spared. He then orchestrated the expulsion of the Liberators, snubbed Octavian, fought against him, and then joined Octavian and Lepidus to form the second triumvirate in 43 B.C. As triumvir, he went east, where he inherited Caesar's affair with Cleopatra VII of Egypt, fought the Parthians, and saw Octavian consolidate his hold on the west. In the final conflict at Actium in 31 B.C., Antony was defeated and, with his armies defecting en masse to Octavian, committed suicide in August 30 B.C.

Aureolus, Marcus Aelius (d. A.D. 268). Commander of the cavalry under Gallienus. He helped the new emperor defeat many rivals, such as Macrianus, but then was hailed emperor himself in 262. He allied himself with the weak Gallienus to attack Postumus but was declared emperor again a few years later while the emperor was fighting the Goths (268). After Gallienus's death, Aureolus surrendered to Claudius II; he was then killed by his troops.

Avidius Cassius, Gaius (d. A.D. 175). Son of the equestrian Gaius Avidius Heliodorus, he became consul *suffectus* under Marcus Aurelius and a general in the Parthian campaign of Lucius Verus. He was the governor of Syria who subdued Mesopotamia, captured Seleucia and Ctesiphon (A.D. 165/6), and was later given supreme command over the east, including Egypt, where he put down a serious revolt in A.D. 172. In A.D. 175, upon rumors of the death of Marcus Aurelius, he was hailed as emperor and ruled the east for three months. With news of Marcus Aurelius's return to Rome, Avidius was killed by a centurion.

Bar Kochba, Simon (d. A.D. 135). Shim'on bar Kosiba was the military leader of the second Jewish Revolt against the Romans in Palestine (A.D. 132–135). He was hailed by the influential Rabbi Akiba as a messiah and the "prince" (*nasi*) of Israel and, therefore, had a widespread following. He held Jerusalem early in the revolt but later was forced into guerilla tactics, striking out from his base at Ein Gedi. He was killed in the sack of the stronghold Bethar, which proved to be the last stand of the resistance.

Bassianus (early 4th c. A.D.). Brother-in-law of Constantine. In 315, Constantine made him the Caesar of Licinius, who then compelled him to fight against Constantine. He was defeated and presumably killed by his betrayed brother-in-law.

Berenice (A.D. 28–c. 80). Daughter of Herod Agrippa; first married to Marcus, brother of Tiberius Julius Alexander, and later, to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis. After his death, she became co-ruler with her brother Agrippa II and tried to prevent the Jewish Revolt in A.D. 66. In A.D. 69, she supported the Flavian cause and engaged in a brief love affair with Titus. She later visited Rome (A.D. 75; 79) and presumably renewed affections, but Titus would not marry her because of public sentiment.

Britannicus (A.D. 41–55). Tiberius Claudius Caesar Germanicus was the son of the emperor Claudius and Messalina, later dubbed Britannicus in honor of his father's victory in Britain in A.D. 44. Upon Claudius's formal adoption of Nero, Britannicus became the younger son and was eclipsed by his new brother. After Nero's accession, Britannicus's position became precarious, and a year later, he died, almost certainly poisoned by Nero's order.

Burrus, Sextus Afranius (d. A.D. 62). Equestrian procurator of Livia, Tiberius, and Claudius who became sole Praetorian prefect (in A.D. 51) under Claudius and Nero, appointed via Agrippina's influence. He had been Nero's adviser for many years and was responsible (with Seneca) for the early and stable period of Nero's reign. He played an uncertain role in the murder of Agrippina but opposed Nero's plans against Octavia. He may have been killed by poison.

Caesonia (d. A.D. 41). Wife of Caligula, brutally murdered by soldiers after his death, along with an infant daughter.

Callistus, Gaius Julius (A.D. 30s–50s). Influential freedman of Caligula; involved in the plot to kill him. He was later an important adviser to Claudius in the post of *a libellis*, and he aided in the downfall of Messalina. Because he was opposed to the emperor's marriage to Agrippina, she is presumed to have secured his dismissal after Claudius's death.

Carausius (d. A.D. 293). An admiral who proclaimed himself emperor in Britain after being charged with retaining booty from his campaigns. He minted coins and attempted to establish himself as a "brother" and co-ruler of Diocletian and Maximian, but the two Augusti were not amused. Carausius formed a secessionist empire in Britain, which gained control of parts of Gaul and lasted until 297. Carausius, however, was killed in 293 by Constantius.

Cassius Chaerea (d. A.D. 41). Centurion in Lower Germany under Augustus, he later became a tribune in the Praetorian Guard and was prominently involved in the plot to kill Caligula. As a result, he was executed upon Claudius's accession.

Cleander, Marcus Aurelius (d. A.D. 190). He was a freedman of Phrygian origin who became Commodus's chamberlain and exercised much influence over him from A.D. 185 onward after becoming the Praetorian prefect. He was given the title *a pugione* ("bearer of the dagger") by Commodus, but in 190, he was blamed for a food shortage and killed by an angry mob.

Cleopatra VII (69–30 B.C.). Ptolemaic queen of Egypt who became joint ruler with Ptolemy XIII in 51 B.C. The young pair supported Pompey in 49 B.C., but she was ousted by the Pompeians in favor of her brother's sole rule. Reinstated by Caesar in 48 B.C., she alleged that the two had a child (Caesarion). After Caesar's death, she supported the Caesarians, and had twins by Mark Antony in 41 B.C. Beginning in 37 B.C., the two formed a lasting political and personal alliance, and she proved a convenient target for Octavian's propaganda and Rome's subsequent declaration of war in 32 B.C. After defeat at the battle of Actium (31 B.C.), she retreated to Alexandria and followed Antony in suicide.

Clodius Albinus, Decimus (d. A.D. 197). From Hadrumentum in Africa, he was the governor of Britain at the time of Commodus's murder. In A.D. 193, he received the title Caesar in return for his support of Lucius Septimius Severus. When it became clear that Severus did not intend him to be his successor, he went to Gaul and proclaimed himself emperor. He was defeated by Severus and killed at the battle of Lugdunum (A.D. 197).

Constans (d. A.D. 350). The youngest son of Constantine. He became Caesar in 333 and Augustus, along with his two brothers, on his father's death in 337. He took control of Italy, Africa, and Illyricum, then extended his rule over the entire western empire after killing his brother Constantine II (A.D. 340). However, the civilians and troops disapproved of his regime and killed him in a coup.

Constantia (early 4th c. A.D.). Daughter of Constantius and Theodora and half-sister of Constantine. She was married to Licinius in A.D. 313.

Constantine II (A.D. 316–340). Second son of Constantine and proclaimed Caesar, along with Crispus and Licinius II, in 317. He became senior Augustus after his father's death in 337 and ruled Gaul, Britain, and Spain but was killed during a quarrel with his youngest brother, Constans, a few years later.

Constantius II (d. A.D. 361). Third son of Constantine. He was named Caesar in 324 and became Augustus in the east after his father's death (A.D. 337). His rule was characterized by battling usurpers in the east. He died in battle against one of these usurpers, his cousin Julian.

Coponius (early 1st c. A.D.). The first procurator of Judaea, around the year A.D. 6. Under his rule, Roman soldiers were introduced into the province for the first time in response to an uprising.

Crassus Frugi Licinianus, Gaius Calpurnius (late 1st–early 2nd c. A.D.). Consul *suffectus* under Domitian (A.D. 87). For conspiring against Nerva, he

was exiled to Tarentum. Later, he plotted against Trajan and was removed to an island, where he remained until killed in the reign of Hadrian during an escape attempt.

Crispus (early 4th c. A.D.). Eldest son of Constantine and his first wife (or concubine) Minervina. He was educated by the Christian scholar Lactantius and was made Caesar in A.D. 317, along with his brother, Constantine II, and Licinius II. He enjoyed a successful military career but was ordered to be executed by his father in 326. The circumstances surrounding his death are unclear, but it seems he may have been involved in some sort of palace scandal.

Decebalus (d. A.D. 106). King of the Dacians and leader of the war against Domitian (A.D. 85–89). He orchestrated two major victories against the Romans in this conflict. Though eventually defeated, he secured a favorable peace for his people and reorganized his realm. Trajan later considered him a significant threat and campaigned against him (A.D. 101–102), imposing a more stringent peace. Upon Trajan's second campaign (A.D. 105–106), Decebalus was defeated and committed suicide to avoid capture.

Domitia Longina (late 1st c. A.D.). Daughter of Domitius Corbulo, wife of Domitian.

Domitilla, Flavia (late 1st c. A.D.). Wife of Vespasian, mother of Titus and Domitian.

Donatus (early 4th c. A.D.). An African clergy member, probably from Numidia, who was the leader and namesake of the Donatist Christian movement that took hold of Africa in the early 4th century.

Drusilla, Julia (A.D. 16–38). Second daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina and favorite sister of Caligula (there were rumors of incestuous relations between the two). On her death, she was consecrated as Panthea, and public mourning was enforced throughout the empire.

Drusus, the Elder (1), Claudius Nero (38–9 B.C.). Second son of Livia and Tiberius Claudius Nero; brought up by Octavian/Augustus. He was allowed to stand for magistracies five years early, and he aided in Tiberius's campaign against the Raeti and Vindelici. Augustus then placed him in command of the three Gauls in 13 B.C. and entrusted the invasion of Germany to him. After a number of successful campaigns against various Germanic tribes, he died from an illness brought on by a fall from his horse. He and his descendants were graced with the title Germanicus in honor of his successes. He married Antonia, and their children were Germanicus, Livilla, and Claudius.

Drusus, the Younger (2), Julius Caesar (15/14 B.C.–A.D. 23). Son of Tiberius and Vipsania; married Claudia Livilla, sister of Germanicus. Successful in suppressing the revolt of the Pannonian legions at Augustus's death, he became consul in A.D. 15 and later commanded in Illyricum (A.D. 17–20), celebrating a triumph upon returning to Rome. Indicated as Tiberius's potential

successor, he received the tribunician powers in A.D. 22. He died the next year, perhaps poisoned by his own wife, who had been seduced by Sejanus.

Drusus (3), Julius Caesar (A.D. 7–33). Second of the surviving sons of Germanicus and Agrippina, he was seen as a likely successor after the deaths of his father and of Tiberius's son Drusus. Sejanus instigated his arrest in A.D. 30, and he died imprisoned at the palace a few years later.

Fausta (early 4th c. A.D.). Daughter of Maximian. Married Constantine in 307.

Faustina, Annia Galeria Minor (c. A.D. 125–175). Younger daughter of Antoninus Pius and Faustina the Elder, cousin and wife of Marcus Aurelius (m. A.D. 145), mother of Commodus. She became Augusta after the birth of her first child, and she accompanied Marcus on campaign late in her life as *mater castrorum*. She died on one such campaign in the east.

Flavius Sulpicianus, Titus (mid- to late 2nd c. A.D.). Father-in-law of Helvius Pertinax. He vied for emperorship after the death of Pertinax but was eventually outbid by Marcus Didius Severus Julianus.

Fulvius Macrianus (d. A.D. 261). A general in Valerian's army who was hailed emperor, along with his brother, Quietus, and with the aid of the Praetorian prefect Ballista, after Valerian's capture in 260. He marched toward Italy to legitimize his claim but was intercepted in Illyricum by Gallienus's troops, led by Marcus Aelius Aureolus, and was defeated and killed.

Gaius and Lucius Caesar (20 B.C.–A.D. 4; 17 B.C.–A.D. 2). Sons of Agrippa and Julia, adopted by Augustus in 17 B.C. The designated successors of Augustus, they were shown great favor via early advancement to magistracies and various titular honors. Gaius married Livilla in 1 B.C. and, in A.D. 2, campaigned in the east, negotiating a settlement with the Parthians regarding Armenia. Lucius died at Massilia on his way to Spain (A.D. 2), and Gaius succumbed to a wound on his way home (in Lycia) less than two years later.

Gemellus, Tiberius (early 1st c. A.D.). Son of Sejanus and Julia Livilla; joint heir with Caligula after Tiberius. He was murdered on Caligula's accession.

Germanicus, Julius Caesar (15 B.C.–A.D. 19). Born Nero Claudius Germanicus, the son of Drusus (1), he was adopted by his uncle Tiberius in A.D. 4 and married to Agrippina in A.D. 5. He enjoyed an accelerated career in magistracies via special imperial dispensations, and he served under Tiberius in Pannonia (A.D. 7–9) and Germany (A.D. 11). Consul in A.D. 12 and chief proconsular commander of both the Gallic and German provinces in A.D. 13, he enjoyed military success and significant popularity with both the troops and the populace. Despite his inept handling of the mutiny of the Lower German legions at the death of Augustus, he subsequently led the legions against the Marsi, Chatti, Cherusci, and Bructeri and won two battles against Arminius. Recalled to Rome for a triumph in A.D. 17, he then was given *maius imperium* and command over all the eastern provinces. There, he quarreled with Gnaeus Piso,

the legate of Syria, and ordered him to leave the province. Afterward, he became mysteriously ill and died at Antioch.

Gessius Florus (mid-1st c. A.D.). A Roman knight who, having gained the favor of Nero, became the procurator of Judaea in A.D. 64. He was a cruel ruler, which helped precipitate the Great Revolt in 66.

Geta, Lucius Septimius (d. A.D. 212/211). The younger son of the emperor Severus; brother and co-emperor with Caracalla; became Caesar in A.D. 198 and Augustus in A.D. 209. He was governor at York during the Scottish campaigns. Early in 212, Caracalla had his brother murdered and his memory "damned" from all public inscriptions and other commemoration.

Gordian I (d. A.D. 238): Roman emperor for about 20 days in A.D. 238. He was a proconsul in Africa, where he was proclaimed emperor by the gentry and later confirmed by the Senate. He made his son, Gordian II, his colleague. He committed suicide a few weeks later after his son was killed in battle.

Gordian II (d. A.D. 238). Son of Gordian I and his co-emperor in A.D. 238. He was killed in battle against the neighboring governor of Numidia, Capelianus. His rule lasted only a few weeks.

Gracchi. The brothers whose careers as tribunes of the plebs mark the beginning of the Roman Revolution. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (c. 170–133 B.C.; tribune 133 B.C.) tackled land reform and employed uncustomary methods to get his measures passed and implemented. He was murdered along with 300 followers in a senatorial-led riot while holding an election meeting for a planned second tribunate. His brother, Gaius Sempronius Gracchus (c. 160–121 B.C.; tribune 123, 122 B.C.) implemented a more overtly anti-senatorial slate of legislation. He backed enfranchisement of the Italian allies but thereby undermined his popularity at Rome. Amid growing tensions, he died in vicious street fighting in 121 B.C., along with 3,000 of his followers.

Helena (late 3rd c. A.D.). Concubine (or possibly wife) of Constantius until about 293, when he married Theodora. Mother of Constantine.

Helvidius Priscus, Gaius (d. A.D. 75). Prominent Stoic and alleged republican from Samnium who was tribune of the plebs in A.D. 56 and praetor in A.D. 70. His second wife was Fannia, daughter of Thrasea Paetus, whose political views he endorsed. Exiled after Paetus's condemnation in the time of Nero, he returned under Galba. Later, after becoming openly critical of the Flavians, he was again exiled in A.D. 71 and executed four years later.

Herod Agrippa, Marcus Julius (10 B.C.–A.D. 44). Grandson of Herod the Great who lived at the imperial court until the death of Drusus, Tiberius's son (A.D. 23). Returning to Italy in A.D. 36, he was imprisoned for treason. Ever a friend of Caligula, the latter named him king of the tetrarchies of Philip in A.D. 37 and of Herod Antipas in A.D. 39. In A.D. 41, he assisted in the accession of

Claudius, who added Judaea to Agrippa's growing realm. After his death, Claudius re-annexed the whole kingdom.

Herod the Great (73–4 B.C.). Made king of the Jews by Mark Antony and the Senate in 40 B.C. After Actium (31 B.C.), Octavian confirmed Herod's position, and he became a skillful financier, a great builder, and an able administrator.

Julia (1) (83–54 B.C.). Daughter of Gaius Julius Caesar and Cornelia, she was married to Pompey (59 B.C.) to solidify the political alliance of the first triumvirate. After one miscarriage in 55 B.C., she died in childbirth the next year.

Julia (2) (39 B.C.–A.D. 14). Only daughter of Augustus and Scribonia, raised largely by Livia, she was married to her cousin Marcus Marcellus (25 B.C.), then Agrippa (21 B.C.), then Tiberius (11 B.C.). Her licentious conduct during the last marriage led to estrangement from her husband and banishment by Augustus to Pandateria (2 B.C.). Six years later, she was moved to Rhegium, where Tiberius stopped her allowance, and she died of starvation. She was the mother of Gaius and Lucius Caesar, Julia (3), Agrippina, and Agrippa Postumus.

Julia (3) (c. 19 B.C.–A.D. 28). Daughter of Julia (2) and Agrippa, she was married to Lucius Aemilius Paullus. Later, Augustus banished her to Trimerus on the charge of adultery (A.D. 8), where she remained until her death.

Julia (4) Livilla (A.D. 18–42). Youngest daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina, she was married to Marcus Vinicius in A.D. 33. She was exiled to the Pontian islands for adultery with her brother-in-law, Marcus Lepidus (A.D. 39). She was restored under Claudius but promptly accused of adultery with Seneca and exiled again (A.D. 42), then killed.

Julia Domna (d. A.D. 217). Daughter of Julius Bassianus, the priest of Elagabalus in Syria. She married Septimius Severus in A.D. 187 and bore him two sons, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla) and Septimius Geta.

Julia Maesa (d. A.D. 224). Sister of Julia Domna. She had two daughters, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea. She plotted against Macrinus to bring Soaemias's son Elagabalus to the throne., she gave her support to her grandson by Mamaea, Severus Alexander.

Julia Mamaea (d. A.D. 235). Younger daughter of Julia Maesa and mother of Severus Alexander. She basically reigned alongside her son throughout his rule and was killed with him by the Roman army.

Julia Soaemias (d. A.D. 222). Older daughter of Julia Maesa, mother of Elagabalus.

Laetus, Quintus Aemilius (d. A.D. 193). Born in Thaenae in Africa, he was the Praetorian prefect from A.D. 191–193. He was responsible for getting Septimius

Severus his governorship in Upper Pannonia (A.D. 191). Along with Commodus's concubine, Marcia, and the chamberlain Eclectus, he organized Commodus's murder and replacement by Pertinax. However, he failed to defend Pertinax in the mutiny that took his life and was later killed by Marcus Didius Severus Julianus, who suspected that he favored Septimius Severus.

Lepidus, Marcus Aemilius (d. A.D. 39). Brother-in-law of Caligula who married Drusilla and to whom Caligula promised the succession. Later, he conspired with Lentulus and was executed.

Licinius II (d. A.D. 326). Son of Licinius who was made Caesar in his infancy in A.D. 317, along with Constantine II and Crispus. He was spared after his father's death (325) but was executed the next year.

Livia Drusilla (58 B.C.–A.D. 29). Wife of Augustus, mother of Tiberius (see Lecture Seven).

Livilla, Claudia Livia Julia (c. 13 B.C.–A.D. 31). Daughter of Drusus (1) and Antonia, she was married to Gaius Caesar, then to Drusus (2). She poisoned her husband as a result of an affair with Sejanus, and Tiberius later had her put to death for both crimes.

Lucius Verus (A.D. 130–169). Lucius Ceionius Commodus, the son of Lucius Aelius Caesar, was adopted by Antoninus Pius in A.D. 138, along with Marcus Aurelius. Upon Marcus's accession, he elevated Lucius to co-equal Augustus with tribunician power. After a command in the east (A.D. 163–166), he celebrated a triumph, then joined Marcus on the Danube frontier. He died during their return trip to Rome the next year.

Macrinus, Marcus Opellius (d. A.D. 218). Praetorian prefect under Caracalla, he planned the murder of the emperor in A.D. 217. He was proclaimed emperor by the army of the east within days of Caracalla's murder, becoming the first Roman emperor who was not of senatorial status. Macrinus suffered major defeats at the hands of the Parthians (A.D. 217) and Elagabalus (A.D. 218), then lost the favor of his soldiers, who saluted Elagabalus as emperor. Within weeks, he was defeated by his rival and was subsequently captured and killed.

Marcellus, Marcus Claudius (42–23 B.C.). Son of Octavia, nephew of Augustus. He served in Spain under Augustus (25 B.C.) and was married to Julia (2) later that year. While he was being positioned as one of Augustus's potential heirs, he died prematurely in 23 B.C.

Messalina (1), Valeria (d. A.D. 48). Granddaughter of Octavia (twice-over) who became the third wife of Claudius in A.D. 38/39. She was the mother of Britannicus and Octavia and was notorious for infidelity and sexual depravity. In A.D. 48, she participated in a mock marriage with Gaius Silius, which was revealed to Claudius, and she was ruined by Narcissus. She was executed as a result of the affair, which was treated as a conspiracy against the state.

Messalina (2), Statilia. Third wife of Nero (m. in A.D. 66) who had put to death her fourth husband, Iulius Vetinus Atticus.

Minervina (early 4th c. A.D.). First wife (or concubine) of Constantine and mother of Crispus.

Mucianus, Gaius Licinius (d. c. A.D. 77). Consul *suffectus* in A.D. 65, he became legate of Syria and was commander of three legions during the turmoil of A.D. 68–69. After some early disagreement, he became the right-hand man of Vespasian after the latter was hailed as emperor by his troops in Egypt. Mucianus marched to Rome as a Flavian supporter, putting down a Dacian incursion along the way, and he was instrumental in holding the government for Vespasian. He later held two consulships and remained a chief adviser to the Flavians.

Narcissus (d. A.D. 54). Freedman of Claudius who enjoyed tremendous influence as the emperor's private secretary. He was even used as an organizer of the invasion of Britain, and he received *quaetoria ornamenta* for exposing the Silius affair and Messalina's misdeeds in A.D. 48. He opposed the marriage to Agrippina and was eclipsed by Pallas as a result. An unsuccessful partisan of Britannicus's interests, he was forced to commit suicide after the murder of Claudius.

Narses (late 3rd c. A.D.). Son of Shapur I and sole king of Persia from A.D. 292. He battled Galerius and was defeated in 298; thus, he was forced to give a large portion of his kingdom over to the Romans.

Nero, Tiberius Claudius (d. 33 B.C.). First husband of Livia Drusilla and father of the emperor Tiberius (and Drusus). He had been commander of Caesar's fleet in the Alexandrian war, and in 46 B.C., he was put in charge of the settlement of Caesar's veterans in Narbonese Gaul. Praetor in 41 B.C., he opposed Octavian and eventually joined Sextus Pompey in Sicily, only to disagree with Sextus and defect to Mark Antony in Achaea. Reconciled to Octavian via the Pact of Misenum (39 B.C.), he was persuaded to divorce his first wife, Livia, who promptly married Octavian.

Octavia (1) (d. A.D. 11). Daughter of Octavius and Atia, Augustus's sister; married originally to Gaius Marcellus but then to Mark Antony as part of the Pact of Brundisium when Marcellus died (40 B.C.). Used as a pawn in the increasing tensions between Octavian and Antony during the 30s B.C., she was divorced by the latter in 32 B.C.

Octavia (2) (b. A.D. 39–62). Daughter of Claudius and Messalina; betrothed to Silanus (4), then Nero at a young age (A.D. 49). In A.D. 53, she was married to Nero, who disliked her and divorced her in A.D. 62 for alleged sterility in order to marry Poppaea. Nero then banished her to Pandateria and had her killed.

Odenathus (d. A.D. 267). Strong ruler of Palmyra from around A.D. 250. His city rose to prominence by securing the frontiers and became a major power in

the east. He proclaimed himself king and became allied with Gallienus, who gave him many titles and entrusted him with control of the eastern part of the empire. He was killed in a family quarrel and was succeeded by his wife, Zenobia.

Pallas (d. A.D. 62). Freedman of Antonia and secretary of finances for her son Claudius. He was devoted to Agrippina and successfully advocated both her marriage after the death of Messalina and the adoption of her son (Nero) by Claudius.

Pescennius Niger, Lucius (d. A.D. 194). He became governor of Syria in A.D. 191 and was proclaimed emperor by his troops upon the death of Pertinax (A.D. 193). Septimius Severus moved against him and defeated him at Issus in 194. Niger then fled to the Parthians in Antioch but was captured and killed.

Piso (1), Gnaeus Calpurnius (d. A.D. 20). Consul in 7 B.C, and, later, proconsul in Africa and legate in Hispania Terraconensis. He was appointed legate of Syria in A.D. 17 by Tiberius to assist (and police) the young Germanicus, who had full control of the eastern provinces. After an open quarrel with Germanicus, he was dismissed, and shortly afterward, Germanicus fell ill and died. Accused of the murder, he was returned to Rome and put on trial in the Senate. He committed suicide before the trial could conclude.

Piso (2), Gaius Calpurnius (d. A.D. 65). Figurehead leader of the major conspiracy against Nero in A.D. 64–65. He had been exiled by Caligula (A.D. 40) but later became consul *suffectus* under Claudius. He was not an effective leader of the plot. Upon its exposure, he committed suicide.

Piso Licinianus, Lucius Calpurnius Frugi (A.D. 38–69). Senator and scion of various noble houses who was adopted by Galba as his heir in A.D. 69 and killed with him five days later in the Forum.

Plancina, Munatia (d. A.D. 33). Wife of Piso (1) and close friend of Livia, she quarreled with Agrippina while the latter was in the east with Germanicus. Upon Germanicus's death, Agrippina accused Plancina of the murder, and she was saved by Livia's intervention. Accused again 13 years later, she committed suicide.

Plotina, Pompeia (d. A.D. 121/2). Trajan's wife, who was praised for her simplicity, dignity, virtue, and fidelity. She favored Hadrian throughout her life and perhaps facilitated his adoption.

Pontius Pilate (mid-1st c. A.D.). Prefect of Judaea (A.D. 26–36) who offended the Jews by placing images of the emperor in the Temple and being generally unsympathetic toward their traditions. Most famous for executing Jesus of Nazareth, he is immortalized in numerous early Christian texts, including the canonical Gospels. He was recalled to Rome by Tiberius in A.D. 36 because of complaints by Samaritans to Lucius Vitellius, legate of Syria.

Poppaea Sabina (d. A.D. 65) Married first to the Praetorian prefect Rufrius Crispinus, then to Otho (the future emperor), from whom she was divorced in A.D. 58. During her second marriage, she had been the mistress of Nero, and he allegedly murdered his own mother in A.D. 59 because of Poppaea. Later, Nero divorced, banished, and executed Octavia in order to marry Poppaea (A.D. 62). Poppaea bore Nero a daughter, Claudia, who survived only four months. During her next pregnancy, Nero kicked her in the abdomen, accidentally killing both his wife and the unborn child.

Postumus, Marcus Cassianus Latinius (d. A.D. 269). Military commander on the Rhine under Gallienus from A.D. 259. After Valerian was captured by the Persians the next year, he seized power and declared himself the ruler of a new Gallic Empire, consisting of Gaul, Britain, and Spain. He was killed by his own troops in A.D. 269.

Quintillus (d. A.D. 270). Brother of Aurelius Claudius. He was proclaimed emperor after his brother's death (A.D. 270), but his position was challenged by the general Aurelian. Before Aurelian was able to confront him, however, Quintillus was killed, either by his own hand or those of his soldiers.

Rubellius Plautus, Gaius (d. A.D. 62). Son of Julia (4) and Gaius Rubellius Blandus. Because his descent from Tiberius rendered him a potential threat to Nero, he was banished in A.D. 60 and murdered two years later.

Sabina, Vibia (d. A.D. 136/7). Daughter of Matidia and Lucius Vibius Sabinus, grand-niece of Trajan, whom Hadrian married in A.D. 100 at Plotina's urging.

Sabinus, Cornelius (d. A.D. 41). Praetorian tribune and conspirator against Gaius Caligula. He committed suicide when Claudius acceded.

Sabinus (1), Titus Flavius (c. A.D. 8–69). Elder brother of Vespasian, he had served as legate of Moesia (c. A.D. 49–56) and urban prefect for 12 years under Nero and Otho, though not continuously. He held the post again during the turmoil of A.D. 68–69 and was instrumental in convincing Vitellius to abdicate. He then was attacked by auxiliary troops of the German legions and killed with his supporters on the Capitoline.

Saloninus (d. A.D. 260). Son of the emperor Gallienus. After being named Caesar (258), he lived in Cologne to maintain imperial influence in the north. Postumus seized the city two years later to make it the capital of his newly founded Gallic Empire and promptly had the young Caesar killed.

Saturninus, Lucius Antonius (d. A.D. 89). The first senator of his family, he became commander of Upper Germany. He raised a serious revolt against Domitian, causing the emperor to leave Rome and march northward. The governor of Lower Germany, Lappius Maximus, remained loyal and defeated Saturninus's forces, killing him in the process.

Scribonianus, Lucius Arruntius Camillus (d. A.D. 42). Consul in A.D. 32 and legate of Dalmatia under Caligula and Claudius. At the instigation of Annius Vinicianus and other senators, he demanded the abdication of Claudius and announced the restoration of the republic. After four days, he was betrayed by his own soldiers and committed suicide.

Sejanus, Lucius Aelius (d. A.D. 31). Praetorian prefect and power-hungry right-hand man of Tiberius (see Lecture Nine).

Servianus, Lucius Julius Ursus (c. A.D. 47–136). Prominent military commander who married Domitia Paullina, thus becoming the brother-in-law of Hadrian. Consul *suffectus* in A.D. 90 or 93, he then served as legate of Upper Germany (A.D. 97) and legate of Upper Pannonia (A.D. 98) and held consulships in A.D. 102 and 134. When he advised against Hadrian's adoption of Lucius Aelius, the emperor ordered Servianus's death, perhaps by suicide, despite the fact that he was extremely old and ailing.

Shapur I (mid-3rd c.). The Sassanid ruler from A.D. 240–272 who made continuous raids on the Roman Empire during the 3rd-century crisis. He seized Armenia and Antioch and devastated Syria. During his third campaign into Roman territory, he kidnapped the emperor, Valerian, who remained in the king's power for the rest of his life.

Silanus (1), Gaius Junius (early 1st c. A.D.). Consul in A.D. 10 but exiled by Tiberius on account of treason charges. Brother of Silanus (2) and (5).

Silanus (2), Decimus Junius (early 1st c. A.D.). Lover of Julia, Augustus's granddaughter, who was sent into exile in A.D. 8. Brother of Silanus (1) and (5).

Silanus (3), Decimus Junius Torquatus (d. A.D. 64). Consul in A.D. 53. He was forced by Nero to commit suicide, allegedly because he boasted about his descent from Augustus. Brother of Silanus (4) and (6).

Silanus (4), Lucius Junius Torquatus (d. A.D. 49). Betrothed to Octavia (2), he accompanied Claudius to Britain and received *ornamenta triumphalia*. Later, he held the praetorship (A.D. 48) but was accused of incest with his sister (via the intrigues of Agrippina), removed from the Senate, and stripped of office. He committed suicide because of the incest charge. Brother of Silanus (3) and (6).

Silanus (5), Marcus Junius (d. A.D. 38). Consul in A.D. 15. His daughter married Caligula in 33, who then had him murdered five years later. Brother of Silanus (1) and (2).

Silanus (6), Marcus Junius Torquatus (d. A.D. 54). Consul in A.D. 46, governor in A.D. 54. Poisoned at the bidding of Agrippina because he was a great-great-grandson of Augustus, he was the first to be executed in the reign of Nero. Brother of Silanus (3) and (4).

Silius, Gaius (d. A.D. 48). Consul designate for A.D. 48, he was known as an especially good-looking young man. In the midst of a sexual affair with Messalina, the two openly celebrated a marriage while Claudius was away at Ostia. Imperial freedmen revealed the affair and prompted Claudius to act, putting the two lovers to death.

Sporus (d. A.D. 69). Slave boy who reminded Nero of Poppaea. Nero had him castrated and dressed up as a woman, and he later married Sporus in a mock ceremony. Disgraced after Nero's death, Sporus committed suicide.

Surtorius Macro (early to mid-1st c. A.D.). New Praetorian prefect secretly appointed by Tiberius to replace Sejanus in A.D. 31.

Tetricus I (late 3rd c. A.D.). Emperor of the Gallic Empire from A.D. 271–274, whereupon he surrendered to Aurelian at the battle of Châlons-sur-Marne. The Gallic Empire was reabsorbed into the Roman Empire, and Tetricus was given a minor senatorial post in Italy.

Tetricus II (late 3rd c. A.D.). Son of Tetricus I. He was the Caesar of the Gallic Empire but surrendered with his father to Aurelian in A.D. 274.

Theodora (early 4th c. A.D.). Daughter of Maximian. Married Constantius in A.D. 293.

Thrasea Paetus, Publius Clodius (d. A.D. 66). Prominent Stoic senator under Nero. Renowned for his uprightness and republican ideals, he periodically made displays of his opposition to sycophancy. Modeling his behavior on that of Cato Uticensis, he was condemned by Nero and committed suicide.

Tigellinus, Gaius Ofonius (d. A.D. 68/9). Praetorian prefect under Nero (A.D. 62). He advised the emperor in the numerous executions of the following years and helped uncover the Pisonian conspiracy, for which he was publicly rewarded in A.D. 65. After Nero's death, he was removed from office by Nymphidius Sabinus and, later, forced to commit suicide under Otho.

Tiridates (mid-1st c. A.D.). King of Armenia; crowned by Nero in A.D. 66.

Valens, Fabius (d. A.D. 69). Commander of Legion I of Lower Germany, he played a major role in the tumultuous events of A.D. 68–69. He first supported Galba, suppressing the governor Fonteius Capito; then, he urged Vitellius to claim the imperial throne, becoming a key commander in the invasion of Italy. After learning of the fall of Cremona to Antonius Primus, Valens fled to Narbonese Gaul. He was captured there and executed.

Valerius Asiaticus, Decimus (d. A.D. 47). Consul *suffectus* in A.D. 35, he publicly approved of the murder of Caligula and may have been involved in the plot. He served in Britain under Claudius, then held the consulship in A.D. 46. Denounced for treason and adultery at the instigation of Messalina, he was brought up on charges and committed suicide.

Verginius Rufus, Lucius (d. A.D. 97). Consul in A.D. 63, he later was made legate of Upper Germany (A.D. 67) and was convinced by his own troops to crush the revolt of Vindex in A.D. 68. He then refused to be hailed as emperor himself before accepting Galba as Nero's replacement. Consul for a second time under Otho, he again refused to be proclaimed emperor upon Otho's death. Nerva chose him as a colleague for consul in the year of his death.

Vindex, Gaius Julius (d. A.D. 68). Son of a Roman senator, he openly rebelled as legate of Gallia Lugdunensis, thus sparking the revolt that eventually toppled Nero in A.D. 68 and, ultimately, put Galba on the throne. He offered to support Galba as emperor and rallied tremendous support in Gaul, but Lugdunum refused to submit, and Verginius Rufus mobilized the army of Upper Germany against him. He was defeated and killed at the battle of Vesontio.

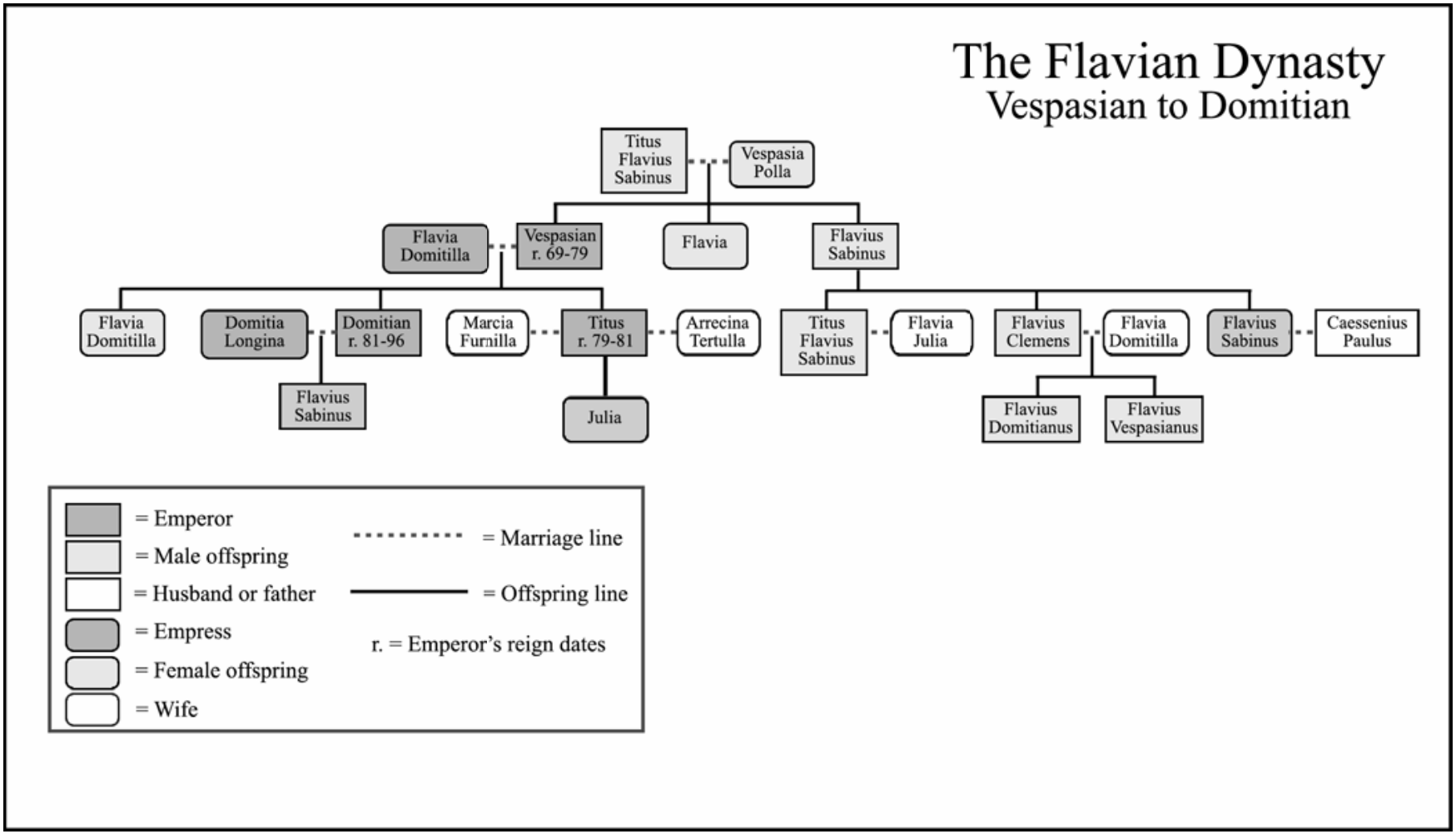
Vinicianus, Marcus Annius (d. A.D. 42). Chronic conspirator against the early emperors; acquitted of *maiestas* in 32; escaped association with plotters in the Gaetulican affair of 39; ringleader of the conspiracy to kill Caligula; finally exposed and committed suicide in the Scribonianus plot against Claudius in 42.

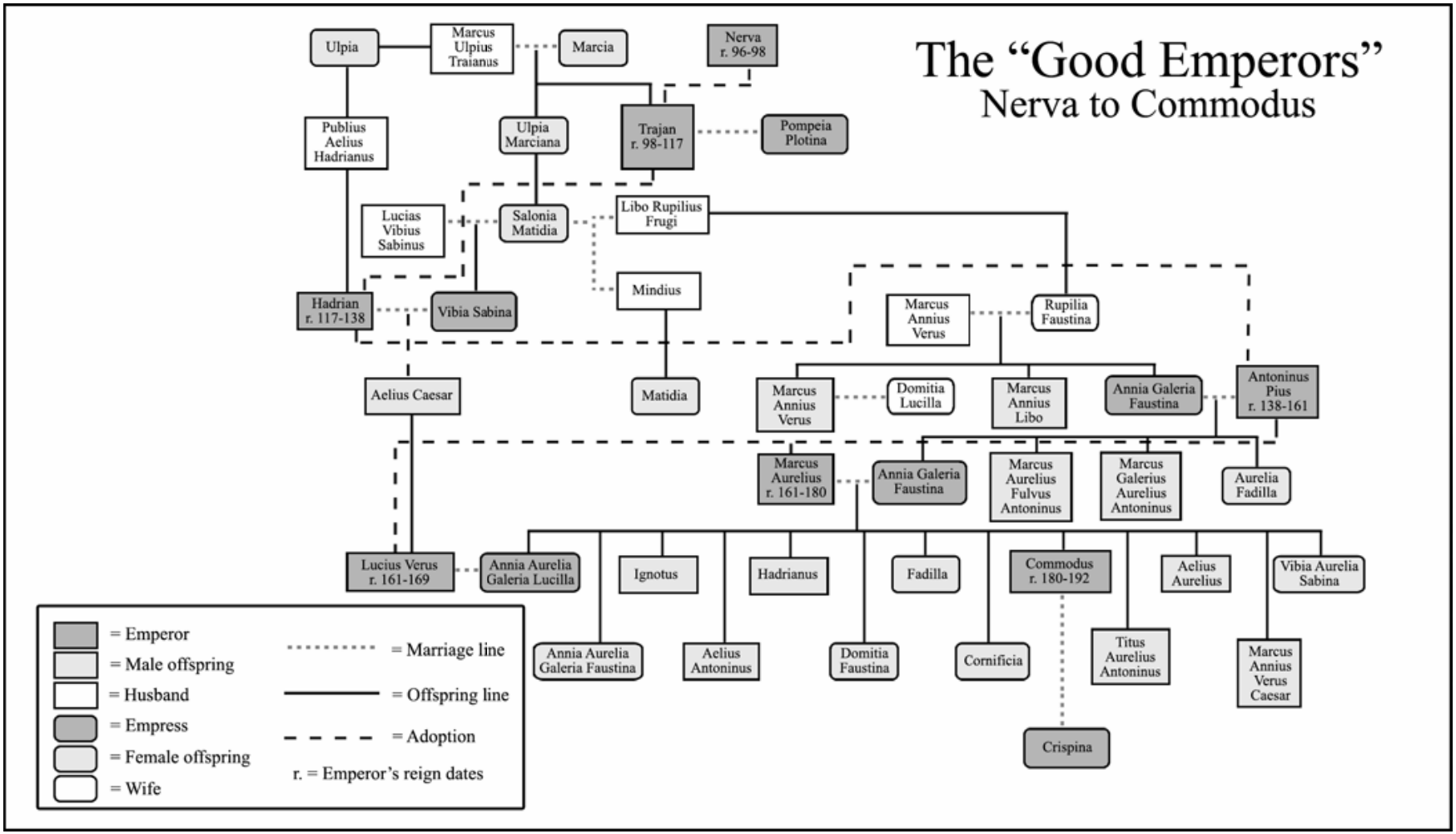
Vinius, Titus (d. A.D. 69). Imprisoned after a scandal as military tribune in Germany in A.D. 39, he was released under Claudius and made praetor. He went on to hold a proconsulship of Narbonese Gaul and later became a close adviser of Galba. He was with Galba in Spain as hostilities broke out in A.D. 68 and was designated as his colleague in the consulship of A.D. 69. He later allegedly advised the emperor to adopt Otho. Generally despised by the elite of Rome, he was murdered along with Galba by Otho's troops.

Vipsania Agrippina (d. A.D. 20). Daughter of Marcus Agrippa, married to Tiberius, mother of his son Drusus. Augustus forced Tiberius to divorce her in 12 B.C., and she then married Asinius Gallus and bore him at least five sons.

Vitellius, Lucius (d. A.D. 51/2). Extremely successful senator who held consulships in A.D. 34, 43, and 47. He allegedly preserved himself via clever deferential responses to Caligula, and he later became a prominent adviser and intimate friend of Claudius. He served as legate of Syria (A.D. 35–37), and Claudius left him in charge of Rome when away in Britain. He was also Claudius's colleague in the censorship of A.D. 47, and he cleverly supported the cause of Agrippina, acting as favorable liaison with the Senate. At his death, he was honored with a public funeral and an inscribed statue in the Forum. He was the father of the later emperor of the same name.

Zenobia (late 3rd c. A.D.). The second wife of Odenathus of Palmyra, who seized power for herself after his death in A.D. 267. She ruled under the name of her son, Vaballathus, to whom Gallienus gave the same titles given his father. After the death of Claudius in 270, she attempted to extend her power to much of Asia Minor and Egypt. Aurelian opposed her in 272, and she was captured in her own city while trying to escape. Her life was spared, and she lived out her years in a villa outside of Rome.





Emperors of Rome

Part III

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Garrett G. Fagan is Associate Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and History at Penn State University. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He received his Ph.D. from McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, and has held teaching positions at McMaster University, York University (Canada), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Davidson College, and Penn State University. In all these institutions, students have rated Professor Fagan's courses on the classical world very highly. He has also given numerous public lectures to audiences of all ages. He has appeared on the PBS series *NOVA* and recorded interviews for The History Channel, National Public Radio, and Sirius Satellite Radio.

Professor Fagan has an extensive research record in Roman history and has held a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellowship at the University of Cologne, Germany. He has published numerous articles in international journals, and his first monograph, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World* (1999), was published by the University of Michigan Press. An edited volume, *Archaeological Fantasies*, on the phenomenon of pseudoarchaeology (also known as "alternative" archaeology), appeared in 2006 with Routledge of London (U.K.). Professor Fagan is currently completing a book on spectatorship at the Roman arena and an edited volume on ancient warfare.

Table of Contents

Emperors of Rome
Part III

Emperors of Rome

Scope:

It has been claimed that the Roman emperors were the most powerful people who ever lived. At their height, they presided over a realm with footholds on three continents and a population of some 60 million souls. They had at their fingertips the wealth and resources of some of the richest lands on Earth. This course examines these emperors in all their fascinating diversity, from the enlightened and conscientious to the feckless and deranged.

The course is essentially a series of biographic portraits, from Augustus, Julius Caesar's grandnephew, to Constantine, who, in my view, was the last Roman emperor and the first medieval monarch. Along the way we will see what sort of men these emperors were. What background and training, if any, prepared them for their awesome responsibilities? What achievements can they claim? What depravities did they display? As the course progresses, we will also come to see the strengths and weaknesses of the available historical sources—how reliable they are and how skeptical we must be of many of them. We proceed chronologically and examine emperors by successive dynasty. When dynasties fail, we look at the main players in the civil wars fought to sort out who would found the next dynasty.

Aside from such issues as these, four other matters will command our attention in varying degrees as we proceed. First, what was the role of imperial women at court? From what source did they draw their power? How did they exercise that power? Second, what was the relationship of the emperor to different groups in Roman society: to the city of Rome, the provinces, the Senate, the people, and the army? How was the empire run, and what was the role of the emperor in that system? Third, linked to the second, what was the shape of the political and social system that gave the emperor his position of dominance? Finally, any serious student of history requires, at the very least, notification of where the main scholarly debates lie in a given field of study. I draw attention to some of these debates as we go along.

Our first two lectures set the stage, initially with a review of the primary sources on which such a course depends—literary sources, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological finds—followed by an examination of the political character of the Roman Republic, the soil from which the emperors sprang. The next 14 lectures address the best documented imperial dynasty, the Julio-Claudians, which started with Augustus in 31 B.C., and ended in A.D. 68 with Nero, who had so thoroughly rid himself of rivals that his death not only brought about the end of his dynasty but left a political vacuum as well.

In A.D. 69, four emperors reigned, with Vespasian finally coming to power and establishing the Flavian Dynasty, which takes us through Lecture Nineteen. The Senate's selection of Nerva in A.D. 96 set in motion another succession of

rulers, covered in Lectures Twenty through Twenty-Four, including, among others, Antoninus Pius (one of the handful of emperors to die peacefully in his bed) and the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Lecture Twenty-Five marks a transition from one era of imperial history to another, with civil war and the establishment of the Severan Dynasty in 193; Lecture Twenty-Six covers the tumultuous years that followed and the dynasty's collapse with the death of Severus Alexander in 235.

In the next five lectures, we break from the biographic and chronological path and take a thematic route, looking closely at the emperors' relationships over the decades to different entities in Roman society: the city of Rome itself, the provinces of the empire, the elite, the people, and the army. My hope is to address some issues that my focus on the lives and deeds of the individual rulers might otherwise have obscured.

We resume our chronological path with Lecture Thirty-Two, aptly named "Chaos." To illustrate how completely and quickly the situation deteriorated after the collapse of the Severan Dynasty, we need only note that in the 265 years between the rise of Augustus and the death of Severus Alexander, there were 24 legitimate emperors and 15 claimants; in the 50 years between the death of Severus Alexander in 235 and the accession of Diocletian, there were 21 legitimate emperors, 38 claimants, and 11 secessionist rulers. This lecture outlines the problems that generated this instability, then studies the reigns of four legitimate emperors as exemplars for how these problems played out during this difficult time.

Lecture Thirty-Three covers the founding of Diocletian's Tetrarchy and the reestablishment of order between 285 and 305. Lectures Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five examine the rise and reign of Constantine, whose conversion to Christianity and founding of Constantinople were to change the face of history. In my final lecture, I share some thoughts on this imperial roster and its fascinating parade of characters, examining in particular why the popular perception of "good" and "bad" emperors should be viewed with a skeptical eye and proposing that we use a different and far more accurate lens to assess the emperors of Rome.

Lecture Twenty-Five
Civil War and Septimius Severus

Scope: Commodus's assassination left a vacuum, temporarily filled by the aging senator Pertinax, whose reign lasted not three months. After he was assassinated by his own bodyguard, one of the most disgraceful events in imperial history took place in the Praetorian camp, where the guard auctioned off the emperorship to the highest bidder. The winner, the wealthy Didius Julianus, was murdered after 10 weeks in power. Septimius Severus, general of the eastern legions, had been proclaimed by his troops. Severus fought off two challengers and ushered in a naked military autocracy that would set the tone for the rest of imperial history. From now on, the emperor would be a military man, occupied with keeping external enemies at bay and staving off internal threats. In this lecture, we survey the main events of Severus's reign and examine his relationship to what came before and would come after.

Outline

I. Commodus was succeeded by Publius Helvius Pertinax, a man of 66 who hailed from the north Italian backwater of Liguria (around modern Turin and Genoa). His father was a freed slave.

- **A.** In his mid-30s Pertinax entered the army and rose rapidly through the ranks, ultimately serving as a provincial governor. In 175, he reached the suffect consulship, and in 189, he was city prefect.
- **B.** Pertinax maintained his ignorance of the plot that killed Commodus, but he was probably the intended replacement for the emperor all along. Pertinax won over the soldiers with promises of money and was presented to the Senate as the soldiers' choice.
- **C.** Pertinax sent his son and daughter away from Rome, ostensibly to prevent his son from becoming too accustomed to imperial power.
- **D.** The treasury was depleted, and Pertinax could not raise enough money to pay the donative to the Praetorians.
- **E.** On 28 March 193, a band of 200 soldiers burst into the palace, brandishing their swords. As Pertinax was addressing the men, one of them struck the emperor with his sword. The rest then finished him off.
- **F.** The instability of the times undermined Pertinax's efforts to return to a civil emperorship.

II. Because Pertinax had no clear successor, two candidates for the throne presented themselves: Titus Flavius Sulpicianus, the father-in-law of Pertinax, and Marcus Didius Severus Julianus, a gluttonous and affluent senator.

A. The two men engaged in a disgraceful bidding war for the loyalty of the troops at the Praetorian camp. In this way, the empire was effectively auctioned off, with Julianus as the winner.

B. The new emperor, surrounded by his troops, then went to the Senate. The terrified senators had no choice but to confirm Julianus.

III. After Pertinax's murder, three armed candidates also arose to press their claims, including Decimus Clodius Albinus in Britain, Lucius Pescennius Niger in Syria, and Lucius Septimius Severus in Pannonia, along the Danube.

A. Of these, Severus was in the most threatening position militarily. He immediately wrote to Albinus and offered him the title Caesar and the succession if Albinus supported Severus. Albinus accepted the offer, allowing Severus to focus on seizing Rome and confronting Niger.

B. Severus, born on 11 April 146, had been raised in the African town of Lepcis Magna in Tripolitania (modern Libya). His family was of equestrian status, fully Romanized, and owned estates in Tuscany.

1. Dio's description, corroborated by portraits and statues, reveals Severus to have been an intense and intelligent man.

2. In 187, he married a striking easterner, Julia Domna. She was to prove a formidable political agent and, within two years, had given Severus two sons, Septimius Bassianus and Septimius Geta.

3. Severus's career was advanced in the 170s and 180s. By 191, he was governor of Upper Pannonia.

C. On 9 April 193, Severus was saluted as emperor by his troops. His political persona as avenger of Pertinax secured the loyalties of legions along the Rhine-Danube frontier that Pertinax had previously commanded. Severus, with 16 legions behind him, styled himself Imperator Caesar Lucius Septimius Severus Pertinax Augustus.

D. As preparations were underway for the march on Rome, Severus received word of Pescennius Niger's elevation by the troops in Syria. The Roman world was realigning around these two men, while Didius Julianus, the official emperor, was sidelined.

E. Severus's soldiers were on the borders of Italy within weeks. Julianus made attempts to fortify Rome and sent ambassadors to the northern armies, to no avail. The emperor was butchered in his palace on 1 June.

F. Severus was 50 miles from Rome when he heard of Julianus's death. He greeted an embassy of 100 senators in full battle dress, surrounded by his bodyguard of 600 loyalists. He replaced the Praetorians with a new guard of Severan loyalists.

IV. The overtly military tone of Severus's entrance into Rome was worrisome. Roman citizens also felt the threat of civil war with Niger. Severus

appeared before the Senate, shadowed by armed men. Pertinax was deified, and Severus's adoption of his name was made official.

V. Then, proclaiming that he was off to a new Parthian war, Severus raised three new legions and headed east. His real target was Pescennius Niger, now based at Byzantium (modern Istanbul).

A. Niger began offensive operations as Severus arrived to take command. The decisive confrontation took place at Issos in the borderlands between Syria and Asia Minor in the spring of 194. Severus's general secured victory, and Niger fled to Antioch, where he was killed.

B. Severus then pressed on with his stated Parthian war. He probably hoped to extend Rome's eastern frontiers, following Trajan's example.

C. Far more important than annexing new territory are two related actions taken by Severus in this period.

1. First, he tied himself more firmly to the defunct Antonine Dynasty by falsely claiming to be the son of Marcus Aurelius.

2. Then, in 195, Severus renamed his eldest son Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. This, too, tied Severus to the Antonines. But Severus also named this son Caesar, revealing his dynastic intentions.

3. Clodius Albinus in Britain had previously been bought off with the title Caesar and the promise of succession. Severus now declared Clodius a public enemy, and in response, Clodius proclaimed himself Augustus. A new civil war loomed.

VI. Albinus's strongholds were Britain, Gaul, and Spain. In the fall of 196, Severus headed north to confront Albinus.

A. Severus defeated the forces of Albinus in February 197 outside Lugdunum (modern Lyons), and Albinus committed suicide. Severan loyalists fanned out to hunt down the supporters of Albinus, and many executions followed.

B. When Severus returned to Rome, matters were no better. Some 64 of the 600 senators were arrested; 35 were released, but the rest were summarily executed.

VII. After securing his position by defeating Niger and Albinus, Severus spent many of the following years on campaign or traveling the frontier provinces.

A. Late in 197, the Parthians retaliated for his aggression in 195, and the emperor set out in the fall to deal with the problem.

B. His plan was to destroy the Parthian state. He quickly took the capital city Ctesiphon in modern Iraq and claimed the title Parthicus Maximus.

C. Severus named as Augustus his eldest son, the nine-year-old Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla). The younger son, Geta, became Caesar.

D. In 202, Severus took the consulship with the 13-year-old Caracalla as colleague.

E. Severus then proceeded to the North African coast. In his hometown, masses of dedications to Severus and his family have been found.

VIII. The emperor spent the following five years in Rome and Italy, the longest period an emperor would spend in Rome for decades to come.

A. In response to his return, the massive Arch of Septimius Severus was dedicated in the Forum in 203.

B. These years were relatively peaceful. In 205, Caracalla and Geta Caesar were consuls. Unfortunately, their rivalry descended into mutual hatred.

C. Also in 205, the Praetorian prefect Plautianus, a close adviser of Severus, was suddenly executed. The sources attribute his death to the machinations of Caracalla, who hated his wife, Plautilla, Plautianus's daughter. Caracalla divorced her, and she was banished to an island.

IX. News now arrived of unrest in Britain, and the 63-year-old Severus led an expedition there early in 208. He seems to have wanted to subjugate the entire island, but he failed, amidst serious loss of Roman life.

A. The rigors of camp life and the northern climate finally took their toll on Severus. On 4 February 211, he perished at Eboracum (York).

B. Severus was Rome's first truly provincial emperor and a product of his times: a military man, direct, and ruthless. Such a ruler may have been needed to handle the increasingly unstable conditions facing the empire, but it made Severus a terrifying man to deal with.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 74–77.

Herodian, *History of the Empire*, books 2–3.

Augustan History (*HA*), *Pertinax*, *Niger*, *Albinus*, *Severus*.

Birley, *Septimius Severus*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Pertinax," "Severus."

Questions to Consider:

1. Was the regime of Pertinax doomed from the outset? What similarities and differences do you identify between him and Nerva?

2. Was Severus a successful emperor? For that matter what, in your view, constituted "success" for an emperor?

Lecture Twenty-Six
Caracalla and the Severan Dynasty

Scope: Caracalla, the elder son of Severus, found sharing power intolerable and soon had his young brother murdered to assume sole rule. His reign devolved into tyranny and ended in his assassination after only seven years. After a brief interlude in 217–218, when the Praetorian prefect Macrinus seized power, the Severan Dynasty reemerged but proved no less oppressive than its founder. The strange emperor Elagabalus was succeeded by the boy Severus Alexander, who was killed by his own troops on campaign in 235. We also consider the immensely powerful Severan women, such as Julia Domna and Julia Mamaea, and their prominent roles in imperial politics in this era.

Outline

I. Caracalla, Severus's eldest son, was born on 4 April 188 at Lugdunum. The advancement his sons enjoyed suggests that Severus saw Caracalla as succeeding him, with Geta, Caracalla's brother, then succeeding Caracalla.

A. But this arrangement was not to be. What may have started out as competitive rivalry between the siblings deepened into implacable hatred as the two emerged into early manhood.

B. Toward the end of his life, Severus may also have had doubts about Caracalla's ability to rule, as evidenced by the sudden elevation of Geta, late in 209 or 210, to the level of Augustus. This move made Geta joint emperor with both Severus and Caracalla.

C. In the months following Severus's death in February 211, a power struggle developed between the fraternal co-emperors. Peace was hastily patched up with the British, and both men headed back to Rome.

D. Late in 211, Caracalla, with military backing, had his brother murdered in their mother's arms. Record of Geta's existence was erased from all public monuments, and a brutal purge of his supporters was undertaken.

E. The sources are rife with Caracalla's excesses while in power. The reign is noteworthy for three details.

1. First, Caracalla increased military pay, which put great pressure on the treasury.

2. Second, in 212, to widen the empire's tax base, he declared all freeborn inhabitants of the empire citizens of Rome. This move, the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, more fully integrated the empire into

a single political entity and ended the millennium-old distinction between Roman citizens and others.

3. Third, in 215, he oversaw the construction of a vast, new public bathhouse in Rome, which we will look at in the next lecture.

F. Word of instability in the Parthian realm sent Caracalla east in 214, where he was based for the rest of his reign.

1. In almost three centuries of conflict, Rome never hit on the right military and political formula to destroy the Parthian state entirely.
2. However, the Severan incursions contributed to the Parthian Empire's ultimate collapse at the hands of Persian usurpers in the following decade—with catastrophic results for Rome.

G. Caracalla relied on naked military force as the basis of his rule. In the winter of 215/16, he traveled to Alexandria to visit the tomb of Alexander the Great; his entrance to the city was marked not by celebration but by the violence of his own soldiers.

H. In April 217, the prefect Marcus Opellius Macrinus, one of his Praetorians, took preemptive action when he learned that the emperor had him slated for execution. On 8 April 217, four days after his 29th birthday, Caracalla was stabbed to death by a guardsman.

I. The verdict on Caracalla is harsh. His extension of citizenship in 212 was his most abiding reform, along with the increase in army pay. But this last move shouldered the empire with an economic burden.

II. With Caracalla gone, Macrinus was saluted as emperor by the army of the east on 11 April 217. Born c. 165, he was the first emperor of Rome who was not of senatorial status. He spent his entire reign in the east.

A. Seeking to disengage and secure his domestic political position, Macrinus first sent conciliatory messages to the Parthians, but they smelled weakness and raised an army. Macrinus moved to counter them and, in May 217, suffered a major defeat near Nisibis in Mesopotamia.

B. Following this defeat, Macrinus bought the Parthians off in the winter of 217, but rather than going to Rome to secure his position, he dallied in Antioch. He secured for his eight-year-old son the rank of senator, elevation to Caesar, and the title *Princeps Iuventutis*.

C. As his regime came under increasing pressure, the women of the Severan Dynasty swung into action.

III. Severus had married Julia Domna in 187. She hailed from Emesa in Syria, a longtime ally of Rome, and her father had been a high priest.

A. Domna was deeply involved in court politics.

B. Domna's relationship with Caracalla frayed following the murder of Geta in 211. In 217, she starved herself to death.

C. Macrinus feared the influence of Julia Maesa, Domna's sister, in the capital and compelled her to leave in 217.

D. Withdrawing to Emesa, Maesa began plotting revolt, aided by her daughters, Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea. As Macrinus's regime tottered, Maesa looked to her 15-year-old grandson, Soaemias's eldest, Marius Avitus Bassianus (known as Elagabalus). Maesa, with the backing of the aristocracy, represented this youth as Caracalla's son.

E. On 15 May 218, a legion camped outside Emesa proclaimed Elagabalus emperor under the name Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

IV. The revolt soon spread in the east.

A. On 8 June 218, Macrinus faced Elagabalus in battle and was again defeated. He fled north into Asia Minor but was captured and killed.

B. The new emperor, Elagabalus, arrived in the city in the summer of 219.

C. In the quest for an heir to help stabilize his regime, Elagabalus married five women in quick succession. No children were produced, probably because the emperor was openly homosexual.

D. We read of four attempted usurpations of Elagabalus in the east, probably in the years 219 and 220. Even though his mother stuck by him, his grandmother began to consider other options.

1. In June 221, Maesa persuaded the childless emperor to adopt as Caesar and P*rinceps Iuventutis* his cousin, the 12-year-old Marcus Aurelius Alexander, better known as Severus Alexander.

2. For the next nine months, confusion gripped the capital. Elagabalus's authority had all but collapsed, and more influence was flowing in the direction of Maesa, Mamaea, and Alexander.

3. Elagabalus attempted to have Alexander murdered, but when the plot was revealed, Maesa struck back immediately. On 11 March 222, Elagabalus was murdered, along with his mother, Soaemias.

V. Severus Alexander was only 13 years old when he came to power. His reign was marked by the quite open rule of his mother, Julia Mamaea, and his grandmother Julia Maesa (until her death in 223 or 224).

A. We should note here that for the reign of Severus Alexander, we must rely on the evidence of the *Augustan History* and of Herodian.

B. Following the brutality of Caracalla, the absenteeism of Macrinus, and the strangeness of Elagabalus, Alexander's was a stable regime.

C. In the 220s, the Parthian state was overthrown by one of its vassals in the old Persian heartland of Iran. This new dynasty, dubbed Sassanid, looked back to the glory days of the Achaemenid Persian Empire.

1. The Sassanids reclaimed the old Persian lands as their own, including much of the Roman east. Persian incursions began late in the 220s, and by 231, the emperor's presence was required.
2. The Persians were checked, but the settlement of 233 was not definitive. The stage was set for four more centuries of conflict among Persia, Rome, and the Roman successor state in the east, Byzantium.

D. In the north, Germanic tribes were threatening the Rhineland.

E. In February of 235, Alexander bought off the Germans for a reputedly vast sum. The soldiers were incensed at this show of weakness, mutinied, and murdered Severus Alexander and Mamaea.

F. With Alexander's successor, Gaius Julius Verus Maximinus, the history of the emperors of Rome takes a new turn; for the next century or more, army officers dominate the imperial roster and preside over a period of almost complete chaos

VI. Under the Severans, in just 50 years, the character of the Principate changed from that of a civic office purportedly responsive to the needs of the public to a military one openly responsive to the needs of the army.

A. With the Severans, the Augustan concept of the emperor as *princeps* was eroded in favor of a new model: the emperor as *dominus*, a lord over subservient subjects, a ruler to be obeyed without question.

B. The Severans tore away the last remnants of the Augustan curtain of civility to reveal the naked military autocracy behind it.

Essential Reading:

Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, books 78–80.

Herodian, *History of the Empire*, books 4–6.

HA, *Caracalla*, *Macrinus*, *Elagabalus*, *Severus Alexander*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Caracalla," "Macrinus," "Elagabalus," "Severus Alexander."

Levick, *Julia Domna*.

Potter, *Roman Empire at Bay*, pp. 125–172.

Southern, *Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*, pp. 37–63.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which Severans do you think were the most active in the militarization of imperial politics, and why?
2. How would you compare the power of the women of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty with that of the women of the Severan Dynasty?

Lecture Twenty-Seven
Emperor and City

Scope: We pause in our narrative to examine, over the course of five lectures, related themes pertaining to the emperors, their activities, and their relations with different groups. First, we examine the emperors and the city of Rome. The special relationship of the emperor to the capital city of the realm is reflected in the adornment of Rome by successive emperors. Each erected increasingly vast structures, most of them public amenities. As examples, we look at the complex of imperial fora and the sequence of huge public bathhouses from Agrippa to Diocletian. We also examine the political aspects of such huge building programs, as well as their social and economic implications.

Outline

I. Over the course of the next five lectures, we will pause in our chronological narrative to consider some thematic topics relating to the emperors, beginning with the emperor's relationship to the city of Rome.

A. Rome is the largest urban archaeological park on the planet. Large tracts of real estate in modern Rome are occupied by the remains of the ancient metropolis, attributable, for the most part, to the emperors.

B. Such monuments as the Colosseum, the Forum Romanum, and the Pantheon are the work of emperors, as much expressions of their personal majesty as the grandeur of the Roman Empire itself.

C. By the mid-4th century B.C., Rome had a seven-mile circuit of stone fortifications and a population of, perhaps, 30,000. For most of the Principate, Rome housed a population of about 1 million.

D. Little from the earlier eras survives. The most prominent remains of the republic include some temples in the region of Forum Boarium near the Tiber and four victory temples in the Largo Argentina.

E. The most spectacular structure of republican Rome was the vast Temple of Jupiter Best and Greatest on the Capitol, the so-called Capitolium.

1. The original temple presented a face of plaster, mud brick, wood, and painted terracotta decoration, but almost nothing of this version survives.

2. The restored version of the temple after a fire in A.D. 80 stood unmolested for centuries until neglect and stone robbers caused its final deterioration. By the 16th century, it had all but vanished.

3. From humble beginnings, the Capitolium grew into an imposing monument under the sponsorship of the emperors.

II. The main forum in Rome, the Forum Romanum, evolved organically over several centuries. It contained an open piazza (or square), temples, large buildings called *basilicas* for judicial and commercial activities, commemorative monuments, and the Senate house.

A. In the closing decades of the 1st century B.C., Caesarism recast this hallowed ground in its own image. A visitor to the main piazza in A.D. 10 would be entirely surrounded by monuments to the Caesars.

B. Caesar, Augustus, and successive emperors down to Trajan also constructed a series of fora on land north of the Forum Romanum.

C. The first planned forum, begun by Julius Caesar in 54 B.C. and completed in 29 B.C. by Augustus, featured a Temple of Venus Genetrix, or Venus the Mother-Ancestor, from whom the family of the Julii claimed descent.

D. After the defeat of Caesar's murderers and their senatorial allies at the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., the young Augustus (then Octavian) vowed a Temple to Mars Ultor, the Avenger. This eventually became the centerpiece of the Forum of Augustus, which opened in 2 B.C.

E. Vespasian's temple to peace was set in a square precinct that came to be used as a forum. This space was dedicated in A.D. 75 and is sometimes called the Forum of Peace. The complex held the *Forma Urbis Romae* ("Plan of the City of Rome"), a map of the city carved into marble blocks. About 1,000 fragments of this map survive as a vital source of information about the ancient city's topography in the Severan age.

F. The Forum of Nerva was begun by Domitian and opened in A.D. 98. The temple here was dedicated to Minerva.

G. The Forum of Trajan, which we saw earlier, was dedicated in 112 and funded by spoils from the Dacian wars. Designed by Apollodorus of Damascus, this complex marked the culmination of forum-building.

H. The sequence of imperial fora represents in microcosm much of the emperors' building activities in Rome. Ostensibly, the constructions served the needs of the public, supplementing the commercial, judicial, and sacred spaces of the ancient Forum with new additions.

1. However, successive emperors sought to outdo their predecessors by erecting larger or more luxurious structures.

2. Each monument conveyed messages important to its builder.

I. All these structures were built at the emperor's personal expense or with spoils stripped from foreign foes in war. They spoke of the power of the Roman state but also of the munificence and majesty of its ruler.

III. The large public baths opened in the late 20s or early teens by Marcus Agrippa marked a departure in Rome's long history of public bathing facilities.

A. Although the baths were technically the product of Agrippa's personal generosity, Agrippa's close association with the new regime effectively put the facility within the ambit of the Augustan order.

B. Sometime in the early 60s of our era, Nero opened a Greek-influenced gymnasium in the same region of the city as the Baths of Agrippa.

C. Titus seems to have opened the baths of Nero's Golden House to the public in 80.

D. Trajan opened a vast bathing complex on the Esquiline Hill in 109, and in 216, Caracalla opened a suite of baths, equaling Trajan's fabulous facility in scale and decorative luxury.

E. The last great set of public baths at Rome was built by Diocletian (Lecture Thirty-Three) and opened in 305 or 306.

F. The imperial baths sent strong messages to the Roman people, and because bathing was part of the daily routine, these messages were absorbed more regularly than would be the case in the theater or circus.

1. The scale and luxury of the buildings spoke to the emperor's wealth; their openness to the people, his generosity; and the imported marbles reflected the vastness of the Roman Empire.

2. That the baths tamed the threatening elements of fire and water for the pleasure of the Roman people also testified to the emperor's power to curtail the menacing forces of nature.

IV. According to Tacitus, after A.D. 22, all public construction in Rome was the prerogative of the emperor alone. There were both symbolic and practical reasons for this monopoly.

A. In the symbolic sphere, until the centrality of Rome in imperial affairs began to diminish (already starting under Marcus Aurelius), vast and luxurious imperially funded structures at Rome were seen as physical manifestations of the empire's glory and greatness.

B. The pragmatic reason for the emperor's monopoly on public construction was that it pumped money into the local economy and provided employment for artisans and laborers. To appreciate this point, we need to briefly review the Roman building industry.

1. In the days of the republic, public building at Rome had been conducted by magistrates (often the censors) letting out contracts to private companies to carry out the work. State officials then supervised the construction and approved the finished product.

2. In the late republic, increasingly powerful individuals contesting for preeminence, such as Caesar or Pompey, used public building for self-glorification as much as for public utility.

3. Augustus placed a premium on public construction, as reflected in the *Res Gestae*. Eventually, the emperor took on sole responsibility

for public construction by appointing curators of roads, aqueducts, and public works. These were put under a centralized office created by Domitian, the *opera Caesaris,* although private contractors continued to be central to public construction.

4. The tomb of Quintus Haterius, from a family of builders, is on display in the Vatican Museums. The tomb depicts construction activities featuring a crane and such monuments as the Colosseum and the Arch of Titus.
5. Large-scale construction also offered benefits to suppliers of wood, stone, metals, and tools and to skilled artisans.
6. The engineer and classical archaeologist Janet DeLaine of Oxford University has calculated that excavating the foundations of the Baths of Caracalla probably required 1,000 men working seven days a week for nearly six months.

V. Public building was a winning situation for all concerned: The commoners were paid to erect the structures and enjoyed them once completed, while the emperor benefited from the goodwill this employment generated and the symbolic power manifested by the finished project.

Essential Reading:

Anderson, *Roman Architecture and Society*.

Coulston and Dodge, *Ancient Rome*.

Supplementary Reading:

Aicher, *Rome Alive.*

Richardson, *New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did emperors insist on monopolizing public construction at Rome? Why was it in their interests to do so? How central do you think public works were to the emperor's program?
2. Do you think that imperial construction at Rome reflected a genuine concern for the welfare of the populace on the part of the emperor, or was it a vast exercise in propaganda?

Lecture Twenty-Eight
Emperor and Empire

Scope: We next consider the question of the emperor's position in relation to the wider empire. How could an empire as vast and diverse as Rome's survive the mismanagement of the likes of Caligula, Nero, Commodus, or Elagabalus? The secret lay in the unique, decentralized administrative structures the Romans employed in running their realm. Imperial administration comprised a hierarchy of authority levels, each capable of functioning independently of the other. From municipal authorities at the ground level, to representatives of the emperor's power at the provincial level, to the emperor himself at the top, the empire was largely able to run itself. The degree of the emperor's involvement in administrative affairs was mostly a personal choice. If the ruler chose to devote himself to private proclivities or vent his paranoia on the ruling classes, it mattered little to the rest of the empire. Civil wars were destabilizing, of course, but largely localized in their impact. The emperor, then, was little more than a figurehead, a man few Romans ever saw in the flesh and fewer dealt with directly.

Outline

I. In this lecture, we turn to the emperor's relationship to the wider empire.

- **A.** Two stories, one about Augustus and one about Hadrian, reflect different aspects of the emperor's relationship with the provinces.
  - **1.** Suetonius tells us that in the last days of his reign, Augustus was hailed by the passengers and crew on a ship from Alexandria. They attributed their safety, liberty, and prosperity to the emperor.
  - **2.** Dio tells us that as Hadrian was in public at one time, a woman called out a request to him, and he replied, "I don't have time." When she responded, "Then stop being emperor," Hadrian promptly turned around and heard her request.
- **B.** The story about Augustus shows that provincials saw the emperor as the guarantor of their lives, liberty, and prosperity, and in the case of Augustus, they were right. He had put an end to a century of uncertainty and mayhem, and his reign heralded a long period of stability.
- **C.** The story about Hadrian reflects the ancient view that rulers should be responsive to the needs of their subjects. It also echoes the essentially civic nature of the Roman Principate at its height: The emperor was a resource available even to his lowliest subjects.
  - **1.** Recall some of the emperors we have seen thus far, such as Nero, who left Italy only once during his 14-year reign, or Antoninus

Pius, who never left Italy. How responsive could they have been to provincial concerns? What about Caligula or Commodus, whose private obsessions clearly trumped all matters of state?

2. For that matter, how could provincials interact with the distant figure of the emperor? In short, what was the relationship of the emperor to the empire he ruled, a realm of some 60 million souls?

II. To answer these questions we need to survey how the Roman Empire was governed, both in the republic and under the Principate.

A. The republic was dominated by an oligarchy of noble families sitting in the Senate. As the empire grew in size, the Romans adapted the organs of their city-state administration to the needs of their growing dominion.

B. Under this system, the commanders in the field governed the provinces assigned to them. Initially, as the number of provinces grew, the Romans increased the number of officials, but then they began to extend the command (*imperium*) of consuls and praetors, restricting it to a certain area, termed a *provincia*.

C. Under this arrangement, a consul became a proconsul and a praetor became a propraetor. Under the republic, promagistrates usually held office for one year following their stints as consul or praetor. Governorships were short-term, and turnover was rapid.

D. There was no viable way to oversee the performance of a governor, especially in Rome's distant provinces; thus, the proconsuls were practically kings in their provinces. In the late republic, some governors saw their provinces as sources of income to fund their domestic political battles. Documented cases of such abuse are rare, but it's true that provincial governors under the republic were largely autonomous.

E. Under Augustus, the old system of proconsuls appointed by the Senate continued in the unarmed *public provinces*, but for the rest, Augustus appointed propraetorian deputies as representatives of his vast proconsular *imperium*. These were trusted administrators who usually stayed in office for several years at a time.

F. The advancement of any governor, whether a legate of Augustus or a senatorial proconsul, depended on keeping the emperor happy. In this way, the Principate systematized and improved the administration of the empire.

G. Another way to control subject territory was through the use of client kings. These were local potentates, mostly in the east, who were confirmed in their authority by the emperor. As time wore on, client kingdoms were increasingly turned into provinces, reflecting a desire to centralize authority around the person of the emperor. By the mid- to

late 2nd century, client kings had largely vanished in favor of direct rule by provincial governors.

III. Despite the ideal of open access, the vast majority of the empire's population would never see an emperor in the flesh.

A. Technically, all citizens had a right to appeal to the emperor to have their grievances heard or to seek privileges. This right was dealt with in several ways.

1. First, local business was restricted to localities. Town councils constituted from the local gentry and elected magistrates were set up at the city level. In most Roman communities in the west, the chief local magistrates were called *duumviri iure dicundo*, or "dual mayors for administering justice." The magistrates heard matters involving minor crimes.

2. In more serious cases, such as murder or sedition, the imperial governor stepped in. Governors usually held assizes in their provinces or heard cases in their provincial capital cities. Serious matters might be settled in these hearings, but if the defendant was a Roman citizen, he had the right to appeal to the emperor himself.

3. In that case, the matter was dispatched to Rome, as famously happened to Paul of Tarsus in the late 50s A.D. He was arrested following a disturbance outside the Temple in Jerusalem and sent to the provincial capital of Caesarea. He was held there for two years before being sent on to Rome for a hearing before Nero.

B. People also petitioned the emperor for help with local disasters, tax relief, arbitration of disputes, or to gain favors and privileges.

1. In these cases, an embassy was usually dispatched by a community to the emperor. One of the emperor's main secretaries, called *a petitionibus*, was tasked with screening requests for audiences.

2. Because the process of gaining access to the emperor could take months or even years, the embassy was usually staffed by the local gentry. The inscription honoring Quintus Cornelius Zosimus in modern Arles in France attests to the fact that most embassies represented a considerable investment of time and energy.

3. In another text, from about the year 185, the governor of Syria directs that no soldiers or civilians shall billet themselves by force in the homes of a certain village. An embassy from the village had probably appeared before the governor with this complaint.

C. The personal interaction of an embassy was how imperial business with the provinces was conducted. Provincial inscriptions that record buildings constructed or restored at imperial expense are probably the result of an embassy from the local community.

D. Thus, the emperor remained a remote figure to most of his subjects. The embassy system ensured that he would deal mostly with those of higher socioeconomic standing and only rarely encounter the commoners.

IV. The quality of the governors varied greatly.

A. Pliny the Younger spent his last years as a special imperial envoy to the province of Bithynia-Pontus on the northern shore of Asia Minor, modern Turkey. His naturally conscientious and diligent nature generated the unusual frequency of his correspondence with Trajan.

B. Most governors spent their time in the provinces unsupervised, and naturally, less care was taken in making appointments to lesser provinces. The tales Josephus tells about the procurators of Judaea offer a case in point. Their gross mismanagement led to the Great Revolt of A.D. 66.

1. Under Augustus, Judaea had been administered as a client-kingdom by Herod the Great, but in A.D. 6, it came under direct imperial rule. The province was subordinated to the imperial legate of Syria and administered by procurators, low-level equestrian officials.

2. Procurators usually ran imperial property in the provinces or acted as assistants to propraetorian legates, but in minor provinces, they were employed as governors. Between A.D. 6 and 66, when the Great Revolt erupted, 12 such procurators were assigned to Judaea.

3. Josephus presents the rule of the procurators as a series of public relations catastrophes that, when combined with religious fanaticism in Judaea, led to the Great Revolt.

4. Under Coponius, the first procurator, a man named Judas appeared proclaiming that payment of taxes to Rome constituted blasphemy. The incident, though minor, was a sign of things to come.

5. The fifth procurator, Pontius Pilatus, better known as Pontius Pilate, touched off at least two significant protests by the Jews, one for displaying Roman standards and one for taking money from a sacred Temple treasury to build an aqueduct.

6. After a brief interlude of peace, matters worsened under Publius Ventidius Cumanus (48–52). At a Passover festival in Jerusalem, one of the soldiers insulted the crowd, inciting a riot. Cumanus ordered his troops out in full battle gear, and a panicked flight claimed tens of thousands of lives, according to Josephus.

7. Spiraling religious and ethnic disorder now began to engulf the region, and problems continued for the final four procurators of Judaea, before the Great Revolt broke out.

C. In any given year, more than 160 officials held office in the provinces, and we hear almost nothing about the majority of them. Gross incompetence and criminality must have been rare.

V. Each layer of Roman provincial administration, from the municipal level, through the governor and his staff, and up to the emperor, represented a self-contained stratum of authority.

A. Each stratum could deal independently with those issues that fell under its purview, but if a larger issue came up, it was pushed to the next level. In this way, most business never reached the emperor.

B. Most business got done at the local level, and provincial administration was limited in its aims.

C. The provincial staff was drawn from a governor's circle of friends and dependents and termed his *amici* (friends) or *comites* (companions), so, the administration of the Roman Empire under the Principate was a vast exercise in patronage. As long as the municipal and provincial administrators did their jobs, no input from the emperor was needed.

D. However, as the one who appointed provincial administrators, as the figurehead around which the empire's ideology was organized, and as the ultimate court of appeal, the emperor was central to the enterprise. This is the core paradox of the emperor's relationship with the empire he governed: He was at once central and peripheral to it.

Essential Reading:

Aelius Aristides, *Oration* 26 ("To Rome").

Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18–20; *The Jewish War*, book 2.

Pliny, *Epistles*, book 10.

Supplementary Reading:

Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty*.

Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, especially pp. 5–40.

Millar, *The Roman Empire and Its Neighbors*, especially pp. 1–103.

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Rome's provincial administrative system efficient? Was it designed to be efficient? If not, what agenda underlay it?

2. How useful do you rate Pliny's letters to Trajan as sources for Roman imperial administration in the provinces? How much stock, if any, can we put in them for what was typical?

Lecture Twenty-Nine
Emperor and Elite

Scope: The running of the provinces, as surveyed in the last lecture, was among the most important tasks of the imperial elite and one of the prominent ways in which members of the elite served the emperor. In this lecture, we look at the groups who constituted the elite, focusing on the senators and the equestrians. We will see how the traditional role of the Senate changed from the republic to the Principate, what strategies senators used for adapting to their new role under an autocrat, and how the imperial Senate conducted its business. We will also survey the equestrian class, whose members enjoyed a greatly enhanced public profile and more prestigious careers under the Principate. The Roman elite was obsessed with the struggle for rank, and the emperor determined the winners in that struggle by the offices he dispensed.

Outline

I. For the period covered by this course, the term *elite* denotes three groups who met certain legally determined property qualifications for membership.

A. The most important group was the senators, or *ordo senatorius*, numbering around 600 men. Next came the *equites*, or *ordo equester*, equestrians or Roman knights. Finally, the decurions, or *ordo decurionum*, were the local landed gentry.

B. Only senators were required to spend long periods in the emperor's immediate ambit. Because the property qualification was lower for equestrians, this group had a larger, more amorphous membership.

C. The decurional and equestrian orders often overlapped in membership. The local equestrians and the decurions rarely dealt directly with the emperor, unless he traveled to their communities or they embarked on an embassy to bring some local concern to his attention.

II. The Senate was the home of the wealthiest, best educated, and most experienced commanders, politicians, priests, and administrators in the state.

A. Amidst intense competition for the higher magistracies and most prestigious army commands, it was widely held that no one senator ought to be better than any other or rise too high above his peers for too long. The senators of the republic regarded the prospect of autocracy with horror.

B. It is no small irony, then, that for the final 600 years of its existence, the Senate had to accommodate itself to an autocrat in the form of the

emperor. The political landscape shifted when the multipolar republic, in which authority was dispersed among competing oligarchs, ceded to the unipolar Principate, where all authority flowed from a single source.

C. Naturally, the traditional role of the Senate changed with this transition, from being the final arbiter of state business to being a pool of administrative assistants working at the behest of a higher power.

D. The Senate's new role is exemplified by the *consilium principis*, the private council of the emperor—a group of senators who served at the emperor's request.

III. The central dilemma of being a senator under an emperor was a structural one, created by the essential disconnect between the ideology of the Principate and its realities. Officially, the *princeps* was little more than a senator. In reality, of course, he was an all-powerful autocrat.

A. What could the senators do, for instance, when the emperor secluded himself (like Tiberius) or went insane (like Commodus)? Even dealing with good emperors could present dilemmas.

B. By the time the Julio-Claudian Dynasty had produced Tiberius and the vile Sejanus, Caligula, Claudius, or Nero, only the most naïve could have harbored any doubts about the autocratic nature of the Principate. What could the Senate do in its revised role under the new order?

1. Many senators chose complicity and compliance, largely because the alternative was worse.

2. Senators might be disillusioned or disgusted by specific emperors or even by a dynasty, but opposition tended to focus on who might replace an incumbent rather than what might replace the system.

3. There were also practical reasons for acquiescing to the emperors. Given the patronage system in ancient Rome, any senator who sought advancement could do so only with the emperor's support.

4. In contrast, the stakes of opposition were high: A man who challenged the emperor either became the next emperor or was killed. Senators faced stark choices: They could advance to the highest offices; oppose the regime and likely die; concentrate on their duties, rein in the inclination to sycophancy, and avoid imperial entanglements; or keep a low profile.

C. Sejanus and other prominent advisers illustrate the first strategy.

1. These men gained influence by virtue of their intimacy with the *princeps*; they were widely despised but perceived as untouchable. The example of Gaius Fulvius Plautianus, a kinsman and close adviser of Septimius Severus, however, shows that this proximity carried risks. Plautianus was summarily executed in 205 when Severus became convinced that he was scheming.

2. Another striking example spans generations in the family of the Junii Silani under the Julio-Claudians. Of the seven sons in this respected family, five were murdered and two banished, all because they had connections to the ruling house.

D. The second strategy, that of opposition, was even riskier than active complicity. If successful, claimants became emperors; if not, they became dead, along with their wives, children, friends, and supporters.

1. Examples include the inadvertent rebellion of Gaius Avidius Cassius against Marcus Aurelius in 175 (Lecture Twenty-Four). Cassius mistakenly revealed his desire for supreme power, and that cost him his life.
2. The strategy of passive opposition was adopted by Publius Clodius Thrasea Paetus, the leader of a supposed Stoic opposition to Nero (Lecture Sixteen). Paetus became increasingly disillusioned with Nero's reign, refusing to attend Senate meetings or take oaths for the emperor's safety. When the Pisonian conspiracy was uncovered in 65, he was forced to commit suicide.

E. The third strategy, quietly doing one's job, is exemplified by Pliny the Elder and Tacitus. Both men had illustrious public careers that accelerated under Domitian, but both were probably at least passively submissive in the face of Domitian's many crimes against their class.

F. The final strategy, maintaining a low profile, does not leave much evidence, but the fact that this group of senators was the largest is suggested by simple arithmetic. We can estimate that at least 6,300 men served in the Senate between 30 B.C. and A.D. 235, and about 1,800 became consuls. Seventy percent of the sitting senators never reached the consulship; of this group, perhaps half are entirely unknown to us.

G. From an institutional perspective, the senators had seen their republican-era power and prestige severely restricted. The traditional preserves of senatorial activity—earning popular favor, gaining financially from provincial administration, and winning military glory—were all curtailed, because in each sphere, the emperor predominated.

IV. The next logical question, then, is: What did the imperial Senate do?

A. The Senate provided the major officers of the state—consuls, praetors, and so on—and from these ex-magistrates came the provincial governors and army commanders. The most prestigious senatorial positions, usually filled by ex-consuls, were the city prefecture and the proconsulships of Asia or Africa.

B. Since Augustus, the habit had emerged of replacing after a few months or even weeks the two *ordinary consuls* with successive pairs of *suffect*

consuls. The average increased from 2 to 3 suffects a year under Augustus to 9 to 10 a year under the Antonines and Severans.

C. The number of other posts increased, too. The reason for this was twofold: first, to generate enough ex-consuls to fill all the posts that required men of that station and, second, to allow the emperor to dole out high offices as widely as possible to keep the nobility happy.

D. As a body, the Senate administered various facets of the empire, heard petitions and embassies, conducted high-level trials, and voted on various measures. Senators met frequently to attend to such business.

1. A typical meeting began with a religious ceremony. The convening magistrate then called the meeting to order.

2. Speeches of thanks to the emperor were then followed by communications from governors or commanders in the field or from emperors who were abroad.

3. The convening officer then referred matters to the house for discussion. If unanimity seemed inevitable, a vote was taken immediately. If not, senators were asked their *sententia* (opinions).

4. Once a matter had been debated, it was put to the vote by a physical division of the house.

V. The equestrian class was a beneficiary of the imperial order established by Augustus. Made distinct from the senators no later than the 2nd century B.C., under imperial rule, the public profile of this group was greatly enhanced and an equestrian career path was established, based on several prefectures.

A. At a low level were the prefectures of non-citizen auxiliary units in the army and, at the top, the prefectures of the urban cohorts, the Praetorian Guard, or Egypt. In addition to those posts, a host of procuratorships were regularly staffed by equestrians. Under Trajan and Hadrian, the imperial secretariat was transferred from ex-slaves to equestrians.

B. We cannot say how many equestrians sought to serve in the Senate or how many were content to retain their local prominence. As a class, however, the equestrians did not harbor the resentment of senators at former prestige and power eclipsed by emperors.

VI. As time went on, more and more people earned prominence from imperial service, and the Roman instinct for hierarchy sought new ways to distinguish the greater from the lesser eminences.

A. In the 2nd century, honorific titles emerged that designated grades of rank: *vir clarissimus* (for senators in general), *vir inlustris* (for eminent senators), *vir consularis* (for ex-consuls), *vir egregious* (for equestrians), and so on. The struggle for rank was the obsession of the

Roman elite, and the dominant currency of that struggle took the form of offices dispensed by the emperor.

B. When Nerva reached the throne, the senator Gnaeus Arrius Antoninus congratulated him, then offered his commiserations: As emperor, Nerva would be imperiled, criticized, and hounded by friends demanding favors. Arrius's observations offer a glimpse into what faced an emperor, not least the harassment of his friends who, to a man, would likely hail from the elite.

Essential Reading:

Juvenal, *Satire 4*.

Pliny, *Epistles*, especially book 10.

Tacitus, *Agricola*.

Supplementary Reading:

Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, especially pp. 120–200.

Talbert, *Senate of Imperial Rome*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Were senators justified in thinking their freedoms impinged upon by emperors? Was their conception of "liberty" different from ours?

2. In what ways did the emperor manage his relations with the elite? Why did such relations even matter to the emperor? Why did the emperor rely on the traditional elite to find administrative personnel?

Lecture Thirty
Emperor and People

Scope: The relationship of the emperor to the common people (*plebs* or *populus*), particularly the inhabitants of Rome, is reflected in the chapters of Augustus's *Res Gestae*. Here, the role of the emperor as the primary benefactor and patron of the masses is made clear. This relationship was cultivated by subsequent emperors well into the high empire, when Rome began to be eclipsed as the emperor's primary place of residence. The modalities of the patronal relationship between emperor and people are examined in this lecture, from the provision of grain, games, and other *commoda* ("comforts") to the mechanisms of communication between emperor and *populus*. We must not forget that, absent such peripatetic rulers as Hadrian, the vast majority of the empire's inhabitants would not have seen or communicated with their ruler. Most interacted less with the emperor than with the *idea* of the emperor, especially as manifested in the so-called imperial cult.

Outline

I. This lecture examines how the ruler related to the *populus Romanus*, or "people of Rome."

A. During the republic, the people of Rome had taken part in popular elections that empanelled magistrates, and the popular assemblies were also the only bodies in the republic that could pass binding legislation.

B. With the advent of the emperors, the role of the people in politics changed radically. Under Augustus, popular elections were still held, but the candidates favored by Augustus tended to be successful.

C. The people had minimal input into the various settlements that defined the position of the new *princeps* between 27 and 2 B.C. In A.D. 14, Tiberius transferred the election of magistrates to the Senate, stripping the people of one of their essential political functions.

D. After Caligula, the Roman people no longer held elections, although the legislative role of the popular assemblies appears to have continued for a while. Sometime after A.D. 98, senatorial edicts were declared law on passage, with the people informed of their content after the fact.

E. By 100, the popular element in Roman governance had lapsed entirely. Juvenal famously characterized the people of Rome at about this time as interested in only two things: bread and circuses. Juvenal's formulation is justly famous and contains an element of truth: Two of the chief ways emperors related to the people of Rome was through the bread-dole (the *annona*) and the provision of entertainments.

II. Before we begin to examine this topic, we must clarify our terminology.

A. The term *populus* properly referred to the entire population of the city, noble and commoner alike. Politically, however, the senatorial element was separate from the commoners. The phrase *Senatus Populusque Romanus* ("The Senate and People of Rome") denoted the political elements of the republic—the Senate and popular assemblies.

B. As a result, the *populus* was also identified with the commoners, more properly termed *plebs*. By the imperial period, there was considerable overlap between the terms *populus* and *plebs*, with the latter now firmly identified as the less-well-off freeborn masses.

III. The grain dole had its roots in the popular politics of the late republic, when Rome's population outstripped the carrying capacity of its hinterland.

A. One of Gaius Gracchus's innovations in the late 2nd century B.C. was to establish a monthly grain distribution at subsidized prices to the citizens, whether rich or poor.

B. In 22 B.C., Augustus accepted responsibility for overseeing the grain supply, which was then systematized and regularized. In times of shortages or famines, the emperor was now held responsible.

IV. Public banquets, staged as celebrations of holidays or imperial anniversaries, were another way for the emperor to feed the masses.

A. The format of a public banquet was usually the same: The better food went to the better people; sometimes, only the elite were invited, while everyone else looked on as spectators.

B. Public banquets and other events comprised a culture of public leisure and mass entertainment presided over and paid for by the emperor.

C. The gladiatorial spectacles and chariot races in the circus are notorious features of Roman imperial culture. (For details, see The Teaching Company's course *History of Ancient Rome*.)

1. The games themselves broadcast powerful symbolic messages about the extent of the Roman realm, the dire price paid for deviance, and the virtues that Roman society valued most.

2. Such spectacles, when staged in Rome, were invariably funded by the emperor or members of his family; thus, these messages were closely associated with the imperial regime.

3. Perhaps most symbolic of all were spectacular executions inspired by motifs from Greco-Roman mythology. Termed *fatal charades*, they appear to have been staged mostly during imperial games at Rome. As such, they symbolized the emperor's capacity to realize the unreal, as if myth, too, was subservient to his authority.

D. It was proper form for the emperor to attend such entertainments personally. Augustus, for example, made sure to watch with interest, and two sections of the *Res Gestae* document the games he held.

E. In A.D. 52 and 53, Claudius put on two spectacles to mark the completion of a drainage channel dug near Rome. The first of these included a mock sea battle with battleships and 19,000 criminals as combatants. The second featured gladiatorial combats and a public banquet. Such spectacles offer us important pieces of information:

1. Events could be staged in combination (sea battles, gladiatorial combats, and banquets).
2. The emperor was expected to attend in person.
3. The extravagance of such events reflected imperial majesty.
4. Criminals and outcasts paid the ultimate penalty for bucking the Roman order.
5. The emperor presided over the realization of the unreal; here, by giving the fleets in the sea battle names from recorded history.

F. An essential component of spectacles was the ability of the crowd to make its feelings known to the emperor. In fact, games and spectacles were among the few places where the people could voice political opinions directly to their rulers.

V. Thus far, we have focused on the emperor and the people of Rome. But how did the people and the emperor interact in the wider context of the empire?

A. As we saw in Lecture Twenty-Eight, most people were unlikely ever to see the emperor. There was, however, an institution through which almost everyone in the empire could interact with the *idea* of the emperor. Modern scholars call this institution the *imperial cult.*

B. The peoples of the eastern Mediterranean had long worshiped their rulers as deities. We should note, here, that in ancient paganism, the distinction between the temporal realm and the divine was far more fluid than is usually the case in modern religions.

1. Pagan gods and people overlapped in numerous ways. Myths, for example, told of gods and goddesses taking human lovers.
2. It was almost logical, then, that men who achieved marvelous things were thought to be, in some way, divine.

C. The Hellenistic tradition of viewing kings as gods was transferred to Roman governors in the 2nd century B.C. and onward. A version of this procedure was then introduced to Rome in 42 B.C. when, at the insistence of Augustus-Octavian, Julius Caesar became the first Roman deified by an act of the Senate and people, under the name *Divus Julius*.

D. We should note here two important points.

1. First, there was a difference between the practices of the Greek east, with its ancient heritage of complex civilization, and the Latin west, with its Iron Age and tribal pre-Roman history. Italic or Celtic tribesmen had no tradition of worshiping chieftains as gods.
2. Second, there could be significant differences between official positions adopted with regard to emperor worship and unofficial practice among the general population. On the one hand, we read of official reluctance to see living emperors worshiped as gods in Italy and, on the other, we find evidence of this practice among the lower echelons of society.

E. Augustus initially refused divine honors but eventually relented; his worship was restricted to his *genius* or *numen* ("spirit" or "essence") and coupled with Rome, personified as the goddess Roma. By the 2nd century, any deceased close relatives of living emperors were usually deified.

F. By and large, it wasn't the case, at least in Rome, that living emperors were worshiped as gods. But, again, that is only one side of the story. Inscriptions abundantly record the worship of living emperors in the east, and such worship was tolerated as part of regional tradition.

1. Around the empire, communities established shrines to deified emperors and to living incumbents and their deified relatives.
2. Priesthoods were also established. By the mid-1st century, the ritual duties of these offices were often handled by freed slaves formed into colleges called *Augustales* ("Priests of the Emperor").
3. In worshiping emperors, whether dead or living, a community broadcast its loyalty to the imperial system. Such was the variety in the worship of emperors across the empire that it is truer to speak of imperial cults rather than a single imperial cult.

VI. The activities charted in this lecture were part of a wider pattern of the emperor's monopolization of popular favor. Only the emperor (or his family) could provide free grain or games for the people, build large public structures, or stage military victory parades.

A. One purpose of this was to establish the emperor as the sole patron of his clients, the people of Rome. Thus, the provision of food, lavish entertainments, luxurious public structures, and other "conveniences" came to be seen as an integral part of what the emperor did.

B. This generosity was part of what the Romans called *magnificentia*, the sharing of one's power and wealth with those less fortunate. In the absence of a progressive tax system, this social contract was one way to make sure that at least some private wealth was disbursed for public benefit. At the risk of oversimplifying, it was also an opportunity for the emperor to show off on a grand scale.

C. Popular culture today holds that pleasing the people of Rome was essential to the emperor's power, but this is nonsense. It was desirable for an emperor to be popular, but unpopularity was not fatal to a regime.

Essential Reading:

Res Gestae Divi Augusti.

Price, *Rituals and Power*.

Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, especially pp. 292–482.

Supplementary Reading:

Donahue, *The Roman Community at Table*.

Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*.

Garnsey, *Food and Society*.

Wiedemann, *Emperors and Gladiators*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did the emperor devote so much money and energy to pleasing the Roman commons?
2. Was there *an* imperial cult or a variety of imperial cults? If the latter, what were the main differences? Was ruler worship an effective means of promoting imperial ideology?

Lecture Thirty-One
Emperor and Soldier

Scope: Given that the basis of the emperors' power lay with the swords of the imperial army, no relationship was more important to the rulers of Rome than that with their troops. Emperors from Augustus on employed various measures to monopolize army loyalties, from oaths of allegiance to direct monetary payments (or promises thereof) for continued adherence to the current regime. These measures are surveyed in detail, as are the dispositions of the troops in the empire and the different classes of soldier that comprised the imperial army. All enjoyed some sort of direct relationship with the emperor, from the citizen legionary to the foreign auxiliary. Some emperors took the extra effort to lead the troops personally on campaign. Others ignored the armies to their ultimate cost. For their part, the professional troops of the imperial period displayed a growing awareness of their political power from A.D. 69 onward, an awareness that, in the 3rd century, almost led to the collapse of the empire.

Outline

I. During the republic, the army was a citizen militia, staffed by men who supplied their own equipment and were mustered as needed.

A. In the course of the 1st century B.C., the army became increasingly professionalized. Landless troops equipped at state expense relied on the rewards of war and the favor of their patron-generals.

B. Such men as Sulla, Pompey, and Caesar were mindful of their soldiers' needs and deployed their political influence for the soldiers' benefit.

C. Augustus realized Rome's military arm had to be radically refashioned. This he accomplished in three main ways.

1. First, the army was reduced from some 60 active legions in 30 B.C. to 28, a more manageable (and affordable) size.

2. Second, the army became a professional force whose members signed up for fixed periods, were equipped and paid by the state, and received cash pensions and land on honorable discharge. Non-citizen troops, termed *auxiliaries*, were granted Roman citizenship on discharge.

3. In the second half of his reign, Augustus settled the units along the frontiers of the newly expanded Roman realm. The practical benefit of this third innovation was that it kept Rome's military forces close to zones of possible external threats, especially along the Rhine and the Danube and in Syria. The political benefit was

that the army was stationed far from Rome and Italy, where it was unlikely to challenge Augustus's rule.

D. These arrangements were not without problems. The army was huge by ancient standards (350,000 to 450,000 men) but rather small to protect a vast empire.

E. The imperial army was bunched up in four major concentrations: the Rhine (from 4–8 legions), the Danube and Dacia (5–9 legions), Syria (3–4 legions), and after A.D. 43, Britain (3–4 legions).

II. The army of the empire was no less politicized than it had been under the late republic, but efforts were now made to channel loyalties to the emperor.

A. Initially, this was achieved by stressing the Caesarian ancestry of the imperial house, even by non-Julians. Every emperor took the name Caesar Augustus.

B. Other strategies the emperor used to monopolize army loyalties can be divided into communication, financial support, and symbolism.

III. The most direct way for the emperor to communicate with his troops was to visit them personally and, even better, to lead them on campaign.

A. When with the troops, the emperor shared the harsh conditions of life in camp. In battle, however, the emperor's role was to direct, not to participate.

B. Emperors also visited army units and addressed the troops in an event called the *adlocutio*. For such occasions, the emperor donned military dress and addressed the soldiery as *milites* ("soldiers") or *commilitones* ("fellow soldiers"), urging them to bravery and conquest or devotion, training, and good order.

C. Indirect channels of communication were more common, however, such as what we see in the choice of army commanders.

1. Much of the time, emperors selected their own relatives, particularly the heir apparent, to command troops. From the emperor's perspective, this ensured the loyalty of the commander and allowed a future emperor to become known to the troops.

2. At the same time, however, such men might get ideas above their station. Further, there were far more army commands than there were princes to occupy them; in most cases, trusted senators had to be appointed, usually from among ex-consuls.

D. Lines of communication were not all top-down. The soldiers expressed their loyalty to the emperor in their annual oath of allegiance (the *sacramentum*).

IV. Throughout the imperial period, cash constituted the material glue that bound emperor and army together.

A. Augustus set up a military treasury, the *aerarium militare*, to pay for his armies, but he put his own money into it, as did future emperors. Salary rates were generous.

B. The average legionary pay rose from about 900 *sesterces* a year under Augustus to 3,000 under Caracalla. Centurions received 5 times this rate, and senior centurions, 20 times the rate. The discharge pension was about 20,000 *sesterces*, plus a land grant.

C. Donatives were paid to the troops on special occasions or by claimants or usurpers to secure support.

V. The processes reviewed thus far carried symbolic messages about the emperor's role as fellow-soldier, commander, war leader, and patron. By other symbolic measures, the emperor reinforced these impressions.

A. Beginning with Augustus and routinely after Vespasian, most emperors adopted the title *imperator* (roughly "general") as their first names and included imperatorial acclamations in their official titles. Following a military success, generals had been traditionally hailed as *imperator* by their troops, but emperors allowed only themselves to be so hailed.

B. Other titles born by emperors also carried military associations.

1. Successful conquests added new elements to the emperor's list of titles, such as Germanicus, Dacicus, and Parthicus.

2. Under Commodus, *invictus*, meaning "invincible," appeared and became common in the following decades.

3. Caligula, to emphasize the stories about his childhood in camp, adopted the informal titles *filius castrorum*, "son of the camp," and *pater castrorum*, "father of the camp."

4. Faustina, the wife of Marcus Aurelius, was the first woman to assume the title *mater castrorum*, "mother of the camp," which became standard under the Severans and afterward

5. Finally, legions could be named after emperors.

C. These titles, however, were only one facet of a larger symbolic process: the monopolization of all military glory by the emperor. This was a cornerstone of the Principate, creating a unipolar political environment that directed the army's attention solely toward the emperor.

1. Triumphs, for instance, were laden with symbolic value: The emperor paraded with his men; floats carried piles of loot or presented dioramas of operations; placards depicted events from the campaign; captives walked in chains.

2. Triumphs were also opportunities to display young princes to the masses and to the army.

3. The image of the emperor was carried by army units, usually fixed on a pole.

D. No less remarkable are the military images and messages that pervade Roman imperial coinage. We've seen many examples of coins showing the emperor addressing the troops or bound captives, extolling victory and peace, exhorting harmony among the armies, or promising stability.

E. Military themes also pervaded art and architecture in Rome. Many of the ancient structures visible today, such as the Colosseum, were either funded by war loot or commemorated military achievements.

F. The outpost of Dura Europus on the Euphrates River was occupied by the Romans between 165 and about 260. In the early 20th century, a papyrus was found inscribed with the military calendar of a Roman unit stationed there during the reign of Severus Alexander.

1. This calendar shows that almost every anniversary pertaining to Severus was celebrated by the unit, as were anniversaries pertaining to deified emperors.

2. The purpose of these celebrations was not just to honor the current regime but to stress the loyalty of the army to the imperial system.

G. Everything said about the emperor's relationship with the army can be applied equally to the Praetorian Guard. Stationed in Rome, better paid and better treated, they enjoyed a special relationship with their ruler.

VI. Tiberius characterized the emperor's handling of the armies as "holding a wolf by the ears," an assessment borne out by history. If the emperor lost control of his troops or became too distant, he was likely doomed.

A. Thus, emperors expended considerable energy kow-towing to men who, on average, were badly educated and uncultivated. The paradox is that while the plebs might be held in contempt by the elite, the armed plebs who filled the ranks of the Roman army required the patronage and close attention of the most powerful man in the world.

B. We'll close with some illustrations of how emperor and soldier were bound together.

1. In 9 B.C., Augustus personally appeared in court on behalf of one of his veterans, revealing the emperor as fellow-soldier, patron of the troops, and defender of their interests.

2. In 175, the Senate set up an inscription to Marcus Aurelius, noting that he "superseded all the glories of all the greatest *imperatores* before him…." In this inscription, we see the emperor as symbol, the preeminent conqueror and general.

3. In October 96, the orator Dio Chrysostom was en route to Dacia when he came to an auxiliary camp along the Danube. Just as he arrived, news came that Domitian had been murdered. The troops, noncitizen auxiliary units stationed in a remote frontier camp, were so dedicated to Domitian that they were outraged.

C. These stories suggest that the system of managing army loyalties was effective. But relations between soldier and emperor became strained in the latter part of the Severan era. As the dynasty collapsed, so did the emperor's monopoly on military loyalties, and the result was civil war.

D. As a consequence, the imperial peace disintegrated amidst a welter of foreign invasions and internal conflicts.

Essential Reading:

Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army*, especially pp. 1–203.

Supplementary Reading:

Le Bohec, *The Imperial Roman Army*.

Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is it fair to describe the Principate as a military dictatorship? Identify some examples of militarization in the trappings that surrounded the emperor.
2. Why was the monopolization of army loyalties so important for emperors? Were the mechanisms used by emperors to this end successful? If so, why?

Lecture Thirty-Two
Chaos

Scope: Rome's army became deeply involved in politics in the 3rd century, and this factor was a major contributor to the chaos of the period. With the murder (by his own troops) of Severus Alexander in 235, the Severan Dynasty collapsed and the succession was again thrown into doubt. Generals began fighting for dominance, but no clear winner emerged quickly, and civil wars raged almost continuously for the better part of 50 years. With the frontiers stripped of troops to fight these internal conflicts, external enemies took advantage to raid and plunder the empire. Franks, Vandals, and Goths poured across the Rhine-Danube frontier and wreaked mayhem from Spain to Asia Minor. In the east, a newly resurgent Persia sacked the empire's third major city, Antioch in Syria. Eventually, the empire began to fragment, as secessionist states east and west sought to ensure their own regional security. In this lecture, we examine several of the emperors of this ill-documented era.

Outline

I. In the wake of the Severan Dynasty's collapse in 235, the emperor's system of managing the loyalties of the Roman army imploded, and for the next five decades, the situation deteriorated hideously. Why did army loyalties fail?

- **A.** The ancient sources' position on this question is essentially useless moralizing: the armies were venal self-seekers whose commanders relaxed their standards to gain political support.
- **B.** The character of the commanders may offer some explanation. Severus, for instance, bribed his men to quell a mutiny over the choice of a campsite—a clear example of poor leadership.
- **C.** Context and circumstance seem to offer far more cogent explanations for Rome's problems in the 3rd century. In stable times, the men largely toed the line, but when the unipolarity of army loyalties broke down and competing options presented themselves, discipline collapsed.

II. The crisis of the 3rd century was generated by two factors: a change in the external threats faced by Rome and a collapse of internal stability.

- **A.** Along the Rhine and Danube frontiers, vast coalitions of Germanic tribes had formed, replacing the small individual tribes of earlier generations. The military capabilities of these tribes far outstripped those of the limited imperial forces.

B. At the same time, Persia emerged as a new threat in the east. Led by energetic kings of the Sassanid Dynasty, the new Persian state laid claim to the lands of the eastern Roman Empire.

C. Confronted by these external threats, emperors were overwhelmed and politically weakened. Military leadership and achievement had long been seen as cardinal virtues of the *princeps*; emperors who were defeated or ineffective in the field appeared vulnerable.

D. These factors led to a situation in which leadership was unclear, thus emboldening external enemies. This, in essence, was the nature of the 3rd-century crisis: internal and external factors combining and feeding off each other to maximize chaos.

III. Four men serve as illustrations of how legitimate emperors fared in these years: Maximinus Thrax, Decius, and Valerian and Gallienus.

A. Our source material for the lives of these men is poor. Aside from coins, occasional inscriptions, and the sketchy history of the Byzantine scholar Zosimus, we are confined to the *Augustan History*.

B. Maximinus was a common soldier who had risen through the ranks. He hailed from Thrace, which made him, in the eyes of the elite and despite his Roman citizenship, a barbarian.

C. The soldiers had killed Severus Alexander for negotiating with the Alamanni, one of the large German coalitions; thus, Maximinus had to reverse this policy, and he prosecuted vigorous campaigns along the Rhine-Danube frontier.

D. Maximinus never visited Rome and made no attempt to reach out to constituencies outside the army. To fund his campaigns and an increase in army pay, he imposed heavy taxes. Despite declaring his son Caesar, as if to establish a dynasty, his support base rapidly collapsed. When the landed gentry in Africa balked at his tax demands, they picked an octogenarian proconsul of Africa named Gordian as their new emperor.

E. Gordian, confirmed by his fellow senators, became the rallying point for those discontented with Maximinus. Faced with a full-scale revolt, Maximinus and his son were butchered by his own troops at Aquileia.

F. The brief reign of Maximinus is significant for four features that would constitute a pattern for the next 20 legitimate emperors and the 36 remaining claimants down to 284.

1. His only qualification was that he was a professional soldier, the first of the soldier-emperors who would dominate the 3rd century.
2. His authority rested on military support and was never secure.
3. His reign was primarily concerned with Rome's frontier security.
4. His own soldiers turned on him as soon as his authority lapsed.

G. Maximinus's successor, Gordian, immediately appointed his son as co-emperor. But the younger Gordian was killed in battle, and the elder committed suicide in response. Their joint rule lasted about 20 days.

IV. Over the next 11 years, four men held the throne.

A. Between 244 and 249, the emperor was Philip the Arab, another professional soldier who had been Praetorian prefect. He faced six usurpers and died in battle against one of them in 249.

B. The man who overthrew Philip was Gaius Messius Quintus Decius Valerinus. He was acclaimed by the armies in Pannonia, and it seems, against his wishes, marched on Rome and usurped Philip. Decius was killed in battle in Dacia 18 months later. During his brief reign, he sought to strengthen the ancient cults and, thereby, unify the empire.

C. While Decius was away on campaign, the mob at Rome elevated a senator, but he lasted only a few days. The powerlessness of the *plebs* was clear: Without armies at his back, a claimant had no chance.

D. In 253, Valerian, a senator in his 60s, came to power. Valerian had been assigned to tackle a usurper in 253, but as with Decius, his army had proclaimed him emperor instead. As three armies converged on northern Italy, those opposing Valerian saw they were at a disadvantage, turned on their leaders, and lynched them.

E. Valerian accepted power in Rome and installed his adult son, Gallienus, as co-emperor. Valerian took the eastern half of the empire and left Gallienus in charge of Rome and the west.

V. In the east, the situation was dire. The Persian king Shapur I repeatedly raided into Roman territory and even sacked Antioch.

A. Because of our poor sources, Valerian's movements and actions in the east are unclear, but we know that he was captured alive by Shapur in 258 or 260. His co-emperor, Gallienus, had moved to Cologne and split his time between there and the Danubian provinces. Defending the frontier against the Germanic tribes had become almost impossible.

B. So many imperial claimants emerged at this time that Roman tradition remembers them as the "Thirty Pretenders." On hearing of his father's capture, Gallienus claimed the entire empire for himself.

C. Gallienus faced multiple challengers and external threats. Amazingly, he clung to power for eight more years. Although the sources for his reign are poor, he did implement some changes that were to endure.

1. He initiated the development of rapid-response forces stationed at Milan in northern Italy. The strategy here was defense-in-depth: conceding border crossings to the barbarians, then using reserves to strike at invaders after they were in the empire.

2. Gallienus also made administrative adjustments that presaged the conditions of the later empire, such as the elevation of equestrians to regular governorships or army commands.
3. Facing a need for more money, Gallienus simply stamped more coins, debasing the currency and leading to inflation. His struggle for control came at a considerable cost to the empire's population, as the needs of the army outweighed all other considerations.
4. Gallienus followed previous emperors and anticipated future developments by promoting his connection to various gods; he also halted the persecution of Christians.

D. The early 260s saw a lull in invasions, but the peace was not to last.

VI. Gallienus's optimism in claiming the empire for himself in 260 proved unfounded. News of Valerian's capture and the ongoing depredations of barbarians and Persians caused some to take matters into their own hands.

A. A secessionist state appeared in Gaul, led by the general Marcus Cassianus Latinius Postumus. Postumus declared the "Empire of the Gallic Provinces" in the summer of 260 and soon attracted Britain and Spain to his banner. This empire was not a nativist movement seeking liberation from Rome but a fully Roman state seeking the security the legitimate emperor clearly could not guarantee.

B. Fitted out with its own Senate, consuls, coinage, and emperor, the new empire made its capital at Cologne. There would be seven emperors of this breakaway empire, but five of them lasted less than a year.

C. Postumus presided over his secessionist state for nine years. His ultimate aims are unclear, but his coins suggest that local security was his driving concern. He seems to have harbored no designs on Gallienus's throne.

D. In the end, the appearance of two challengers led to the murder of Postumus by his own troops in the summer of 269. By early 271, a man called Tetricus was in charge.

E. The central government's inability to guarantee the security of the east against Persia led to a similar outcome. There, Odenathus, a leader of the quasi-Roman trading city of Palmyra in Syria, rose to prominence. He checked Shapur I in 260 and led incursions into Persian territory.

F. Gallienus first tried to subsume Odenathus under his own authority, but in 267, Odenathus was murdered, possibly at the bequest of Gallienus.

G. Odenathus was succeeded by his wife, Zenobia. She charted a more independent course for the Palmyrene state and began to seize control of Rome's eastern provinces. By 270, much of the Roman east was ruled over by a female potentate who declared herself Zenobia Augusta.

VII. Before concluding the dismal narrative of these rulers, we might briefly look at a handful of the 38 unsuccessful claimants of the mid-3rd century.

A. Shortly after Gallienus became sole emperor in 260, the governor of Illyricum, Publius Regalianus, was declared emperor by his men. He scored a victory against invading tribesmen but was killed by Gallienus.

B. Fulvius Macrianus, a general in the east who had extracted the army from the disaster that had seen Valerian captured, was also hailed as emperor. He marched toward Italy to press his claim but was met in Illyricum by one of Gallienus's generals, Marcus Aelius Aureolus. Macrianus did not survive the encounter.

C. Following his defeat of Macrianus, Aureolus was hailed as emperor. This was early in 262, when both the Gallic Empire and the Palmyrene state were up and running—that is, when Gallienus looked weak.

1. In fact, Gallienus made an alliance with Aureolus, and together, they attacked Postumus in Gaul.

2. In 268, however, while Gallienus was in Illyricum, Aureolus was declared emperor *again*, this time by the cavalry forces in Milan. Gallienus turned back to besiege him but was killed by his staff.

D. Although much maligned in our sources, Gallienus managed to survive for 15 years in office in this chaotic age.

VIII. In 268, there was no reason to expect that the Roman Empire would endure much longer: It had been battered by foreign invaders, divided within, and stripped of its emperor. Who could have foreseen that within 20 years, the situation would be turned around by a series of energetic soldier-emperors who extended the empire's life for two further centuries?

Essential Reading:

HA, various lives between Maximinus and Gallienus.

Zosimus, *New History*, book 1.1–40.

Brauer, *The Age of the Soldier-Emperors*.

Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, pp. 1–39.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Maximinus Thrax," "Decius," "Valerian," "Gallienus."

Southern, *Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*, especially pp. 64–108.

MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why was there a 3rd-century crisis? Could it have been avoided or, at least, mitigated?

2. Which emperors of this troubled era do you consider the most important and why?

Lecture Thirty-Three
Aurelian, Diocletian, and the Tetrarchy

Scope: The Roman Empire in 268 appeared to be on its last legs, battered from without, divided within. The Roman era seemed to be over. But within a few years a series of militarily aggressive and highly competent general-emperors had turned the situation around. They forged a modified Roman emperorship, far more despotic and oppressive than the Augustan Principate, but one that carried Roman history forward two more centuries. In particular we look at Aurelian, who restored the integrity of the empire and solidified the authority of the emperor; and Diocletian, whose Tetrarchy promised to secure the frontiers and resolve the succession problem that had plagued Rome's emperor's for so long.

Outline

I. Among the plotters who killed Gallienus in 268 was Marcus Aurelius Claudius, a professional commander in his mid-50s, whom the army hailed as emperor.

- **A.** Invading Goths were Claudius's immediate concern; new hordes of Germanic tribesmen had crossed the Danube to pillage northern Italy.
- **B.** Early in 269, Claudius defeated them, but then a mass of Goths and a tribe called the Heruli repeated their destructive incursion of the early 260s that had seen much of Asia Minor and Greece ravaged.
- **C.** Claudius sent ahead his trusted general Lucius Domitius Aurelianus (Aurelian), then followed along. But the barbarian numbers were so vast that he could not entirely neutralize them. He then contracted the plague and, in September 270, succumbed at Sirmium on the Danube.
- **D.** Claudius's brother Quintillus was proclaimed emperor in Italy, but the army in Greece elevated Aurelian.

II. In 270 Aurelian was about 56 years old, a professional soldier with a reputation for tackling problems head-on.

- **A.** His first problem was Quintillus, who had been recognized as emperor by the Senate. Aurelian moved toward Italy, but before the armies engaged, Quintillus was dead, killed either by himself or his men.
- **B.** Now unopposed, Aurelian was recognized by the Senate, but his empire was divided into three states and the Goths were still at large. From the winter of 270 to the fall of 271, Aurelian pushed the hordes out of the Balkans and northern Italy.

C. He then moved to Rome, where he was hailed as Germanicus Maximus. He remained there over the winter of 271–272, initiating the construction of the city's first set of fortifications since those erected in the 4th century B.C.

1. These Aurelianic Walls remain a major feature of the city today.

2. The existence of these walls is a testament to changed times. No longer did Rome feel secure from foreign marauders.

III. Having secured Rome and Italy, Aurelian turned his attention to the Palmyrene state that had absorbed most of Rome's eastern provinces.

A. The Empire of the Gallic Provinces was a Roman secessionist state. Palmyra, in contrast, seemed "foreign," and worse, it was ruled by a queen, Zenobia.

B. En route to Syria, Aurelian crushed a Gothic force in the Balkans. Seeing only the strategic weakness of Dacia, he ordered its evacuation.

C. Palmyra was no easy target; it was built around an oasis in the open desert. Aurelian had his army carry all its supplies across some 80 miles of open desert to attack the heart of the Palmyrene realm.

D. The Palmyrenes surrendered when Zenobia was captured. But in 273, they broke the terms of their surrender and rallied around a man claiming to be Zenobia's son.

E. Aurelian marched his army back across Asia Minor and attacked the city for a second time. Palmyra, once the richest trading city in Syria, was reduced to ruins. A revolt in Egypt was also quickly suppressed.

F. In 274, Aurelian moved against the Gallic Empire, which was by now ruled by Tetricus I. At Châlons, the two armies fought a bloody battle. Tetricus either surrendered or was captured, and his army was defeated.

G. Aurelian had reintegrated the empire but was now held responsible for its security with significantly reduced forces.

IV. Early in 275, having wintered in Rome, Aurelian was on the march once more, his main theater of operation being the Balkans.

A. In September or October 275, in the vicinity of Perinthus in northern Greece, the emperor was ignominiously butchered by a cabal of his officers. He was 61 years old and had ruled 5 years.

B. Aurelian's reign had been magnificent: He restored the integrity of the empire, checked several major barbarian incursions, and solidified the authority of the emperor.

V. Over the next nine years, six men held official power, four of them for a matter of months only.

A. The longest lived was Probus, a general on Aurelian's staff who ruled from the summer of 276 to the fall of 282.

B. Like Aurelian, Probus was kept busy in the field fighting off Germans and three rival claimants. Between campaigns, he insisted that his troops perform manual labor, for which he was lynched.

VI. Following the murder of Probus in 282, the new general-emperor Carus attempted to establish a dynasty. Carus died quickly and mysteriously, but his sons, Carinus and Numerian, endured for two years as joint emperors.

A. Carinus presided over the western half of the empire, and Numerian, the east. When Numerian died at the hands of an assassin, the army acclaimed the commander of the imperial bodyguard, Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocles (Diocletian), on 20 November 284.

B. Diocletian's first act was to execute Numerian's assassin personally. He then moved westward to confront Carinus. He met Carinus's forces in the Balkans in the late summer of 285 and was facing defeat when Carinus was murdered by one of his officers.

VII. Diocletian was a professional soldier—a man of energy having the organizational ability to consolidate the gains made by Claudius, Aurelian, and Probus.

A. Shortly after securing sole rule for himself, Diocletian relinquished it again to fulfill his ambitious agenda.

B. In 285, he declared as Caesar (and, possibly, adopted) one of his most loyal generals, Maximian. In 286, Maximian was declared Augustus.

C. Maximian was assigned the western empire, while Diocletian took the east, initially concentrating on the Danube.

D. Maximian was busy with Germanic tribes threatening Gaul and with an admiral, Carausius, who proclaimed himself emperor in 286. Carausius ultimately formed a secessionist state in Britain that endured until 297.

E. Meanwhile Diocletian was occupied in the east and along the Danube, where tribes constantly renewed their pressure on Rome's borders.

F. By 291, the situation had stabilized sufficiently for Diocletian and Maximian to celebrate their achievements, which they did in Milan. The role of Rome as the center of the empire had long been declining.

VIII. In 293, Diocletian took the final steps in a major reorganization of imperial authority when he formed the *Tetrarchy*, meaning "Rule of Four."

A. As mentioned earlier, Diocletian had devolved some power to his co-emperor, Maximian. His experiences in the intervening years told him that more high authorities were needed. The result was the Tetrarchy.

B. The system worked as follows: On 1 March 293, each of the two Augusti, the senior emperors Maximian and Diocletian, adopted one of

their generals. Maximian, in Milan, adopted Constantius; Diocletian, in Nicomedia in northern Turkey, adopted Galerius.

1. These two men now became Caesars, or junior emperors. It was clear that, when the time came, these new Caesars would succeed each of their Augusti.
2. The new rulers presided over certain regions of the empire, each associated with his own capital city: Diocletian was in Nicomedia in Turkey, which gave him access to the eastern provinces and the lower Danube; Galerius was in Sirmium facing the central Danube, Thessalonica in Greece, or Antioch in Syria, where he could confront the Persian threat; Maximian was based in Milan, which gave him access to the upper Danube and upper Rhine; and Constantius was at Trier, covering the central and lower Rhine.

C. In this way, the Tetrarchy, in theory at least, solved two of Rome's greatest problems: The frontier was more comprehensively covered than ever before and the succession problem was apparently solved.

D. In the decade after 293, there was almost constant warfare on all fronts. The British Empire of Carausius was suppressed by Constantius in 297. The details of the wars are obscure, but by 303, it was time to celebrate.

E. At a 20th anniversary ceremony in Rome, Maximian and Diocletian proclaimed their achievements. Before Diocletian left the city, he secured an oath from Maximian that the two of them would step down simultaneously and allow Galerius and Constantius to ascend jointly.

IX. The other major achievements and reforms carried out by Diocletian and his successor, Constantine, merit our attention.

A. After elevating Maximian in 285 and 286, Diocletian applied the epithet Jovius ("of Jupiter") to himself and Herculius ("of Hercules") to Maximian.

1. The new titles represented a way of orienting political and religious ideology firmly around the rulers.
2. The Christians' refusal to sacrifice to Jupiter or Hercules now took on the appearance of political resistance to the new regime. The policy of tolerance was abandoned in the early 4th century and the so-called Great Persecution got underway in 303.

B. Under Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, the Roman emperor became an absolute monarch, divinely mandated and held aloof from his people by ceremony and formality. The Principate, or rule by a *princeps*, a leading citizen, had given way to the Dominate, rule by a *dominus*, or lord.

C. To ensure security, the frontiers were strengthened with new roads and forts, and civilian and military career paths were permanently split.

D. The provinces were multiplied by subdivision; by 314, they numbered 101. These new provinces were more easily managed and defended. Their civilian governor was called a *praeses* (pl.: *praesides*); their military commander, if they had one, was a *dux* (the root of "duke").

E. The new provinces were grouped into 12 *dioceses* presided over by a new official, a *vicarius*. The provincial *praesides* answered to the *vicarius*, who answered to the Praetorian prefects attached to each emperor. Bureaucracy expanded exponentially.

1. Senators were increasingly eclipsed by equestrian army officials in the immediate ambit of traveling emperors.

2. The function of the new provincial order was twofold: to afford greater protection by reducing the area a commander was responsible for covering and to allow greater state control over local resources. Taxes on land, goods, and people were increased.

F. Apprenticeship became compulsory, and all workers had to be members of guilds. The five-year census was revived to track local populations.

G. The degree of state control is manifested in the famous Price Edict of 301. In this document, Diocletian set maximum prices for hundreds of goods and services, to be transgressed on pain of death.

H. The main beneficiary of these measures was the army, which was remodeled to fit the new circumstances of the empire. Each tetrarch had his own army, but they could be combined into larger forces if needed.

I. In the two decades between 285 and 303, Diocletian reestablished the Roman Empire as a centralized, bureaucratic state presided over by an absolute monarch who ensured that the whole was geared toward the needs of the army, which was necessary for its security.

Essential Reading:

HA, Claudius, Aurelian, Diocletian.

Zosimus, *New History*, book 1.41–73.

Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, pp. 39–208.

Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Claudius II," "Aurelian," "Diocletian."

Stoneman, *Palmyra and Its Empire*.

MacMullen, *Roman Government's Response to Crisis*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did Diocletian succeed in reorganizing imperial authority where others had failed?
2. How had the role of the army evolved between the reign of Augustus and the time of the Tetrarchy?

Lecture Thirty-Four
Constantine—Rise to Power

Scope: Constantine was an emperor of both the old and new molds. He embraced the despotic model of imperial rule introduced by Diocletian, but he rejected the Tetrarchy in favor of sole command. He is one of the most complex and difficult emperors to understand, despite some excellent sources (notably, Eusebius). In this lecture, we survey Constantine's difficult and protracted rise to sole rulership. Despite being passed over by Diocletian's tetrarchic system, the young Constantine accepted his army's imperial acclamation on 25 July 306. From then until 324, he was engaged in extending his power to become sole emperor of the entire realm. The complex events of these years occupy our attention for this lecture. Throughout, Constantine's singleness of intent and purpose shines through.

Outline

I. The ideology of the Tetrarchy demanded that the rulers present a unified front to the world.

A. A victory won by one tetrarch was credited to the entire college of four. The point was to ensure that army loyalties were not split between east and west and to comfort the population. Likewise, imperial edicts were issued in the names of all four.

B. In reality, the Tetrarchy was held together by Diocletian's personal *auctoritas*. The uneven pursuit of Christians during the Great Persecution tells us that there were sharp differences in priorities among the four. These differences would explode in the wake of events in 305.

C. We have a number of sources for Constantine. The contentiousness of his reign, however, makes interpreting this material a difficult task.

1. Edicts, letters, rescripts, and rulings from Constantine himself are preserved in inscriptions and in later compilations of Roman law. We also have a speech of Constantine, called the *Oration to the Assembly of the Saints*, of disputed date and context.

2. Foremost among the contemporary or near-contemporary sources is Eusebius (c. 260–339), a native of Caesarea in Palestine, where he was elected bishop around 313. One feature of Eusebius's work that warrants notice is his citation of contemporary documents, including letters of Constantine. All of Eusebius's testimony is marred by a pro-Christian bias, but it is nevertheless valuable.

3. Lactantius (c. 240–320), a Christian from North Africa, tutored Constantine's eldest son, Crispus. He did not write directly about Constantine, but the emperor suffuses much of his work.
4. We also have anonymous speeches delivered in Gaul during Constantine's reign called *Latin Panegyrics*.

II. In 303, Diocletian had secured an oath from Maximian that both Augusti would relinquish power together. In 304, Diocletian's health was failing, and in the following year, he decided to step down.

A. Diocletian had built a palace for his retirement near his birthplace of Salona (modern Split in Croatia). In 305, Maximian withdrew to a similar palace in southern Italy.

B. According to the tetrarchic succession scheme, the former Caesars, Galerius and Constantius, ascended to become Augusti. Two new Caesars were now needed to replace Galerius and Constantius.

1. Diocletian had no natural son, but the others did. The Tetrarchy, however, did not recognize familial connections.
2. In 305, two generals unrelated to the new Augusti became Caesars: Severus was adopted by Constantius in the west, while Galerius in the east chose his nephew, Maximinus Daia. This new college of four is sometimes called the Second Tetrarchy.

C. Tensions arose from the bypassed natural sons. Further, Maximian had abdicated under duress.

D. Constantine's mother was a woman of low birth whom Constantius had put aside by 290. In 293, he married Maximian's daughter Theodora, becoming both son and son-in-law to the Augustus.

1. Helena gave birth to Constantine in Naissus in modern-day Serbia on 27 February in 271, 272, or 273.
2. As an imperial son, Constantine was well educated, and he enjoyed military appointments. He served with Diocletian and Galerius in their eastern campaigns in the 290s and rose to the rank of tribune.
3. The elevation of Severus over Constantine in 305 was probably shocking. It further rankled that Galerius had favored his own family by selecting his nephew Daia as his Caesar.

III. The Second Tetrarchy lacked an obvious senior partner. Galerius, notionally the senior, lacked the *auctoritas* to fill Diocletian's shoes.

A. In the face of familial discontents, Galerius attempted to eliminate Constantine by assigning him perilous duties. Alarmed, Constantius asked Galerius to release his son from military service in the east.

B. Father and son then moved on to Britain to campaign against the Picts of Scotland, but on 25 July 306, Constantius died at Eboracum (York). The troops unilaterally declared Constantine their Augustus.

C. Constantine now stood outside the Tetrarchy, a challenger to Severus. Severus offered Constantine the position of Caesar. Constantine accepted and became next in line to the throne after Severus.

D. Maxentius, the son of Maximian, chafed at his exclusion. On 28 October 306, with the backing of the Senate in Rome and the Praetorian Guard, Maxentius had himself declared emperor of the entire realm.

E. Maxentius then persuaded his father, Maximian, to emerge from retirement and assert himself as Augustus. Within 18 months of Diocletian's retirement, the tetrarchic succession had collapsed. The empire had three Augusti (Galerius, Severus, and Maximian), two Caesars (Constantine and Daia), and one *princeps* (Maxentius).

F. Galerius and Severus now moved to suppress the usurpers. As Severus approached Rome, his army defected to Maxentius and Maximian. In 307, Severus withdrew to Ravenna, surrendered on the promise of being spared, and was later murdered or forced to commit suicide.

G. Galerius now came to Italy, but outside Rome, the loyalty of his men began to waver, and he withdrew. Constantine, meanwhile, pinned his colors to Maximian's mast, who granted him the title Augustus and married him to his daughter Fausta in 307.

IV. The situation remained unstable and was exacerbated when Maxentius declared himself Augustus on 27 October 307. This act caused a falling out between Maxentius and Maximian, who in 308, fled to Constantine.

A. Galerius met with Diocletian and Maximian on 11 November 308. Diocletian refused to return as senior Augustus but outlined a solution: Maximian was to retire again. Maxentius was declared an outlaw, and a new Augustus was to be appointed by Galerius to replace Severus.

B. Galerius's choice, a general named Licinius, was an insult to the two incumbent Caesars in the Third Tetrarchy. Both Maximinus Daia and Constantine were passed over, and Constantine was demoted to Caesar.

C. Despite his demotion, Constantine continued to assert himself as Augustus. Until 310, he was occupied with German tribes on the Rhine, but in that year, Maximian came out of retirement yet again.

D. When Constantine besieged Maximian in Massilia (modern Marseilles), Maximian's troops deserted to Constantine. Remarkably, Constantine spared Maximian, but the 60-year-old Augustus was forced to commit suicide later that year when he was linked to a plot against Constantine.

E. Galerius had pursued the persecution of Christianity with vigor since 303, but just before dying, probably in May 311, he issued an Edict of Toleration, allowing freedom of worship to pagans and Christians alike.

F. Galerius's death left four men claiming imperial power: Licinius and Daia in the east, Constantine and Maxentius in the west.

V. An alliance had taken shape in the years 310–312 between Constantine and Licinius, sealed by the betrothal of Licinius to Constantine's half-sister, Constantia. Daia allied with Maxentius in opposition.

A. In the spring of 312, Constantine crossed the Alps and clashed with Maxentian forces in northern Italy. Then, he moved on Rome. Impelled by a population that quailed at the prospect of a siege, Maxentius moved out of the city to face Constantine in the open field.

B. Maxentius had earlier cut all the bridges across the Tiber, but to get at Constantine's army, he constructed a pontoon bridge beside the ruined Milvian Bridge north of the city. His army marched across to attack Constantine and was crushed at Saxa Rubra, nine miles from Rome. In the rush to retreat across the pontoon bridge, Maxentius and many of his men fell into the Tiber and drowned.

C. The battle of the Milvian Bridge (28 October 312) left Constantine the master of the Roman west. It was also the occasion when Constantine is said to have had a vision from the Christian God promising him victory.

VI. In the spring of 313, Constantine returned north. En route, he met Licinius in Milan and married him to his sister.

A. While Licinius was in Milan, Maximinus Daia had invaded his territory in the Balkans. Near Adrianople, on the last day of April 313, Licinius crushed Daia's forces. Daia fled into Turkey, was defeated again, then fled to Tarsus, where he died or committed suicide.

B. The Tetrarchy had collapsed, and the Roman world now had two rulers. Diocletian himself died on 3 December, probably in 313, having breathed 200 more years of life into the Roman Empire.

VII. Constantine and Licinius were notionally political allies bound by marital ties, but in fact, they were rivals, and by 315, tensions had resurfaced.

A. Despite the demise of the Tetrarchy, Constantine appointed his brother-in-law Bassianus as Caesar for Licinius in 315, but Licinius suborned Bassianus to fight against Constantine. Bassianus was defeated, and Constantine retaliated by invading Licinius's territory in 316. At a battle near the city of Cibale in modern Croatia, Licinius was defeated and withdrew to Adrianople, where he was defeated again but escaped.

B. Constantine pressed on to capture Byzantium, but Licinius blocked his passage home. The conflict ended in a negotiated settlement.

C. In 317, three Caesars were appointed: two of Constantine's sons, Crispus (about age 17) and Constantine II (7 months old), as well as

Licinius's son, also named Licinius (about 18 months old). This arrangement was tetrarchic in form but dynastic in substance.

D. Both senior emperors now devoted themselves to foreign enemies, but tensions persisted, particularly in religious policy. As Constantine issued edicts favoring Christianity, Licinius pursued persecution, and war became inevitable. In 324, Constantine moved east and, once more, met Licinius near Adrianople. Once more, Licinius lost.

E. Licinius withdrew deeper into his realm and, two months later, fought a second battle at Chrysopolis near Nicomedia in Turkey. Defeated again, Licinius and his nine-year-old son surrendered on 19 September 324. They were banished to Thessalonica in northern Greece.

F. As he entered Nicomedia in triumph, Constantine was the unchallenged master of the entire Roman world. The clash of pagan and Christian, which was to dominate Rome's domestic affairs for decades to come, had been presaged in the conflict between Licinius and Constantine.

G. In the spring of 325, Constantine ordered Licinius executed, along with his son, Constantine's nephew. In 336, he issued an order returning another son of Licinius to slave status. The treatment of Licinius and his line shows the ruthlessness of Constantine's dynastic logic.

Essential Reading:

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*.

Zosimus, *New History*, book 2.

MacMullen, *Constantine*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Constantine."

Lenski, *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, especially chapters 1–3.

Pohlsander, *The Emperor Constantine*, pp. 2–21.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why did Diocletian's tetrarchic system for the succession fall apart?

2. Did Constantine have any particular advantages as he entered the succession fray in 306? What factors impelled him to success?

Lecture Thirty-Five
The Christian Emperor—Constantine

Scope: This second lecture on Constantine examines his conversion to Christianity, his impact on the church, his administrative and military reforms, and the founding of Constantinople in 324. This last act established the basis for the Byzantine Empire, which existed in various guises down to 1453 and had significant ramifications for European and Asian history. Of even greater historical importance is Constantine's relationship with the heretofore reviled cult of Christianity. The matter of the emperor's personal conversion, although interesting, is secondary to the more important patronal relationship the emperor established with the early church. Under Constantine, Christianity changed from an outsider's religion to a state-sponsored religion, a transition that had seismic repercussions for subsequent history. By the time of Constantine's death in May 337, Christianity was not quite the official religion of the Roman state, but it was well on its way there. We end with a survey of Constantine's inadequate provisions for the succession.

Outline

I. Constantine converted to Christianity, but his treatment of the religion was closer to what might be termed "decriminalization" than establishment as a state religion.

A. At the end of Constantine's reign in 337, the Christian church was in a far stronger position than ever before, but it was still just one cult among many. It was not until the reign of Theodosius I (379–395) that Christianity emerged as the sole religion of the Roman Empire.

B. Two accounts of Constantine's conversion are preserved in the sources.

1. According to Lactantius, on the eve of the battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, Constantine had a dream ordering him to put the sign of Christ on his soldiers' shields. This sign was probably the chi-rho symbol (or *labarum* in Latin), *chi* and *rho* being the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek.

2. Eusebius claims that his account, written 25 years after 312, comes from Constantine himself. In this version, Constantine saw a cross in the sky in broad daylight with the words "under this sign you will win." The following night, he had a dream in which Christ told him to place a Christian sign on his battle standards.

C. Scholarly debate has raged around the issue of the "sincerity" of Constantine's conversion: Did he become fully or only partially Christian in 312? The evidence is ambiguous on this point.

1. On the one hand, there is evidence in the years following 312 that Constantine had become a Christian, or at least, that he promoted himself as such. The chi-rho symbol appeared in imperial iconography, and the emperor implemented significant pro-Christian measures. He prevailed on Licinius to do the same.
2. On the other hand, Constantine had experienced divine revelations in the past and linked himself to Sol or Sol Invictus ("Invincible Sun") on his coins. Such pagan imagery continued in Constantine's imperial iconography long after his conversion to Christianity.
3. The continuance of pagan imagery on coins may have been motivated by a desire not to alienate the pagan segment of his support base. But if so, it suggests that the emperor was willing to sacrifice religious principle to political expedience. When set against the backdrop of the Great Persecution, this choice casts doubt on the depth of Constantine's commitment to his religion.

D. A deeper historical perspective puts this issue in a somewhat different light. Emperors had long associated themselves with gods and had been as much religious as political leaders. The difference with Constantine is that he chose a novel god as his patron.

1. The inscription on the Arch of Constantine in Rome, dedicated in 315 or 316, is notably indistinct, attributing Constantine's victory to "the inspiration of divinity" but not identifying a specific god. A pagan would interpret that phrase differently from a Christian.
2. Constantine clearly recognized the usefulness of claims to divine guidance, but this does not mean that his conversion to Christianity was a sham. Religious sincerity and political acumen are not mutually exclusive traits.

E. From his official actions before the 320s, it seems that Constantine took his new religion seriously, while making concessions to ancient pagan traditions.

II. One role of Roman politicians was to oversee the maintenance of good relations with the deities. When Constantine cast the Christian God in the role of guiding light, he brought trouble to himself, the empire, and centuries of European history.

A. Up to the reign of Constantine, a variety of Christian churches existed, many clinging to mutually exclusive beliefs about doctrinal matters. By the early 4th century, tensions among the churches were evident.

B. Constantine was sucked into this doctrinal swamp almost immediately. A controversy had arisen in North Africa over what to do with Christians who had not given the full measure of devotion during the Great Persecution.

1. One school of thought, centered in the cities, urged forgiveness. The other, centered in the countryside, insisted that the *traditores* ("traitors") and their leaders, many of whom were priests and bishops, no longer qualified as true Christians. These hardliners were called *Donatists*, after one of their leaders, Donatus.
2. In April 313, the Donatists appealed to Constantine, not the pope, to remove a bishop of Carthage.
3. Constantine summoned the disputants to a synod in Rome in October 313. The Donatists lost the issue but appealed. Constantine then convened a council at Arelate in 314.
4. The Donatists lost again but still refused to back down and were faced with state persecution. Donatist property was confiscated, and their leaders were exiled. These practices proved ineffective, and in 321, the emperor abandoned them.

C. Constantine's engagement with the Donatist controversy inevitably dragged him into others. To curb the theological wrangling, Constantine convened a council at Nicaea in Asia Minor in 325. Here, the essentials of a state-sponsored Christian faith were laid out in the Nicene Creed.

1. The state sponsorship of this creed created the notion of an empire-wide *orthodoxy*, or "straight belief," in matters of faith, which inevitably cast all deviations from its decisions as heresy.
2. A major difference from the pagan persecutors of Christians was that Christian heretics would now actively be rooted out. The bloody manifestations of such thinking were not yet evident, but Constantine had started the process by putting the weight of the state behind only one version of Christianity. His desire was to unify the empire, but the historical consequences would be dire.
3. We see Constantine somewhat bewildered at the vehemence with which doctrinal arcana were debated by their adherents. He begged for cooperation among the disputants and held more councils, at Nicomedia in 327 and Tyre in 335.

III. In 324, Constantine refounded Byzantium as Constantinople, a move that shaped European and world history for centuries to come

A. Byzantium had been founded in the 7th century B.C. by Greek settlers and had grown in size and importance over the intervening millennium. The city occupied a triangular peninsula with an easily defensible land approach. The site dominated the main crossing from Asia to Europe, as well as the sea trade routes to and from the Black Sea.

B. In 324, Constantine marked out the boundaries of a new city and, on 11 May 330, officially dedicated the foundation of Constantinople. It was, in all respects, an eastern mirror of Rome.

C. Part of Constantine's motivation in founding a new Rome was probably that the old city was resistant to his new religion, although strategic considerations also stood behind the new city.

D. Constantinople was to be the main city of Christendom for centuries to come. It also became the capital of the successor state of Rome in the east, the Byzantine Empire, which is covered in The Teaching Company's course *World of Byzantium* by Dr. Kenneth Harl.

E. In many other great cities of the empire and in the Holy Land, Constantine founded churches, most dating to the 320s and 330s, as he emerged more openly as a Christian ruler and his attitude toward paganism hardened.

F. Oddly, though, Constantine displayed some religious ambiguity throughout his life.

IV. In running the empire, Constantine continued the work of Diocletian.

A. The army was separated into border-guards (*limitanei*) and mobile strike forces (*comitatenses*). Provincial administration was centralized further. Elaborate ceremony kept the emperor aloof from mere mortals. After 324, Constantine also remained aloof from military campaigning.

B. One of Constantine's major failings was the succession. He had departed from the merit-based tetrarchic idea of succession and leaned in the direction of dynasty.

1. The emperor had a large family, and initial attention focused on his eldest son, Crispus, who was about 20 in 324. In 317, he had been declared Caesar.

2. Constantine later gave the same title to his other sons and two of his nephews, but his ultimate intentions are unclear. That he had spent so much time and effort securing sole rule for himself would tend to suggest that he intended one of his sons to succeed him.

C. In 326, Crispus was suddenly executed. Fausta, Constantine's wife, soon followed him. Why these killings took place is unknown, but some shadowy dynastic wrangling may have been behind them.

D. Constantine fell ill shortly after Easter in April 337. He arranged to be baptized at Nicomedia, and then, on 22 May 337, he died. He was about 65 years old, had ruled almost 31 years, and had changed the face of European history for centuries to come.

V. Constantine remains a bit of a mystery, not least for his inconstant official treatment of Christianity and paganism.

A. His lack of decisiveness on the succession inevitably led to tragedy. After Constantine's death, his son Constantius II presided over the so-called "massacre of the princes," in which nine potential rivals were killed. By the autumn of 337, only the three sons of Constantine were

left. They initially divided up the empire but soon fell to squabbling. Civil war returned and, with it, the specter of usurpation.

B. Constantine's Christianizing of the empire, state-sponsorship of religion, and founding of Constantinople all rippled down to future ages. Indeed, these developments were so great that Constantine can be seen as ushering in the history of medieval Europe, with its divinely appointed absolute monarchs allied to popes and bishops.

C. For this reason, the death of Constantine is an apt place to end our survey. Although the Byzantines continued to call themselves Romans until the Turks broke into Constantinople in 1453, the world they ruled for more than a millennium was medieval rather than classical. And the foundations of that world were laid by Constantine, both the last Roman emperor and the first medieval monarch.

Essential Reading:

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*.

Zosimus, *New History*, book 2.

MacMullen, *Constantine*.

Supplementary Reading:

DIR, "Constantine."

Lenski, *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, especially chapters 4–10, 14–16.

Pohlsander, *The Emperor Constantine*, pp. 22–87.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you see Constantine's relationship with both Christianity and paganism changing over the course of his 30-year reign?

2. Was Constantine, in your view, a successful emperor? On what criteria do you make your judgment?

Lecture Thirty-Six

Reflections on the Emperors of Rome

Scope: In this final lecture, we look back over the course and ask: What makes the emperors of Rome so compelling a subject? We start by surveying the ancient sources' portrayal of the emperors and examining critically the traditional categorizations of "good" and "bad" emperors. We subject those traits to analysis and discover them to be largely a matter of spin: The same behaviors can be found in accounts of both good and bad emperors, and only prejudicial presentation separates the two. We therefore embark on our own diagnoses of what made bad emperors bad and, in so doing, uncover some fundamental truths about power, legitimacy, and empire in Rome.

Outline

I. We begin with the issue of "good" and "bad" emperors and work toward matters that the history of the emperors seems to elucidate.

A. The *Life of the Deified Aurelian* in the *Augustan History* includes a musing on the relative merits of emperors. The author lists a dozen good emperors, including Augustus, Vespasian, Trajan, Hadrian, and others. The rest—some 30 "legitimate" incumbents—were scoundrels.

B. The Roman emperors obviously represent a mixed bag, but the situation is less clear-cut for us than it was for the ancient sources.

C. The judgment of whether an emperor was good or bad in the ancient sources revolves around two core issues: How seriously did the man take his job, and how did he treat the Senate? Recall that most of our ancient literary evidence comes from the senatorial class.

1. All the good emperors meet the two criteria; bad emperors invariably followed private pursuits and treated the Senate with scorn or even persecuted it.

2. Note that some Senate-denigrating rulers were arguably effective for at least part of their reigns, including Tiberius, Claudius, and Domitian. At the same time, some questions still hang over the effectiveness of such Senate-respecting emperors as Titus, Nerva, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius.

D. We can make three further observations about the ancient sources. First, they can be seen to "spin" data to fit their predetermined opinions on an emperor's worth.

E. Second, perspective matters in the ancient sources. We see this in the views of Tiberius found in Tacitus, a senator, and Velleius Paterculus, an equestrian who served under Tiberius. Tacitus portrays a brooding monster; Velleius, a heroic man of action and a conscientious ruler.

F. Third, for all his vilification in the elite sources, Nero retained such a popular appeal that at least three false Neros are reported in the 20 years after his death. Obviously, a view of Nero quite different from that documented by senatorial sources was current in antiquity.

G. If we have any hope of finding the truth, we must assess the orientation of our writers to their subjects and appreciate the tradition they inherited about each one.

H. An alternative, albeit limited, approach is to eschew all attempts to "find the truth," embrace the biases of the sources, and use them to investigate the "construction" of emperorship among the Roman elite.

II. I prefer to jettison the categorization of emperors as merely "good" or "bad" and think in terms of relative effectiveness.

A. Effectiveness, unlike goodness or badness, can be measured in different spheres of action: domestic policy, succession arrangements, military affairs, handling of conspiracies or usurpers, degree of stability, attention to duties, and so on.

B. We must also look at the evolution of individual reigns, rather than seeing their courses as somehow inevitable.

C. If we adopt these perspectives, we can make some useful observations.

1. First and most obviously, the likes of Caligula, Nero, Commodus, and Elagabalus cannot be classed as effective or conscientious.

2. In contrast, Augustus, Vespasian, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Diocletian were surely effective rulers.

3. Somewhere between these poles stand such men as Tiberius, Domitian, Trajan, and Septimius Severus.

D. In general, ineffectiveness can be seen to correlate with youth and inexperience. Caligula, Commodus, Nero, and Elagabalus, for example, all came to power in their teens or 20s, and none had any military or administrative experience to speak of. In contrast, Vespasian, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and Diocletian were all close to 40 or older, and all had extensive experience in government prior to assuming office.

E. Circumstances are also important, of course: Galba, Nerva, and Pertinax were both old and experienced but proved unequal to the challenge of their times. In contrast, Claudius, who also entered the job mature in years and with only a theoretical knowledge of how to govern, gives us a reign of mixed results but certainly not a catastrophe.

F. The relative conscientiousness of the emperors leads to another observation: The Roman Principate had no job description attached to it. Its powers and privileges were instituted by law, but its duties were nowhere specified, not even in custom. The emperorship, then, was

defined more by the character of the incumbent than by any notion of what the job entailed. There was no way to direct a Roman emperor's behavior and no legal way to remove him once he was installed.

G. Factors such as these contributed to the growth of raw autocracy at Rome. As generations lived and died in the presence of all-powerful emperors, the sociopolitical order acclimatized to increased absolutism.

III. From the material covered in this course, we might also trace the rise of tyranny at Rome. From the careful constitutional constructions of Augustus to the open absolutism of Diocletian and Constantine, the emperors consistently acquired more overtly monarchical political personae.

A. This process began as early as Caligula, while Nero's reign and its aftermath left no doubt about the future direction of the Principate. The 2nd-century Antonines furthered the process by entrenching institutional paternalism and centralization in various ways. As times grew more unstable, militarism blossomed under the Severans and the 3rd-century incumbents and was institutionalized by Diocletian and Constantine.

B. That said, the scope of Roman tyranny was, by modern standards, extremely limited.

1. Probably only a few thousand people were ever in danger of being affected by the occasional spasms of repression. The majority of those would stem from the ranks of the senators or from knights in imperial service.

2. Roman emperors lacked the state apparatus and communication capabilities to institute the tyranny familiar from modern horrors, such as Nazi Germany. Nero or Domitian could not, like Stalin, wreak havoc in the lower echelons of society.

3. Genuine tyranny that slaughtered masses of common citizens was all but unheard of, although two exceptions stand out: the suppression of rebellions, such as the Jewish Revolts under Nero and Hadrian, and the persecution of Christians in 303–311.

IV. The most important lesson the Roman emperors have to teach us may be this: The political loyalties of a state's standing professional armed forces must be managed carefully. The history of the emperors can be read, from start to finish, as a tale of army loyalties either managed or mismanaged.

A. Augustus's solution to the problem of the politicized armies of the late republic was to focus their loyalties entirely on himself. That focus was then transferred to successive emperors.

B. The problem with this system was twofold: First, in times of uncertainty, army loyalties could splinter, resulting in civil war. Second, the close association of soldier and emperor held only so long as the soldiers had confidence in the emperor as a military leader.

1. We should contrast this situation with that in Western democracies, where military power is firmly subordinated to civil authority.
2. Beginning with Augustus, the same man was both the head of government and the commander-in-chief.
3. The same is true of the American president, but the American president is the commander-in-chief by virtue of being the head of the civilian government; the Roman emperor was the head of civilian government by virtue of being commander-in-chief.

C. The history of the Roman emperors reveals that military authority was paramount. If that authority flagged in an emperor, he was doomed.

D. The history of the emperors also illustrates how, over time, the army came to realize fully its dominant role over all other imperial functions.

1. Major signposts on this march to military monarchy are the civil wars of A.D. 69, the civil wars and political militarism of the Severans, the emergence of soldier-emperors during the 3rd-century crisis, and the institutionalized military despotism of Diocletian and Constantine.
2. To my mind, this process is the most important feature of the history surveyed in this course. Each step was taken with a view toward expedience. But when that step became the new normal, it paved the way for the next step, and so on, until Rome had moved from the *princeps* Augustus to the *dominus* Constantine.

Essential Reading:

Baldwin, *The Roman Emperors*.

Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*.

Supplementary Reading:

Drake, *Problematics of Military Power*.

Roller, *Constructing Autocracy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Rank the Roman emperors surveyed in this course in terms of their effectiveness (perhaps in different categories: domestic policy, the succession, achievements in foreign affairs, or the army). Who among them emerges from your survey as the most effective (i.e., the "best")?
2. What, in your opinion, is the single most important lesson taught us by the emperors of Rome? Justify your answer with specific examples.

Bibliography

Important Note: The potential bibliography for the Roman emperors is vast. Presented below are particularly recent, pertinent, and/or influential works. The notes and bibliographies of the titles below will readily lead the curious or the diligent to more focused works on specific topics.

*Denotes essential reading.

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Augustus

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Seager, R. *Tiberius.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, 2nd ed. A standard and excellent biography, with thorough citation of relevant ancient sources. Proponent of the regency model of imperial succession

Southern, P. *Domitian: Tragic Tyrant.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. A concise, readable, and not entirely hostile biography.

Wellesley, K. *The Year of the Four Emperors.* London: Routledge, 2000, 3rd ed. A detailed and readable account of this pivotal year; unfortunately, documentation is minimal.

Wilken, R. L. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. An excellent examination of the way early Christianity appeared to pagan Romans.

Nerva and the Antonines

*Bennett, J. *Trajan Optimus Princeps: A Life and Times.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. The only full-scale biography of Trajan in English, but flawed. Use with caution.

Birley, A. *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography.* New York: Barnes and Noble, 1987, rev. ed. Thorough treatment of the topic by a leading historian of imperial Rome.

*———. *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor.* London: Routledge, 1997. Excellent and thorough biography of the enigmatic ruler.

Coarelli, F. *The Column of Trajan.* Rome: Editore Colombo, 2000. Excellent description of the column, its history, vital statistics, and defining characteristics. Includes photographs of all 155 scenes on the column.

Grainger, J. D. *Nerva and the Roman Succession Crisis of AD 9–99.* London: Routledge, 2003. A complex but surprisingly readable prosopographical argument about the accession of Nerva and, within 17 months, that of Trajan.

Grant, M. *The Antonines: The Roman Empire in Transition*. London: Routledge, 1994. A competent survey of the emperors from Antoninus Pius to Commodus, incorporating both narrative and thematic analysis.

Rossi, L. *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971. Advocates interpreting the column as "history in pictures" and assesses the evidence for the wars.

Schäfer, P., ed. *The Bar Kochba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome.* Tübingen, Germany: Siebeck, 2003. Leading scholars contribute papers that reexamine various aspects of this war, partly on the basis of new finds.

The Severans, the 3rd-Century Crisis, and the Recovery

Barnes, T. D. *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. A classic study by a leading scholar of late antiquity that still retains its value.

*Birley, A. R. *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. The best biography of this emperor in print.

*Brauer, G. C., Jr. *The Age of the Soldier-Emperors: Imperial Rome, AD 244–284.* Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1976. An older but still valuable survey of the main period of chaos in the mid-3rd century.

Cameron, A. *The Later Roman Empire, AD 284–430.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. Standard treatment of the era, which extends a little beyond the scope of this course.

Grant, M. *The Collapse and Recovery of the Roman Empire*. London: Routledge, 1999. A short but useful survey that includes frequent (and lengthy) direct quotations from ancient sources.

———. *The Severans: The Changed Roman Empire*. London: Routledge, 1996. A concise survey of the main events and issues of the dynasty.

Lenski, N., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Sixteen superb essays on various aspects of the Roman world and Constantine's place in it circa 284–363.

Levick, B. *Julia Domna*. London: Routledge, 2007. A succinct life of the woman who was both Septimius Severus's wife and the matriarch of a corps of powerful imperial women.

*MacMullen, R. *Constantine*. New York: Dial Press, 1969. Despite its age, this remains a readable and stimulating biography of this complex emperor.

———. *Roman Government's Response to Crisis, AD 235–337.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976. An older work by a leading Roman historian, written in lively style and packed with insight.

Pohlsander, H. A. *The Emperor Constantine*. London: Routledge, 1996. Concise coverage of Constantine's reign.

Potter, D. S. *The Roman Empire at Bay, AD 180–395*. London: Routledge, 2004. Magisterial treatment of the era in both narrative and thematic form.

Southern, P. *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*. London: Routledge, 2001. A readable survey of this critical era.

Stoneman, R. *Palmyra and Its Empire: Zenobia's Revolt against Rome*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992. A readable account of the Palmyrene secession.

*Watson, A. *Aurelian and the Third Century*. London: Routledge, 1999. A comprehensive study of this pivotal reign, with a useful summary of the 3rd century as an introduction.

*Williams, S. *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*. London: Methuen, 1985; reprint, London: Routledge, 1997. A thoroughgoing and lucid analysis of this pivotal reign.

Thematic Issues

Aicher, P. J. *Rome Alive: A Source-Guide to the Ancient City*. Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 2004. A superb and useful book that ties specific pieces of written testimony (literary texts, inscriptions, and coins) to specific monuments in Rome. Given that most of these monuments are imperial, this is an invaluable survey of the emperors' building activity in the city. Offers a brief introduction to the visible remains, followed by pertinent citations from ancient sources (translated in vol. 1; in the original Greek or Latin in vol. 2).

*Anderson, J. K. *Roman Architecture and Society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. An excellent guide to the Roman construction industry and its products.

Ando, C. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. A scholarly and detailed

assertion of the emperor's ideological centrality to the cohesion of the Roman Empire. A difficult but rewarding read.

*Campbell, J. B. *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 235*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. The definitive treatment of the subject (in English), richly detailed and well documented.

*Coulston, J., and H. Dodge, eds. *Ancient Rome: The Archaeology of the Eternal City*. Oxford: Oxford School of Archaeology, 2000. A superb and readable collection of essays by leading experts on the history of Rome's development and various aspects of its physical remains.

Donahue, J. F. *The Roman Community at Table during the Principate*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. Detailed study of public feasting.

Fishwick, D. *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*, 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1987–. Magisterial study of the imperial cult in the western half of the Roman Empire.

Garnsey, P. *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Fascinating exploration of the social uses of food (including public banquets) in both Greece and Rome.

———, and R. Saller. *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987. A concise and readable introduction to the issues covered.

Hopkins, K., *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Stimulating study of the Roman games, senatorial mortality and replenishment, and Roman attitudes toward death.

Le Bohec, Y. *The Imperial Roman Army*. London: Batsford, 1994. An up-to-date and well-illustrated survey of the topic.

Millar, F. *The Roman Empire and Its Neighbors*. London: Duckworth, 1981, 2nd ed. Classic study of the administration of the empire, run without a government, in the modern sense of that word.

*Price, S. R. F. *Rituals and Power: The Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. The standard, authoritative study of the topic as it pertains to the Greek east. An excellent complement to Fishwick's study of the west.

*Richardson, L., Jr. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. Invaluable reference work that covers all the visible (and some subterranean) remains of the ancient city.

Talbert, R. J. A., *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Definitive, scholarly treatment of the topic

*Veyne, P. *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism*. Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1990. Translated abridgement of a 1976 French original that remains a classic and highly influential analysis of *euergetism*, the social contract that saw private monies deployed for public benefit.

Webster, G. *The Roman Imperial Army*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1985, 3rd ed. A standard work that addresses the nuts and bolts of army organization, dispositions, recruitment, and so on.

Wiedemann, T. *Emperors and Gladiators*. London: Routledge, 1992. Remains the best concise study of the place of gladiatorial games in Roman culture.

Internet Resources

De Imperatoribus Romanis (*DIR*). www.roman-emperors.org. Biographies of the Roman emperors penned by reputed scholars and experts. An excellent resource, with links to battle maps and catalogues of coins.