

Contestations of Power in Late Antiquity (A006708)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Hoof, Lieve	LW03	lecturer-in-charge
Van Nuffelen, Peter	LW03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - English)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - French)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - German)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Greek)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Latin)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - Swedish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - German)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Greek)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Latin)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Swedish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - English)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - German)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Greek)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Latin)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - Swedish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Greek)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject German - Swedish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Greek)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Latin - Swedish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme Classics	5	A
Exchange Programme Global Studies and World Societies	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Elective Set Southeast-European Language	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Later Roman Empire, Late Antiquity, Christianity, early Middle Ages, Byzantium

Position of the course

This module is one of the two core modules of the research focus Ancient History on BA3 level. Building on knowledge about the ancient world acquired in the first two bachelor years, it offers a survey of the later Roman Empire (AD 284-565) and focuses on sources, methods and debates, with the aim of allowing students to navigate this field of study independently. It is also of interest to students interested in the early middle ages, early Islam, and the history of Christianity.

Contents

The later Roman Empire is marked by profound political, religious and cultural transformations. Political reforms changed the power balance within the empire, as well as between the Romans and their neighbours. The rise of Christianity not only reshaped the religious landscape, but also had a profound impact on fields as diverse as the care for the poor and the writing of literature. And the fusion of classical and new artistic and linguistic traditions changed the world of culture. As the resulting political, religious and cultural changes had a profound impact on the empire and its inhabitants, they generated numerous conflicts.

This module focuses on these conflicts in order to offer a survey of the main lines of development, the main sources, and current approaches and debates of the history of Late Antiquity. The course discusses themes such as: (1) Autocracy and bureaucracy, crises and riots; (2) Voting for God?: councils and conflicts; (3) Waiting for the barbarians: migrations, integration and state formation; (5) Natural disasters: climate change and plagues; (6) The Fall of the Roman Empire: history and myth.

Initial competences

Basic knowledge of the ancient and medieval world, acquired in the survey courses of BA1 or in any other way.

Final competences

- 1 To have a firm knowledge of the history of the later Roman Empire
- 2 To be able to explain the main concepts, changes, and debates in scholarship in the field of Late Antiquity, and critically reflect on them
- 3 To be familiar with the main sources and source types used for the study of the later Roman Empire
- 4 To be able independently to discuss and critically evaluate late antique sources.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Interactive classes

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Type: Reader

Name: Extracts from sources

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

References

Recommended reading: Mitchell, Stephen, and Geoffrey Greatrex. *A History of the Later Roman Empire, AD 284-700*. Third edition. Blackwell History of the Ancient World. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2023. (copy available in the library)

Course content-related study coaching

Directly in the class (interactive classes)

Through Ufora

During office hours, after appointment

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

NPE: Active and constructive participation in the classes on the basis of reading assignments and guiding questions.

PE: At the end of the semester the course is assessed through an oral exam with written preparation..

Calculation of the examination mark

NPE: 10%

PE: 90%

Students must pass both NPE and PE in order to pass the course unit as a whole.

Facilities for Working Students

Possibility to change the NPE part into an assignment. Possibility to move oral exam. Possibility to move feedback.