Roman History – Winter Term 2020
Course Outline (preliminary version, 29 Oct. 2019)

Rome was the starting point and centre of the largest empire of antiquity, and the most durable superpower in world history. This course provides an introductory survey of her political history, with due consideration of her (changing) constitution, her imperialistic drive and her major players such as Caesar, Augustus, and Constantine. After starting with the mythical past and the regal period (753 to 510 BCE), we shall focus on the establishment, stabilization, and disintegration of the Republic (510 to 31/27 BCE) and its transition into the monarchy under Augustus (31/27 BCE to 14 CE). The main events of the High Empire, the 3rd-century crisis, the spread of Christianity and the transformation of the Roman state in Late Antiquity (until the 6th century CE) will be treated more briefly. Discussions on the notions of history, on the risks and advantages of periodization, on the critical use of ancient sources & on the implications of modern bias will frame the course.

Instructor: Professor Altay Coşkun, Classical Studies, ML 228, ex. 38903
Class Location: PAS 1229
Class Time: TTh 14:30-15:50
Prerequisite: none
Prof’s Office Hours: TTh after class (until 17:00), and on appointment
Email: acoskun@uwaterloo.ca
Required Reading: C.S. Mackay, Ancient Rome: A Military and Political History, Cambridge 2005. Further required and optional readings are available through LEARN
Course Website: at UW LEARN
Course Requirements Two multiple-choice tests: 20%
One mini-essay test: 10%
One essay abstract: 10%
Course essay: 30%
Final exam: 30%
Work Load: Please, set aside 5 hours per week to revise and prepare for class.

Learning Outcomes and Course Objectives:

Students will acquire a basic knowledge of the main historical issues such as the gradual growth of the city state and empire of the Romans as well as of their political constitution and more broadly their political culture (students more interested in social and cultural history should consider taking CLAS 202). They will learn not only the names of outstanding personalities and the dates of key events, but also be acquainted with the different genres of sources (such as historiography, inscriptions, coins), on which our ‘knowledge’ is based. They will also have some idea of the fragility and limitation of this ‘knowledge’, which may be due to the fabrications or distortions by ancient authors, the complete lack of sources for certain questions, or the prejudice of modern perspectives. The weekly writing assignments and the course essay challenge the students with central questions of Roman History, thereby initiating the development of their methodological and analytical skills, as well as training their capability of communicating their research results in writing. The course will prepare them to form their own opinions on crucial issues such as the driving force of Roman imperialism or on factors stabilizing or jeopardizing the Roman state (esp. the controversial role of Christianity in this regard). Any of these topics may be covered in more detail in CLAS 352 or 486.