

**Title of course:** The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 284–476

**Name/email of Convenor:** Dr Lea Niccolai (ln294@cam.ac.uk)

**Course description:**

This paper traces the history of the Mediterranean and Near East from the accession of Diocletian in 284 to the dissolution of the Roman Empire as a unified political structure in the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Three themes will stand in the centre of our attention.

First, we will explore the structure of the Roman state at the height of its power. In the period from the late third century onwards, the imperial administration became more present in the lives of its subjects than ever before. We will look at the shape of the ideologies on which emperors drew to justify the formation of a more energetic state apparatus. We will trace the relationship between this new state and local landowning élites and the effect this had on cities.

Secondly, we will explore the relationship between state power and the Christian church. After the conversion of the emperor Constantine, Christianity gradually became the dominant religion in the Mediterranean and Near East. How did this development change Roman conceptions of the body and permissible sexual behaviour? What role did religious institutions and charismatic leaders play? How did Roman policies towards minority groups change?

Thirdly, we will analyse the factors that led to breakup of the Roman Empire. The fifth century saw the western half of the empire fragment into a group of successor states. But the eastern Mediterranean and Near East entered a prolonged period of stability and economic growth. We will trace the reasons for the weakening of imperial authority, examine the impact of 'barbarians', and explore the effects of the end of the empire.

**Mode of teaching:**

16 lectures and 4 two-hour classes. Supervisions will be centrally organised. The three-hour examination paper will contain around sixteen essay questions concerning various of the topics covered in lectures and classes. Candidates are required to answer three questions.

**Maximum supervision capacity:** No cap.

**Suggested preliminary reading:**

P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (1978); A. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284–430* (1993); P. Garnsey and C. Humfress, *The Evolution of the Late Antique World* (2001); C.M. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (2004); C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (2009); P. Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle:*

*Wealth, the Fall of Rome and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (2012); K. Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (2013).