

Fresh Voices in Ancient History

Trinity Term 2025

Ioannou Centre Lecture Theatre, Tuesdays at 11 am

Programme

Week 1 (29 April)

Max Buckby

The Civil Contio and Late Republican Politics: A Process of De- and Reconstruction

Week 2 (6 May)

Karl Berg

Christianity in the Roman World: Proliferation and Persecution

Week 5 (27 May)

Zoé Lienard

Rome and the Reges socii et amici

Week 6 (3 June)

Mridula Gullapalli

Translating Power: Empires and Multilingual Inscriptions

Week 7 (10 June)

Adam Burge

Egypt and the Coming of Rome

Week 8 (17 June)

Martin Lopez Howe

Ancient geopolitics: maritime exploration and empire from Sargon to Alexander

Abstracts

Week 1

Max Buckby: *The Civil Contio and Late Republican Politics: A Process of De- and Reconstruction*

This lecture will explore the central position of the civil *contio* within historiographical debates concerning the character and culture of late Roman republic, especially the nature of non-elite political power. The lecture will explore contional procedure, audience composition and certain instances of non-elite political expression in and around the civil *contio*, especially vocal responses and physical violence. It will also be stressed throughout that we must analyse the civil *contio* through a careful process of de- and reconstruction, being ever-aware of our slanted elite literary sources; the tension between institutional theory and practical public-political realities, but also the pitfall of overly structuralist / ritualist accounts produced by modern historiography. As such, the way we approach the civil *contio* serves as a microcosm of the methodological considerations all students and scholars must confront when studying any area of the late republic. This lecture will be of relevance to students studying any late republican paper, e.g., RH5, Cicero, Politics and Thought.

Week 2

Karl Berg: *Christianity in the Roman World: Proliferation and Persecution*

The lecture will examine vexed questions surrounding the scale and pace of Christianity's expansion over the first three centuries AD and survey the history and historiography of attested conflicts between Christian communities and civic, provincial, and imperial authorities over this same period, leading up to Galerius' edict of toleration (AD 311), which brought about the end of the 'Great Persecution' and precipitated the more famous 'edict of Milan' (AD 313), promulgated by Constantine and Licinius. This lecture will be of particular relevance to students studying the paper *Religions in the Greek and Roman World, c. 31 BC-AD 312*.

Week 5

Zoé Lienard: *Rex sociusque et amicus – King, ally and friend in the Roman Empire*

From the third century BCE until the end of the fourth century CE, kings played an essential role in the continuation and expansion of the Roman *imperium*. They protected the frontiers of the Roman Empire, supported exploration and military expeditions beyond these frontiers and actively contributed to connect their kingdom with the rest of the Empire economically, diplomatically and culturally. Their integration into this imperial model allowed them to acquire significant personal and dynastic power and wealth. This lecture will address the historiographical debates regarding the status of the kings of the Empire and try to understand their place in the imperial system from the Republic to the early Principate with three case studies: king Masinissa of Numidia, king Juba II of Mauretania and queen Pythodoris of Pontus. This lecture will be particularly relevant for students studying papers on the late Republic and early Roman Empire.

Week 6

Mridula Gullapalli: *Translating Power: Empires and Multilingual Inscriptions*

Imperial inscriptions in multiple languages provide striking insight into how empires were 'translated' for their multiethnic constituents. These texts often share characteristics such as the portrayal of the ruler as benevolent, reminders of his piety and multiple religious offices, enumerations of the various subject peoples, and framing the empire as a project of 'imperial peace'. Going beyond the words on the stone, the location of such inscriptions also contributed to their character as imperial monuments, often lying alongside major routes connecting political and economic capitals and hubs of the empire(s). In this lecture, I will illustrate how the multilingual imperial inscriptions were an important means for the management of vast, ethnically diverse political units, by a ruler who was foreign to several imperial subjects. This lecture will cover case studies from Achaemenid Persia (the Behistun Inscription), Hellenistic Central Asia (the Greek/Bilingual Edicts of Aśoka), and the Roman Empire (the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*). The discussions presented here draw on my ongoing research into the Edicts of Aśoka and imperial multiculturalism. Topics covered will be relevant to students taking the following papers: The Achaemenid Empire, 550-330 BC; Alexander the Great and his Early Successors, 336 BC-302 BC; The Hellenistic World: Societies and Cultures, c.300-100 BC; Epigraphy of the Greek and/or Roman World; Augustan Rome; Republic to Empire: Rome, 50 BC to AD 50; Texts and Contexts; Beyond Greece and Rome.

Week 7

Adam Burge: *Egypt and the Coming of Rome*

This lecture will survey both the changes and continuities in Egypt after it came under Roman control. Specific attention will be given to topics such as land ownership and fiscal and civic reforms. Specific examples from personal archives of individuals living during this time would be explored to examine the extent to which top-down changes affected the daily lives of common individuals. Additionally provided will be an overview of key debates, such as the nature and extent of these changes and continuities and the so-called 'Sonderstellung question'. This lecture will be of particular interest for those taking The Hellenistic World, RH6 and Politics, Society and Culture from Nero to Hadrian, as well as those taking the faculty classes Rome, Italy and the Hellenistic East and Imperial Culture and Society.

Week 8

Martin Lopez Howe: *Ancient geopolitics: maritime exploration and empire from Sargon to Alexander*

I propose in this lecture to present exploratory voyages on sea conducted on behalf of ancient polities, from Sargon II to Alexander the Great (722 - 323 BC), and to show they were a shared practice. The evidence from better and less well-known literary sources, as well as inscriptions and archaeology, will be discussed to cover case-studies from Assyria, Egypt, Persia, Carthage, Athens, and finally Macedonia. I will go over the practical uses of seafaring exploration, and then the purposes of reporting these discoveries in the form we know now. Consequently, maritime voyages were particularly favoured instruments of expansionism and imperialism. This elaborates on the geopolitical facet of my research on the Persian Achaemenid navy by taking a broad view on ancient empires. This could be of interest to students taking GH1, GH3, Alexander the Great and his Early Successors, 336 BC-302 BC, The Achaemenid Empire, 550-330 BC, The Greeks and the Mediterranean World, c.950-500 BC, and Texts and Contexts.