Introduction

This course offers an extended exploration of one theme: religious aspects of warfare. We shall together examine such notions as the Roman 'theology of victory', Christian 'Just War' and Muslim jihad, among other aspects of thought and practice in the late Roman empire and its successor states in the near east, notably the Byzantine empire. While the chronological parameters of the course appear broad, our focus will remain acute. Similarly, while our key sources may appear disparate and wide-ranging, our investigations will illuminate common themes and ideas.

In the first instance we shall focus on late Roman and early Byzantine attitudes to war and religion, measuring the impact of the Christianization of the Roman world. We shall begin by exploring attitudes to war and religious violence in the Bible, carefully reading books from both the Old Testament and the New Testament that were interpreted and reinterpreted through the centuries under consideration, paying particular attention to the book of Revelation. We shall then compare the thoughts and attitudes of certain Patristic writers with those of 'pagan' contemporaries, remembering that both groups were citizens and subjects of the same Roman emperors. This is the essential background to the later material, as Byzantine authors refer continually to Biblical and Patristic writings.

We shall identify two strands for fuller consideration throughout the first five sessions: Christian attitudes to violence, army service and war; and Roman attitudes to religion generally, and to Christianity in particular. An excellent place to study these attitudes is within the Roman army in the third and fourth centuries, for here one might expect to find the clearest distinction between 'pagan' and Christian attitudes to warfare. We shall dwell on the ritual and religious life of the army camps. This is also the essential background to understanding the conversion of Constantine, general and emperor. We shall see how Christian ideas were embraced by the early Byzantine state within its highly elaborate 'theology of victory', and explore how Christian ideas developed within radically changing contexts in eastern and western parts of Roman lands. Our attention will remained fixed most extensively on eastern lands, where Christians who called themselves Romans throughout our period fought first Zoroastrian Persians, and later Muslim Arabs. But we shall also have opportunities to consider western attitudes to warfare, notably the ideas of St. Augustine of Hippo.

In the second part of the course, we shall focus on the rise of Islam and Christian interactions with the new power to the east. We shall trace the developments in Christian and Muslim thought on aspects of warfare to the middle of the tenth century C.E. Certain motifs, for example the cross, and ideas, notably martyrdom, will appear frequently throughout the course, and we shall explore how they change, or stay the same, in different contexts. Throughout the course we shall study texts translated from the original Latin, Greek and Arabic, alongside pertinent images, which are far more than mere illustrations, and often more illuminating than texts. We shall prepare a 'gobbet' (definition below) for discussion at each session.
Reading

Not every work listed on this syllabus and handbook will be in the library. This is a universal problem. Consequently, a very large amount of the weekly reading will be supplied in electronic form in a Dropbox. For copyright reasons, not everything can be supplied in this manner, but there will always be enough to read for each session, if not always everything you might wish to read.

It is not expected that you will read everything listed each week, but it is required that you devote a good amount of time and attention to the course, and therefore complete as much of the reading as you are able, and certainly enough to contribute each week to discussions. Moreover, you may be asked in any session to deliver an answer to a "gobbet" question (see below).

Assignments and Deadlines

NB: Graduates enrolled in the seminar as HIEU 263 will be examined differently, and should consult the professor.

There are three major components by which undergraduates enrolled in the seminar as HIEU 163 will be assessed:

A. Midterm Paper (40%): You will write one take-home paper of 3000 words (plus critical apparatus, i.e., notes, bibliography). The deadline for this essay is in the start of the seminar in Week 8, i.e. Thursday, May 24, at 1pm.

B. Gobbets (40%) are, for the uninitiated, short excerpts from set texts or images that are presented to you for comment. These will be assessed by an in-class examination in week 10, in which you will write on a selection of excerpted passages or images relating to the whole course. You will be asked to write a commentary on four "gobbets", at least one textual and one visual, and two others that may be any combination of visual and textual. You will have a choice in the exam.

In preparation, as you work through the primary sources (written and visual), you will be asked to prepare gobbet commentaries to present in each seminar. A list from which you may select is appended below, and you will be asked to alternate between commentaries on textual and visual material.

Your commentary on the gobbets will be integral to seminar discussions. Your commentary should take 15-20 minutes to formulate, in exam conditions, but will take longer at first. You will be expected to identify the passage or image excerpted, reconstruct its broader context, and reveal its significance through exegesis (literally 'drawing out', thus 'interpretation'). Textual gobbets will all be selected from the list of primary sources (A), and a list of examples to be covered in seminars is appended below. Gobbet images are listed after each seminar, and will have been made available on you in Dropbox, along with the electronic readings. Pertinent secondary literature is listed in the bibliographies under each weekly heading.
C. Attendance and full participation (10%). This includes attendance at all seminars unless a good reason is provided in advance, and presentation of an answer to at least one "gobbet" question.

SEMINARS

There are 10 timetabled seminars in total, each lasting 2.5 hours. However, one seminar will be a reading week. The first part of each session will, as a rule, be devoted to general discussion of particular readings; the second part of each session will, as a rule, be devoted to close readings and exegesis of 'gobbets'.

Week 1 (April 5). Old and New Testament Attitudes to Warfare

Our focus is on contrasting attitudes to war in the Bible, familiarizing ourselves with key passages that feature in many of the later key sources; also our first thoughts on defining 'holy war'.

Readings: Old Testament: Exodus, 13.1-15.27 (Crossing of the Red Sea); Deuteronomy; Book of Joshua; 1 Samuel: 13 to 2 Samuel: 24 (The David Story, which concludes at 1 Kings: 1-2); Micah: 1-7 (Prophecy of Micah), Psalms 91 [90 in the Septuagint], 137 [136]; 2 Maccabees.

New Testament: Gospel of Matthew, 5.1-7.29 (Sermon on the Mount). [PDF of the KJV Bible provided; check the Dropbox for readings.]

Week 2 (April 12). Christian Attitudes to Warfare before Constantine

We shall explore how Christian writers conceived of violence and warfare in the centuries before Constantine's conversion; how they understood aspects of Scripture that appeared to countenance religious violence, or showed God's sanction for war; how Christian martyrs conceived of themselves and their struggle; and subsequently how they viewed Christian participation in warfare.


Images: Christ-Helios; images of the martyrs?

Week 3 (April 19). The Late Roman Theology of Victory and the *Triumphus*

We shall explore the highly-developed Roman system of thought and ritual that underpinned warfare and celebrated victory; become familiar with panegyrical orations, and the contexts in which they were employed, notably the triumph.


Images: Porphyry Tetrarchs, Arras Medallion, Arch of Galerius, Arch of Constantine

Week 4 (April 26). Constantine the Great

We shall explore how: Constantine was converted, and the nature of that conversion; how his faith served his needs as a general; how iconography and rhetoric developed as a consequence of the conversion.


For Eusebius you may not need to consult much more than the commentary by Cameron and Hall, but do follow up some leads. On Lactantius, see E. DePalma Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire. Lactantius and Rome* (Ithaca, NY, 2000);
A. Søby Christensen, *Lactantius the Historian* (Copenhagen, 1980), which proposes that, contrary to the standard view, Lactantius did not compose his work in the west, having fled Nicomedia, but rather used a Latin historiographical source, the notorious lost *Kaisergeschichte*.


Images: The Great Cameo, Constantine's coins, Red Sea sarcophagi

Red Sea Sarcophagus

Week 5 (May 3). Imperial Victory in the Theodosian Age; East and West diverge

We shall explore how, in the age when Christianity became the formal religion of empire: the Roman army responded to the disaster of Adrianople; Church fathers developed ideas on killing in war; ceremonial once reserved for imperial victory was adapted for the reception of religious relics; the cult of the True Cross and how the Cross emerged as the supreme symbol of Christian victory.


Images: Probus Diptych, Long-cross solidi, Trier Ivory, Christ Militant (Ravenna)
6. Justinian, Maurice, Heraclius: Fighting the Persians

We shall explore the development of religious services for the army and how they inspired the armies of Justinian, Maurice and Heraclius. We shall also read the prescriptions in Maurice’s *Strategikon*. Did the spilling of tears prevent the spilling of blood? We shall then explore the final battles of antiquity, between Romans and Persians, and determine whether one can discern the first articulation of Christian ‘Holy War’ in the art and literature of the early seventh century. There is too much for any one person to cover this week, so choose an emperor and period on which to focus. We’ll decide who will do which in class.


*The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*, translated by Cyril Mango and Roger Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 424-75 (from A.M. 6100; over coming weeks you will read to the end, at A.M. 6305). Be sure to read the intro. to sources and the notes carefully. **This book in the reserves for HIEU 104B.** See also an excerpt: [http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/theophanes.htm](http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/theophanes.htm)

Chronicon Paschale, the Easter Chronicle, preserves a despatch that Heraclius sent back from the front to be read out in Hagia Sophia on 15 May 628. Find it in Chronicon Paschale 284-628, tr. M. Whitby and Mary Whitby (Liverpool, 1990).

Commentary on Corippus: Averil Cameron, "Corippus' Iohannis: Epic of Byzantine Africa," Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar 4 (1984), 167-80, reprinted in her Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium (Aldershot, 1996); and now at greater length if you read German: T. Gärtner, Untersuchungen zur Gestaltung und zum historischen Stoff der Johannis Coripps, Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 90 (Berlin, 2008). Relevant comments are to be found in Bachrach, Religion and the Conduct of War; and McCormick, Eternal Victory.

On Maurice's Strategikon, read the introduction and commentary carefully, as with Theophylact Simocatta. The latter is expanded upon at length in M. Whitby, The Emperor Maurice and his Historian (Oxford, 1988). You must also read J. D. Frendo, 'The Armenian and Byzantine foundations of the concept of jihad', Byzantine Studies 13 (1986), 241-50.


Week 7 is a reading week. You must complete your midterm paper.

Midterm questions: Please ensure that you choose on the questions and use it as the title of your essay. Do not simply make up another title to reflect what you wrote, as you will find that you did not answer the question!

1. "Early Christians were engaged in a cosmic struggle with the Roman state. As the Roman world was Christianized, the terms of the battle changed." Discuss with reference to the period A.D. 200-650.

2. How far did the tenets of Christianity preclude the enlistment of Christians in the Roman army? How far did matters change with the Christianization of the imperial office? Discuss with reference to the period c. A.D. 200- c. 650.

3. Was the symbolism and celebration of Roman victory inappropriate in Christian contexts? What functions did the Cross play? Discuss with reference to the period c. A.D. 200- c. 650.

RIGHT: Probus Diptych (detail: see gobbet below)

Continuing into the later eighth and ninth centuries, we find there is now some contemporary Islamic literature to read. We shall explore from the Muslim perspective the development of 'striving [on the path of God]' (jihad), and the importance of purity, merit (fadl) intent (niyya), divine reward (ajr) and becoming a martyr (shahid). Was the idea of 'Holy War' unique to Islam at this time? When and how did the notion of jihad develop?

Readings: The first extant book devoted to jihad is not, at the time of writing (4 May 2009) available in translation. It may be when you read this, so do search for it online: Ibn al-Mubarak, Kitab al-jihad. For now be sure to read the excerpts and commentary at Bonner 1996, pp. 122-5; Sizgorich 2008, pp. 180-90.

Sahih Muslim, Ahadith, books 19 (Jihad and Expedition) and 20 (Government): http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/muslim/ Read selectively, if you wish, but note 20.4681 (the gobbet).

Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik ibn Anas (London, 1989; paperback: Singapore, 2005), tr. A. Abdurrahman Bewley, pp. 173-84 (= Ch.21, Jihad), or you may wish to consult Bewley's online translation: http://bewley.virtualave.net/muwcont.html

There is also this version of the same translation (although the translators' names are rendered somewhat differently: look under 'jihad'): http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/muwatta/

There are now a good number of general books by scholars that include very useful chapters on early ideas. You might start with D. Cook, Understanding Jihad (California, 2005). The first chapter is available in the Dropbox, although the footnotes did not translate in the e-version):


Specialist studies, showing developments: M. Bonner, 'Some Observations Concerning the Early Development of Jihad on the Arab-Byzantine Frontier', Studia


9. Purity and Martyrdom, II: Christianity

We shall explore how the Byzantine empire (deprived of the lands conquered by Islam, including Syria and Palestine) adopted what might be called a 'theology of defeat'; how attention had turned to the soldier and his purity; whether and to what extent penitential discipline was introduced into army life; how neomartyrs were made in lands now under Muslim rule (Syria, Palestine)


We shall shall explore how Byzantium returned to the offensive in the east; how this new war led to an intensification of religious thought and ritual devoted to the needs and duties of the army; how icons and relics were incorporated into Christian warfare.


Images: Joshua Roll, Joshua Plaques (Met.), Byzantine ivory reliquary of Cortona (Tuscany); Troyes Casket, David (Rome) Casket; Bamberger Gunthertuch; Psalter Portrait of Basil II, Silver processional cross, Great Lavra, Athos (below).

Silver processional cross, Great Lavra, Athos (below)
GOBBETS

For each seminar you must prepare at least one gobbet, and as a general rule you should alternate between commentary on texts and images when this is possible. Do not, however, ignore an image (or text) that particularly interests you simply because you considered and image (or text) for the previous seminar.

Consult the Dropbox for the images, which are reproduced below simply for reference. Do not attempt to write a commentary based on the reproductions in this syllabus, as the quality may not be great enough (especially a printed version).

1.A.-D. For the first seminar select your own gobbet passages from one of the following books of the Bible: Exodus; Joshua; Matthew; Revelation. You must explain why you have chosen the excerpt, and why you believe it is pertinent to the subject of study. Be led by the gobbets below when determining length and content. Do you have enough to say? Do you have too much to say?

2.A. Tertullian, De Corona
It came to pass the other day, the bounty of the most illustrious emperors was being paid off at the camp. The soldiers were coming up wearing their laurel crowns. A certain man there, more the soldier of God, more firm of purpose, than the rest of his brethren who had presumed that they could serve two masters, stood conspicuous, his single head untrammelled, his crown hanging idle in his hand, the Christian being already, by this very ordering of himself, proclaimed. Every man began to point at him; the distant to mock, the near to gnash their teeth upon him. The murmur reacheth the ears of the Tribune, and the person had now quitted his place. Immediately the Tribune saith, 'Why so different from the rest in thy dress?' He answered that he might not act with the rest. Being asked his reasons, he answered, 'I am a Christian.'

2.B. Origen
Thus, if in this manner we understand what is written, perhaps the reading will seem worthy of the pen of the Holy Spirit. For what does it profit me if I know that on twofold wood the king of Ai was hanged? But if I know there is a double power of the cross, that both Christ is suspended on it in the flesh and the Devil is conquered on it with his army, my soul will be edified from the understanding of the mystery. And in order that we may extend still higher the grandeur of the mystery, perhaps a greater thing is that the knowledge of good and evil is understood to be in this wood, on which both the good Christ and the evil Devil were suspended.
2.C. Image: Christ-Helios (Vatican Crypt)

3.A. Panegyric of Constantius
But invincible Caesar, on this occasion graced by your divinity I must relate without delay those exploits carried out under the leadership and auspices of your divinity, the spectacle of which we are also enjoying, all the more so because, although they are of general benefit to the state, we must applaud especially achievements which are closer to us. Thus you straightaway made Gaul yours, Caesar, simply by coming here. Indeed, the swiftness with which you anticipated all reports of your accession and arrival caught the forces of that band of pirates who were then so obstinate in their unhappy error, trapped within the walls of Gesoriacum, and denied access to the Ocean which washes the gates of the city to those who had relied for so long upon the sea.

3.B. Panegyric of Constantine Augustus
For although our emperor accepts the submission of friendly kings and the very fact of his being feared and cultivated by the noblest kings counts the same as praise for victory, yet he is glad that the fame of his valour is increased as often as it is challenged. What is lovelier than this triumphal celebration in which he employs the slaughter of enemies for the pleasure of us all, and enlarges the procession of the games out of the survivors of the massacre of the barbarians? He threw so great a multitude of captives to the beasts that the ungrateful and faithless men experienced no less suffering from the sport made of them than from death itself.
4.A. Image: Porphyry Tetrarchs

4.B. Image: Arch of Constantine

4.C. Lactantius, *On the Deaths of the Persecutors*

The anniversary was at hand of the day on which Maxentius had taken imperial power, 27 October, and his *quinquennalia* were coming to an end. Constantine was advised in a dream to mark the heavenly sign of God on the shields of his soldiers and
then engage in battle. He did as he was commanded and by means of a slanted letter X with the top of its head bent around he marked Christ on their shields. Armed with this sign, the army took up its weapons.

4. D. Eusebius, Life of Constantine
About the time of the midday sun, when the day was just turning, [Constantine] said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light and a text attached to it which said, 'By this conquer'. Amazement at this spectacle seized him and the whole company of soldiers that was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere, and witnessed the miracle. He was, he said, wondering to himself what the manifestation might mean; then, while he meditated, and thought long and hard, night overtook him. Thereupon, as he slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make a copy of the sign which had appeared in the sky, and to use this as protection against the attacks of the enemy.

5. A
Probus Diptych of Honorius (right, and a detail above)

5. B. Basil of Caesarea, Homily on the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
For there was no longer this fellow or that fellow, but all were proclaimed as Christians. Who then was the one who prevailed on that occasion? For he was clever and flexible, now fawning with flattering remarks, now turning aside with insults. First he tricked them with flattering remarks, trying to break the intensity of their piety. 'Don't betray your youth. Don't exchange an untimely death for this sweet life. For it is absurd for those who have gained the prize for valour in war to die the death of criminals.' He promised money in addition to this. He gave this: honours from the emperor, and the distribution of offices, and tried to outwit them by countless devices.

5. C. Augustine of Hippo
What is the evil in war? Is it the death of some who will soon die in any case, that others may live in peaceful subjection? This is mere cowardly dislike, not any religious feeling. The real evils in war are love of violence, revengeful cruelty, fierce and implacable enmity, wild resistance, and the lust of power, and such like; and it is generally to punish these things, when force is required to inflict the punishment, that, in obedience to God or some lawful authority, good men undertake wars, when they
find themselves in such a position as regards the conduct of human affairs, that right conduct requires them to act, or to make others act in this way. Otherwise John, when the soldiers who came to be baptized asked, 'What shall we do?', would have replied, Throw away your arms; give up the service; never strike, or wound, or disable any one.

5. D. Image: Christ Militant (Ravenna, below)

6. A. Corippus
Then the Christian people came out in the prescribed order, the Roman soldiers and the great-souled captained along with their ensigns. In a place in the centre of the camp where among the foremost the general John placed his tents with the canvas spread out, a priest had set up and draped a large altar and in the manner of their
fathers had surrounded it on all sides with holy tapestries. The acolytes had formed a choir and with humble voice sang sweet hymns as they wept ... 'Forgive us out sins and the sins of our fathers, we beseech You, Christ', they moaned and with palms extended looked up to heaven and asked for the comfort of the Lord. John himself, in front, with knees and body bent, was moved by piety and uttered prayers for the people.

6. B. Maurice, *Strategikon*  
The battle-cry, "Nobiscum", which it is customary to shout when beginning the charge is in our opinion extremely dangerous and harmful ... Instead of the shout, prayers should be said in camp on the actual day of battle before anyone goes out the gate. All, led by priests, the general and other officers, should recite the "Kyrie eleison" (Lord have mercy) for some time in unison. Then, in hopes of success each meros should shout the "Nobiscum Deus" (God is with us) three times as it marches out of camp.

6.C. Theophanes  
Sain was pleased at this and, together with Sarbaros, eagerly pressed on against Herakleios. The emperor gathered his troops and gave them courage by assuaging them with these words of exhortation: 'Be not disturbed, O brethren, by the multitude (of the enemy). For when God wills it, one man will rout a thousand. So let us sacrifice ourselves to God for the salvation of our brothers. May we win the crown of martyrdom so that we maybe praised in the future and receive our recompense from God.' Having with these and many other words encouraged the army, he arranged the battle order with joyful countenance. The two sides faced each other across a short distance from morning until evening, but did not engage. When evening had fallen, the emperor continued his march; and again the barbarians pressed on behind him.

6.D. Image: David Plate (above, p. 9)

7. Reading week.
8. A. Qur’an
Fight in the path of God
Those who are fighting you;
But do not exceed the bounds.
God does not approve the transgressors

The killed are three men: a faithful man striving with his person and his property on
the path of God until he meets the enemy, fighting until he is killed. This shahid is the
most favoured in the tent of Allah, under his throne. The prophets are not preferred to
him except with regard to the status of prophethood ... And a hypocritical man strives
with his person and his property on the path of God until he is killed. This one is in
Hell, for the sword does not scrape away hypocrisy.

9. A. Chronicle of 811
On that same day the Emperor Nikephoros was killed during the first assault, and
nobody is able to relate the manner of his death. Injured also was his son Staurakios,
who suffered a mortal wound to the spinal vertebrae from which he died after having
ruled the Romans for two months. Many of the surviving Romans, after the battle
ended, were forced by the impious Bulgars, who had then not yet been baptized, to
renounce Christ and embrace the error of the Scythian pagans. Those who were
preserved by the power of Christ endured every outrage and by various torments
earned the martyr’s crown.

9. B. Nicholas the Monk, former soldier
And he looking around sees all the earth appearing to him full of dead bodies, and in
the middle of it all a patch of green meadow the size of a single bed. And he says to
him, ‘Lord, all the earth is full of Romans slain mercilessly except one patch.’ Then
the fearful apparition said to the soldier, ‘And what do you think it is?’ He replied: ‘I
am an ignorant man, Lord, and I don’t know.’ And the fearful one said to him again:
‘The bare patch, which you see having a length of one bed, is yours and in it you were
bound to have been slaughtered with your fellow soldiers and to be put down in it and
to fill in the gap: when last night you shook off sensibly from you the three-braided
snake who wrestled you thrice into shameful intercourse and intended to kill, know
that you freed yourself from this slaughter and have gained exemption from the “bed”
of the meadow and have saved your soul along with your body.’

10. A. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Military Oration or Harangue
Therefore, have no fear, my men, have no fear, fill your souls with zeal and show the
enemies who rely on the aid of Beliar or Mohammed what those who put their faith in
Christ can accomplish. Be the avengers and champions not only of Christians, but of
Christ himself, whom they wickedly deny … And so let us put all our hope in him,
and instead of our whole panoply let us arm ourselves with His cross, equipped with
which you lately made the fierce soldiers of the Hamdanid the victims of your swords.

10. B. Leo the Deacon, History
And when he had reclaimed the entire island ... he took the booty and captives and
sailed to Constantinople. And he was received with great honour by the emperor
Romanos and celebrated a triumph in the Hippodrome, with the whole populace
assembled amazed at the amount and beauty of the booty. For great amounts of silver and gold were seen, both barbarian coins of refined gold and cloth of gold thread, and purple carpets and manifold treasures executed with the utmost craftsmanship, gleaming with gold and stones. There were whole suits of armor, and helmets and swords, and breastplates studded with gold, spears and shields and back-stretched bows too many to count (being present there one might have said the whole wealth of the barbarian land was gathered there in the theatre), so that it resembled some sort of abundant river. With these things also were the barbarians who had been captured, assembled in a countless throng.

10.C. Silver processional cross, Great Lavra, Athos (above, p. 14)