

Britannia: Roman Britain from Caesar to Arthur

Illinois Classroom, Wednesdays 1:30—3 PM

COURSE OUTLINE:

1. **Sept. 14:** Introduction / Prehistoric Background / Caesar's Invasions, 55 and 54 BC

The class will begin with a brief survey of British geology and geography, a summary of prehistoric cultures, and an account of Roman expansionism. Videos will show Caesar's two campaigns, and his motives and the reliability of his account will be discussed.

2. **Sept. 21:** Claudius' Conquest and the Foundation of Roman Britannia

The Roman conquest of southern Britain will be described, with films of key sites and events including Richborough, early London, Colchester, and Maiden Castle.

3. **Sept. 28:** The Rebellion of Boudica, AD 60

A full description of the rebellion and the available sources will be accompanied by films of the sites involved, and by discussion of the archaeological finds which supplement the written accounts.

4. **Oct. 5:** Caledonia and Hadrian's Wall

The Roman role in northern Britain will be described, with an account of Agricola's Caledonian campaign, the withdrawal from northern Britain, and the building of Hadrian's Wall.

5. **Oct. 12:** Life in Britannia: Villas, Towns, and Peasant Villages

The nature of life under Roman rule will be illustrated from museum displays and onsite films of sites like Chedworth Roman Villa, Fishbourne palace, and Bath.

6. **Oct. 19:** Britannia in the Later Empire

The Antonine Wall will be described and shown. The changing nature of life in the later Empire will be depicted with films of the late pagan temple site at Lydney Park and the early Christian evidence from Lullingstone villa.

7. Oct. 26: The End of Roman Rule and the Coming of the Anglo-Saxons

The forts of the Saxon Shore and the walls of London show the defensive measures taken in the fourth century. Discussion will cover the evidence for the Roman military/political withdrawal, continuing Roman culture in Britain, and the new genetic data shedding light on the beginnings of the Anglo-Saxon presence.

8. Nov. 2: Post-Roman Britain: the “Age of Arthur”

The scanty evidence for the fifth century will lead to summaries of ideas and controversies. This will include a discussion of the views about Arthur and a brief account of subsequent folklore, poetry and changes of scholarly opinion about his reality. The class will conclude with discussion of the significance of the Roman period in British history.