

BYZANTIUM

Coordinator: Raoul Oreskovic

After the fall of Rome, scholarship and culture nearly disappeared from Europe but Byzantium preserved the heritage of ancient Rome and Greece. For eleven centuries the empire was under threats from Goths, Persians, Bulgars, Crusaders and Turks but nevertheless continued to flourish. It was a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic civilization spread over several continents.

The history of Byzantium is fascinating and its religious quarrel still echo in our times. This Christian empire was a vital bridge between the European, Islamic and Slavic worlds. It inspired the Renaissance, shared the golden age of Islamic learning and laid the foundations of Russian Orthodox Christianity. The study group covers the splendors and intrigues of Byzantium, its rulers, barbarians, mystic monks, outstanding women, philosophers, artists, soldiers, slaves, eunuchs, peasants and voyagers.

Readings and other Required Materials:

Nowich, John Julius, *A Short history of Byzantium*, Vintage Books, 1999, ISBN 0-679-77269-3, \$13.45

In addition, the coordinator will email to the participants various chronicles, writings, memoirs as well as scholarly articles on Byzantium.

Raoul Oreskovic was an international energy and commodity trader. He has coordinated study groups on Austro-Hungary, Fourteenth Century Europe, Vichy France and The Latin American Literary Boom.

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Weeks 1, 2 Why Byzantium? Origins: the Tetrachy, the reign of Constantine and the foundation of Constantinople

Week 3 Justinian and Theodora Heraclius, iconoclasm, the Isaurian Dynasty

Week 4 The Macedonian dynasty, Leon VI the Wise, Basil I and Basil II, the first crusade, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem

Week 5 The Comneni Dynasty, second, third and fourth crusades, the sack of Constantinople, the Empire of Nicea

Week 6 The Mongol threat, the black death, the rise of the Ottomans, the last crusade, Constantine XI and the fall of Byzantium

Week 7 Byzantium and Europe, Barlaam of Calabria, Byzantium and the Slavic

- world, Cyril and Methodius, Simeon the Great, Prince Vladimir of Kiev
- Week 8 Byzantium and Islam, Huanyn Ibn Ishaq, religion and the Council of Florence, Mohamed and his successors, Byzantium and Venice, Byzantium and Genoa
- Week 9 Government: The imperial court, aristocracy, bureaucracy, diplomacy, legislation, army and navy
- Week 10 How they lived, the place of women, cities and villages, economy and trade, slaves, fairs and travel, chariot races, dress and fashion, monastic life
- Week 11 Byzantium literature and poetry, philosophy, theology, astronomy, medicine, music and art
- Week 12 Summing up: the Byzantium legacy, discussion and further readings