

**Roman Archaeology: Cities and Settlement under the Empire
III: The Archaeology of the Roman economy (HT, Mondays)**

Prof. Andrew Wilson

This lecture course explores new approaches to the study of the Roman economy, using archaeological evidence to address historical questions about economic growth, technological development, capital investment, the state as an economic actor, and production, trade and the role of cities. It is aimed primarily at undergraduate students in classical archaeology and/or ancient history, taking the option “Roman archaeology: Cities and Settlements under the Empire”, and at Classical Archaeology masters students taking the courses on “The Archaeology of the Roman Economy” and “Roman Urban Systems”, and any of the Roman period papers; but it should also be of interest to students at all levels in archaeology and ancient history more generally, and indeed to those in economic history. All are welcome.

While the undergraduate paper “Roman archaeology: Cities and Settlements under the Empire” is not in itself a study of the Roman Economy, a number of its themes have economic aspects. For those students, this lecture series provides some additional support on subjects that bear on the city’s role in production and consumption, its economic relations with the countryside, and its role in trade, to allow students to situate their knowledge of these issues within the current vigorous debate over the nature, structure and scale of the ancient economy.

Week 1: Approaches to the Roman economy

(Historiography of the subject: Rostovtzeff; Finley; Hopkins; archaeology and the debate over the Roman economy; current approaches and future agendas)

Week 2: Environment, climate and disease

(The ancient environment; environmental change; the energy budget and climate; climate proxies and reconstruction of climate change; plagues; relationship between climate and disease?)

Week 3: The archaeology of economic institutions

(Can archaeology help with New Institutional Economics? Markets and law enforcement; property rights and centuriation; the annona; state intervention in the market)

Week 4: Roman technology: the possibilities and limits for preindustrial growth

(Economic growth and technology; irrigation schemes; mechanical irrigation techniques; the development of water power; technology and capital formation)

Week 5: Trade in the Roman Empire

(Trade in red-slipped pottery; counting shipwrecks; packing technologies, amphorae and barrels; technological improvements in ship design and construction; harbour technology; la grande commerce maritime vs. coastal tramping; transport and trading costs)

Week 6: Before the pin factory: division of labour and mass production

(Adam Smith; ancient texts on division of labour; archaeology of division of labour; manufactories; mass production; large-scale production of glass, sarcophagi and olive oil; mechanisation and milling)

Week 7: Mining and metal supply in the Roman Empire

(Metal supply; gold and silver mines; lead pollution in Greenland ice as a proxy for lead and silver production; debasement of the silver coinage over time; mining, coinage and the state budget)

Week 8: Hydraulic mining

(Hydraulic mining of gold, using aqueducts to process alluvial deposits with large amounts of water; fineness of the gold coinage)