

Roman History 241-146 BC

In the words of Polybius, our principal source for this period, “Can any one be so indifferent or idle as not to care to know by what means, and under what kind of polity, almost the whole inhabited world was conquered and brought under the dominion of the single city of Rome, and that too within a period of not quite fifty-three years? Or who again can be so completely absorbed in other subjects of contemplation or study, as to think any of them superior in importance to the accurate understanding of an event for which the past affords no precedent.” (Polyb. 1.1). This paper covers the period in which Rome moved from domination of the Italian peninsula, to domination of the ancient Mediterranean, with enormous consequences for both the conquered and the conquerors. These lectures are intended for all those taking versions of this paper either in Classics FHS, or AMH prelims, but should be of direct relevance for anyone studying either the contemporary Hellenistic world, or the subsequent periods of Roman history.

Week 1: Setting the scene: sources and background (Polybius, Rome and the western Mediterranean prior to 264 BCE)

Week 2: Rome’s ‘Tyrrhenian empire’ (the First Punic War and the nature of Roman imperialism in the second half of the third century BCE, as Rome moves beyond *terra Italia*)

Week 3: The Hannibalic War

Week 4: Polybius and Rome

Week 5: Rome and the Greek East: The ‘freedom of the Greeks’, Rome and the kings, 200-168 BCE

Week 6: Rome and the West: Gaul, Spain, and the growing impact of empire

Week 7: 168-146 BCE (“So the final end achieved by this work will be, to gain knowledge of what was the condition of each people after all had been crushed and had come under the dominion of Rome, until the disturbed and troubled time that afterwards ensued.” (Polyb. 3.4).

Week 8: Rome and Italy in an age of imperial expansion.