

MA in Classics

Department of Classics and Ancient History

Taster sessions, 14 June 2024

Dr Edmund Thomas
Director of Taught
Postgraduate Programmes
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Schedule for this evening's session

6.00-6.05 General introduction to the course

6.05-6.15 The MA Dissertation

6.15-6.30 Crisis and recovery: a taster session

6.30-6.45 Edessa: a taster session

6.45-6.50 The student experience: questions

6.50-6.55 Where the MA leads: careers

6.55-7.00 Final questions

Why come to Durham for an MA?

Our Department of Classics & Ancient History is able to provide exceptionally rich resources whatever your reason for thinking about an MA:

- as preparation for higher research;
- to allow you to go deeper into subjects you enjoy;
- to give you a highly-regarded degree which attests to your personal enthusiasm, dedication, and academic achievement.



Our department

Our Durham Department of Classics & Ancient History is a large and successful department with four (soon to be five) active research centres.

We are consistently ranked as one of the top Classics and Ancient History Departments in the UK for research and teaching. On a global level, we came 8th in the 2023 QS World University Rankings.



4th in
the UK

For overall research quality in
REF 2021

The MA programme in Classics

You will study an ancient language, either at beginners' or advanced, postgraduate level, and a range of specialist modules to suit your interests.

You can either take the default Classics programme.

Or you can take a specialist pathway to reflect two of the department's research specialities covered by our research centres:

- Ancient Philosophy
- Greece Rome and the Near East

This means that, within each pathway, you will take a dissertation in that area. For the pathway in Ancient Philosophy, we normally require previous study in this area.



MA in Classics: Admissions requirements

- A 2.1 honours degree in a relevant subject or international equivalent
- Some previous relevant study
- We do not require previous training in ancient languages, but because the programme will involve language study, at least at beginners' level, we normally expect some previous study either of modern languages or of classical subjects or similar.
- Two references
- A statement of research (in the 'personal statement' box)



Classics MA modules offered in 2024-25



Ten fortnightly seminars,
encouraging independent
research and dynamic intellectual
debate

- Linear B: Mycenaean Greek and Homer's world
- The Unity of Virtues in Ancient Philosophy
- Aristotle's Systems
- Religious Life in the Roman East
- Edessa: Athens of the East
- Epigraphy in the Ancient World
- The World of Nero
- Crisis and Recovery: the Roman Empire in the Long Third Century C.E.
- The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, and Thought
- Baroque Modes: Classical Excess and its reception in Literature and the Visual Arts



Durham
University

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Postgraduate Taught Elective
Modules - Durham University

Arts & Humanities MA modules offered in 2024-25

However, you are not limited to Classics modules and can choose from a wide palette of modules across the Arts & Humanities at Durham. Some of those that offer particularly good links with Classics subjects are:

- The City in History
- The Nature of History: Approaches to Environmental History
- Reading Medieval Literature
- Emotional Architectures: Building Power and Emotion in the Late Antique World, c. 250–750
- Narrative Transformations: Medieval Romance to Renaissance Epic

- Visual Modernities
- Current Issues in Aesthetics and Theory of Art
- Current Issues in Metaphysics
- Critical Curatorship
- The Theology of Thomas Aquinas
- Literature and Religion
- Environmental Posthumanities

Durham CLAH: Research Specialisms

- Latin Poetry
- Greek and Roman Theatre
- Greek and Roman Epic
- Near East
- Epigraphy
- Classics and Pedagogy
- Reception
- Ancient Philosophy





Durham
University

MA Dissertation module

Dr Katherine McDonald
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MA Dissertation

- 15,000 word dissertation
- Weekly seminars to provide support and feedback
- 6 hours of one-on-one supervision

- Module convenor (Dr McDonald) helps you register for modules and find a supervisor, and provides general support during the MA



Format of the Dissertation module

We meet for a seminar once a week for two terms.

In the first term, we focus on building skills (such as writing book reviews) and discuss a range of thematic topics (finding a voice in Classics, decolonization, applying for PhDs) with experts from the department.

In the second term, we focus on student presentations and peer feedback on your ideas.



Assessments

Formative

- Book review (end of term in December)
- Dissertation outline (end of term in March)
- Dissertation chapter c. 4000 words (end of term in June)

Summative

- Full dissertation (around the 1st September)





Crisis and Recovery

The Roman Empire during the Long Third Century CE

“Now however, when from each summit of the Alps your deity first shone forth, a clearer light spread over all Italy; wonder seized upon all who gazed up no less than uncertainty, whether some god was arising from those mountain crests, or by these steps descending to earth from heaven.”



“Do you see Diocletian? Do you see Maximian? Both are here! They are together! How closely they sit! How amicably they converse! How quickly they pass by!”

[...]

Naturally, you often looked back – and this is not an empty tale made up about you: you exchanged such assurances since you intended soon to return to see each other.”



“Even Rome herself, the mistress of nations, in a transport of extravagant joy at your proximity and in an attempt to get a glimpse of you from the summits of her own mountains, the closer to sate herself with your countenances, advanced as near as she could to get a look. Indeed, she had sent the leaders of her Senate, freely imparting to the city of Milan, most blessed during those days, a semblance of her own majesty, that the seat of imperial power could then appear to be the place to which each Emperor had come.”



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PART I

- Week 1: Modern scholarship and the 'crisis' of the third century
- Week 2: The Roman Empire of the Severan dynasty
- Week 3: The time of the 'Soldier Emperors'
- Week 4: The unappreciated 'genius' of Aurelianus
- Week 5: The rise and fall of Diocletian's tetrarchy

PART II

- Week 6: Administration
- Week 7: Economy and trade
- Week 8: Imperial ideology
- Week 9: Military and defence
- Field Trip to Hadrian's Wall (?)
- Week 10: Religion



The background of the slide is a photograph of an ancient Roman wall. On the left side, there is a vertical panel of frescoes depicting several figures, possibly a family or a group of people, in a classical style. The rest of the wall is covered in intricate relief carvings, including architectural elements like columns and doorways, and various figures in different poses. The overall tone is aged and historical.

Crisis and Recovery – The Roman Empire during the Long Third Century

Dr Karl Dahm

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Welcome to Edessa!

Module presentation (in a tiny nutshell)

Edessa: The “Athens of the East” CLAS44430



Dr. Mara Nicosia
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Dr. Alberto Rigolio
Alberto.rigolio@durham.ac.uk

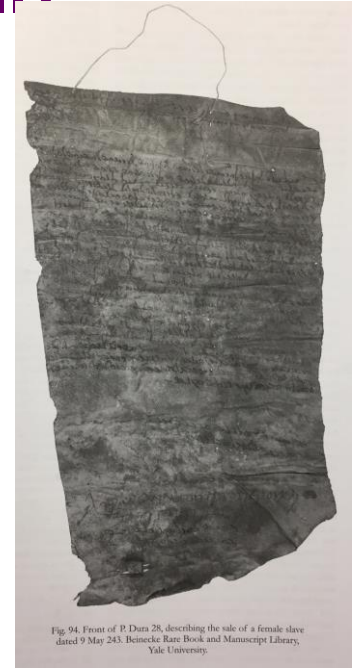


Fig. 94. Front of P. Dura 28, describing the sale of a female slave (dated 9 May 243). Bezae: Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

If I say Edessa, what do you think?



What do you expect to learn from this course?

Edessa: Where

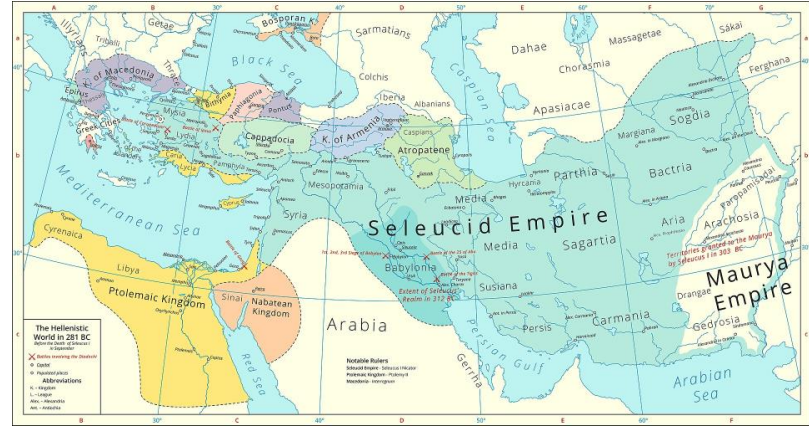
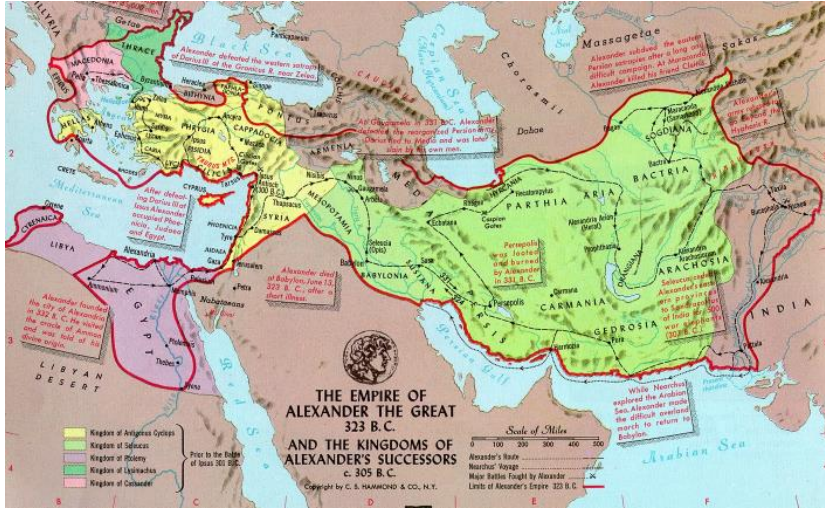


Edessa: The "Athens of the East"
CLAS 44430

Edessa: Where



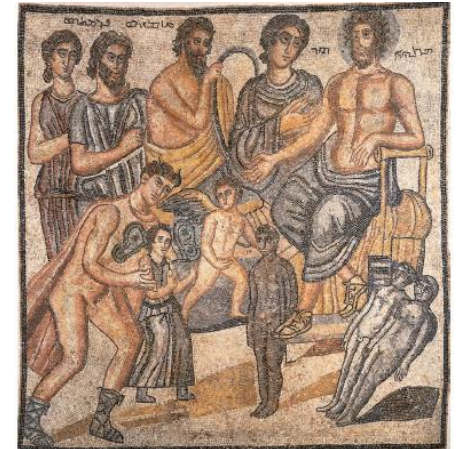
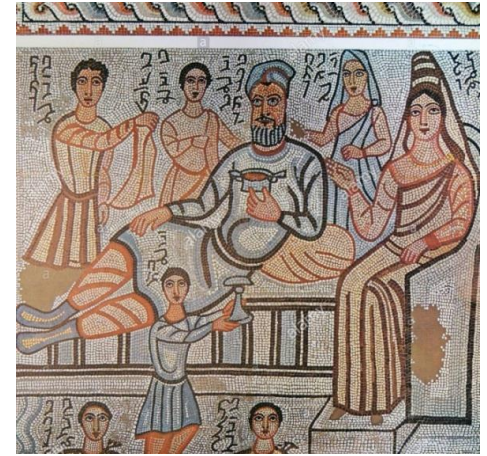
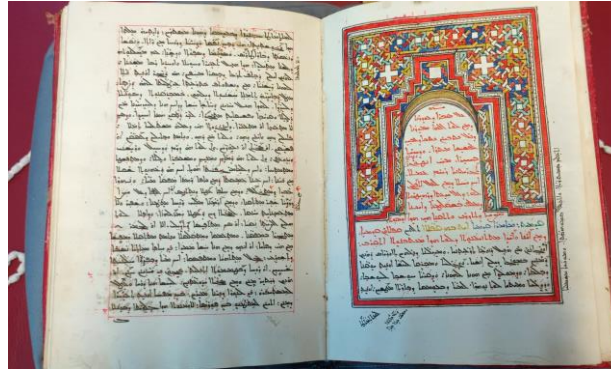
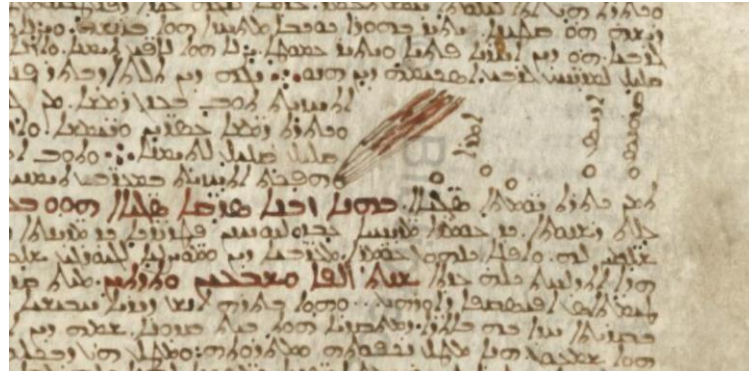
Why is this module important for students in Classics?



Things to know before you join Edessa:

1. 10 seminars, equally distributed between Michaelmas and Epiphany terms
2. No knowledge of Syriac is required
3. Each seminar is organised around research questions
 - How can we understand the culture of the **Kingdom of Osroene** between the second and third centuries?
 - How do we explain the influences shown by **Syriac mosaics** and figurative representations? Can we spot common threads? Do we see elements of innovations?
 - Why does **Christianity** play such an important role in Syriac culture and literature?
 - What is the role of **Ephrem** in the emergence of **Syriac poetry**?
 - What role did Syriac play in the “**Greek-to-Arabic translation movement**”?
 - Can we spot **common threads** in the roles played by important cities (Babylon, Athens, Edessa, Baghdad, ...) **in cultural revolutions?**

What to expect from Edessa:



Questions?

Doubts?



Mosaic no. 1 (50,8 × 58,4 cm). Photograph Courtesy of Sotheby's, Inc. © 2018



Mosaic no. 2 (57 × 54,6 cm). Photograph Courtesy of Sotheby's, Inc. © 2018

Dr Mara Nicosia

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Beyond the MA

Our programme aims to enable you to develop a wide range of theoretical and practical skills, highly transferable to a variety of careers and paths of life:

1. reflective and self-directed learning;
2. the capacity to express the findings of research in clear written form;
3. enhanced linguistic skills;
4. the ability to form and express views and arguments in a clear, persuasive, structured and innovative way, orally and in writing;
5. enhanced ability to access, gather, interpret, analyse, organise, assess and employ evidence and information of a variety of kinds and from a variety of sources;
6. the ability to exercise self-discipline, responsibility and autonomy in pursuing a complex project which might be interdisciplinary in nature, managing time effectively and keeping to deadlines;
7. intellectual integrity and maturity.

Support: Careers Officer: Prof. Arlene Holmes-Henderson; the Durham Careers and Enterprise Centre (CEEC) : <https://www.dur.ac.uk/careers/>.