

2022 OSU Classics Graduate Symposium

The Missing Middle: Being Roman After Antiquity

With Keynote Speaker: Marion Kruse, University of Cincinnati

March 11-12, 2022, at The Ohio Union in Columbus, Ohio

Identity in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages has been a topic of sustained scholarly focus for a century now, focusing particularly on the various Germanic peoples that migrated into the Roman Empire. However, a curious gap can be seen in the scholarship. Although we owe most of what we know about the identities and makeup of the various peoples in the broader Mediterranean world to Roman sources, late antique/Byzantine Romans and their identities have gone understudied, especially so in the east. This has formed a missing middle as scholars predominantly look out but not in. Only recently have basic questions about what it means to be Roman in this period received the investigation they merit. Still, much work remains to be done to explore the contours of Romanness.

At this conference we hope to highlight the work that graduate students are doing to advance our understanding of these topics. We invite papers that will discuss topics regarding what it means for someone or something to be Roman in this period from any field, including but not limited to Archaeology, Near Eastern Languages, History, Linguistics, Religious Studies, Art History, Classics, and Anthropology. Preference will be given to topics focusing on the Eastern Mediterranean; however, we encourage submissions that touch on Roman identity topics from the post-Roman west, that might make comparisons to other cultures, or that look at Rome from an outside perspective, especially from the Islamic world. Interdisciplinary papers that touch on these topics are also encouraged.

Potential topics of investigation include:

Who was counted as a Roman and whose status was contested?

How did gender intersect with Romanness?

What made someone or something appear Roman to an outsider?

How might someone express their Romanness?

What roles did institutions play in the formation of Roman identity?

How might Romans have expressed their identity in their art, religion, or social customs?

Each presenter will have 20 minutes to discuss their paper. Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words to Collin Parks (parks.424@osu.edu) by January 15th, 2022. The current plan is to have the conference in person in Columbus, but we will move to Zoom if need be and are willing to accommodate presenters if circumstances arise that necessitate it. Any questions or concerns may be addressed to Collin at the aforementioned e-mail.