

BTPRT1597 – Reading Practice from Late Antiquity

Instructor: Dr. Szekeres Csilla

Course Title

Reading Practice from Late Antiquity: Selected Passages from Ammianus Marcellinus' Historical Work

Course Description

This course focuses on the reading and interpretation of selected passages from Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res gestae*.

Ammianus Marcellinus, the last major Roman historian, produced the *Res gestae*, the most important source for the history of the Roman Empire in the fourth century CE. Continuing Tacitus' *Historiae*, his originally 31-book work covered Roman history from the reign of Nerva to the Battle of Adrianople. Its central focus is the account of wars and Roman politics, enriched with excursions into natural science, ethnography, geography, and social history.

The extant books (14–31) demonstrate that Ammianus wrote in a uniquely authentic manner, relying both on numerous historical sources and his own personal experiences as an eyewitness to many events. Covering the period from 353 to 378, this makes his work of unparalleled historical value.

The course aims at a comprehensive treatment of the selected texts—linguistic, stylistic, and historical—supported by relevant modern scholarship. It is designed to deepen students' knowledge of fourth-century Roman history and strengthen their Latin language skills.

Requirements

- Regular and active participation in class
- Preparation of assigned texts in advance
- Presentation based on a chosen item of secondary literature
- If necessary, a final written or oral examination

Primary Texts and Commentaries

- Rolfe, J. C.: *Ammianus Marcellinus with an English Translation*. Loeb Classical Library 300, 315, 331. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935–1939. Revised edition, 1950–1952.
- Seyfarth, W.: *Ammianus Marcellinus, Römische Geschichte: Lateinisch und Deutsch mit einem Kommentar. Schriften und Quellen der alten Welt* 21. 4 vols. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968–1971. Repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978.

- Seyfarth, W. – Jacob-Karau, L. – Ulmann, I.: *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1978. Repr. 1999.
- Viansino, G.: *Ammiano Marcellino: Storie. Classici Greci e Latini* 131, 134, 135. 3 vols. Milan: Mondadori, 2001–2002.

Hungarian Translations

- Pirchala, Imre (trans.): *Ammianus Marcellinus reánk maradt történeti könyvei I–II. Görög és latin remekírók*. Budapest: Franklin, 1916–1917.
- Szepeszy, Gyula (trans.) – Adamik, Tamás (notes, afterword): *Ammianus Marcellinus: Róma története*. Budapest: Európa, 1993.

Suggested Secondary Literature

- Adamik, T.: “The Figure of Julian in Ammianus’ History.” In: Tar I. – Wojtilla Gy. (eds.): *Speculum Regis. Acta Universitatis de Attila József Nominatae, Acta Antiqua et Archaeologica* 26; *Minora opera ad philologiam classicam et archaeologiam pertinentia* 22. Szeged: Universitas de Attila József Nominata, 1994, 3–36.
- Breisach, E.: *Historiográfia*. Budapest: Osiris, 2004, 68–85.
- Brodka, D.: *Ammianus Marcellinus: Studien zum Geschichtsdenken im vierten Jahrhundert n. Chr. Electrum: Studies in Ancient History* 17. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2009.
- Drijvers, J. W. – Hunt, E. D.: *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Hanaghan, M. – Woods, D. (eds.): *Ammianus Marcellinus from Soldier to Author*. Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2022.
- Matthews, J. F.: *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*. London: Duckworth, 1989.
- Mehl, A.: *Römische Geschichtsschreibung: Grundlagen und Entwicklungen: eine Einführung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001.
- Mellor, R.: *The Roman Historians*. London – New York: Routledge, 1999, 110–131.
- Seager, R.: *Ammianus Marcellinus: Seven Studies in his Language and Thought*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986.
- Thompson, E. A.: “Ammianus Marcellinus.” In: Dorey, T. A. (ed.): *Latin Historians*. London: Routledge, 1966, 143–157.
- Vergin, W.: *Das Imperium Romanum und seine Gegenwelten: Die geographisch-ethnographischen Exkurse in den “Res Gestae” des Ammianus Marcellinus. Millenium-Studien* 41. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Wittchow, F.: *Exemplarisches Erzählen bei Ammianus Marcellinus: Episode, Exemplum, Anekdote. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* 144. Munich: Saur, 2001.