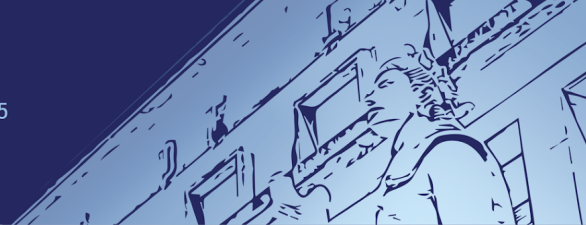


CALL FOR PAPERS

Unveiling the Optimus Princeps: New trends and approaches in discussing the Age of Trajan



PANEL ORGANIZATION:

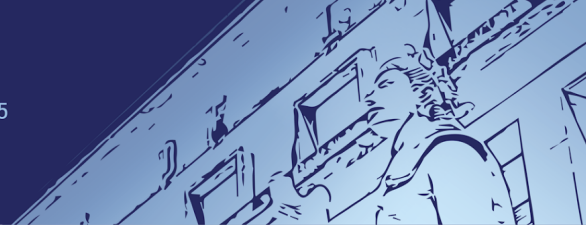


ORGANIZER 1:

name	Dr Consuelo Martino
e-mail	consuelo.martino@ed.ac.uk
affiliation	University of Edinburgh
country	UK
biography	Dr. Martino is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Edinburgh, where she researches the political instrumentalization of war trauma in the early imperial age, with a particular focus on civil wars. Her main research interests include the cultural history of leadership, ancient and modern propaganda, and counter-narratives to the official imperial narrative and ideology. Dr. Martino has authored chapters and articles on Latin historiography and biography, notably on Livy and Suetonius. She is currently completing a monograph titled <i>Becoming Caesar: Suetonius and the Politics of Memory in the Roman Empire</i> , which explores the cultural history of leadership during the principates of Trajan and Hadrian. Additionally, she is co-editing a volume on <i>Narratives of War and Violence in Africa and Egypt</i> with Dr. E. Sanderson (Liverpool). She also leads the project “ConTra” (Confronting Trauma), which investigates the role of arts and humanities in addressing war-related trauma, spanning from antiquity to the present.

ORGANIZER 2:

name	Dr Panayiotis Christoforou
e-mail	panayiotis.christoforou@classics.ox.ac.uk
affiliation	University of Oxford
country	UK
biography	Dr. Christoforou is a Marshall Fellow at the Pharos Foundation, Oxford, and a Lecturer in Ancient History at Brasenose College, University of Oxford. He researches the political life of the <i>populus Romanus</i> in the early Roman empire, and in particular public interactions between leaders and masses in the Roman world. His main research interests concern political culture, the place of rumour and misinformation in the perceptions of political leaders and hidden perspectives in ancient narrative. Dr Christoforou’s first monograph <i>Imagining the Roman Emperor</i> (Cambridge, 2023) explores the perception of the office of the Roman emperor from the perspectives of his subjects. Additionally, he has submitted a co-edited volume <i>Tacitus and the Incomplete</i> (Michigan University Press), with Dr. Bram ten Berge, on the problems arising from Tacitus’ fragmentary works, and has published various chapters and articles on the imperial cult, Philo’s embassy to the emperor Caligula and funeral rituals concerning Roman emperors.



PANEL SYNOPSIS:

Under the leadership of Emperor Trajan (98-117 CE), known as “optimus princeps,” the Roman Empire experienced a period of prosperity, military conquest, and cultural flourishing. Trajan stands at the start of the Antonine Age, lauded from antiquity and beyond as an age of Gold (Dio 72.36.4; cf. Gibbon *Decline and Fall* Vol. I, Ch.3.2). Frequently celebrated as a new era of freedom after the tyranny of Domitian, the age of Trajan is often portrayed as the peak of Roman power which, under the emperor, reached its largest expansion. Exhibitions organised for the anniversary of his death in 2017 went as far as to claim that he constructed the empire that, many years later, “created Europe.” Consequently, the evaluation of Trajan’s principate continues to be exceptionally positive, and often fails to take into consideration the controversial role it played in the brutality of Roman conquest in the Balkan and Eastern regions. While Trajan’s principate is lauded for its achievements, recent scholarship invites a critical reassessment of his military campaigns and their implications. The Dacian wars, for instance, are increasingly seen as potentially genocidal and the support of intellectuals and politicians, such as Pliny and Tacitus, is also now questioned. Neither were the transitions before and after his reign smooth. His adoption by Nerva and the claim of Marcus Cornelius Nigrinus Curvator Maternus are shrouded in mystery, as is Hadrian’s succession and the role of Plotina.

We propose that the time is ripe for a reassessment of the emperor and the image of his principate.

The panel will feature discussions on a variety of topics: examining literary expressions of the era, analysing imperial strategies in the Balkan and Eastern territories, and unveiling the representational strategies in both ancient and modern media. Papers will address a broad range of themes, from Trajan’s ideology and the whole concept of “optimus princeps” to the impact of this ideology in and outside Rome. Our panel will challenge the prevailing narrative of Trajan as “optimus princeps” and will introduce new perspectives to understand his rule and his memory, including non-Roman viewpoints and critical anti-colonial analyses. This dialogue promises to enrich our understanding of a complex historical figure and his time. Moreover, the edited volume we will publish from the conference will contribute to the scholarly discussion that has recently challenged the view of Trajan as “optimus princeps” and the unrestrained support he received during his reign. Ultimately, we aim to present an alternative view of the Trajanic age, one that elevates contextual reading of literary, material, and historical evidence, which shifts the focus from Trajan as the prime instigator and character of his era.

What does an alternate Trajanic age look like?

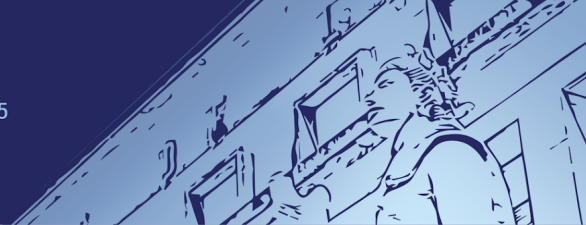
We welcome papers covering the topics above as well as other approaches to “unveil” Trajan and his principate. Please send a title and an abstract of no more than **250 words** to consuelo.martino@ed.ac.uk and panayiotis.christoforou@classics.ox.ac.uk by **31st of January, 2025**.

Already confirmed speakers are: Dr Consuelo Martino; Dr Panayiotis Christoforou; Dr Nathan Elkins; Prof. Nicholas Purcell; Caitlin Spencer.

16th Celtic Conference in Classics

Coimbra 2025

July 15-18 Faculty of Arts and Humanities · University of Coimbra



Observations:

Travelling and attendance to the conference must be self-funded.