

HIST 4033 The Roman Empire
Paper 2 / 3200-3600 Words
Due May 6 by 5pm

One of the best documented periods of the Roman Empire is the Year of the Four Emperors, which is covered in depth by the historian Tacitus and the biographers Suetonius and Plutarch. For this paper you will be reading their accounts of the Emperor Galba, who overthrew Nero late in 68, only to be overthrown and murdered himself early in 69. Compare and contrast these accounts - note that Tacitus only covers Galba's last few months, since his work begins in 69:

[Plutarch, Life of Galba](#) / [Suetonius, Life of Galba](#) / Tacitus, *Histories* I.1-49 (pp. 3-51)

Given the lengths of the accounts, you will probably need to focus more on specific passages rather than try to cover every single point of contrast. Some aspects that will be worth considering include (but are not limited to):

- How does each historian define Galba's character and its chief traits?
- What information does one historian include about Galba, but not the others, and what does this show about him?
- What sort of anecdotes does each author give about Galba, and how do they define him?
- How do the authors depict the soldiers, especially the praetorians, and their relationship with Galba?
- How do the authors depict Galba's three closest associates, especially Vinius, and their relationship with the emperor?
- How do the authors depict Galba's choice of Piso and the nature of adoption?
- How do the authors use omens to foreshadow key events of Galba's life?
- How does each author depict Galba's death and sum up his life?

Based on these and any other points you find significant, analyze and explain how each author understands Galba, his personality, his reign, and why he fails. How do these overall depictions differ between the historians? How well does each author support his depiction, and is it ultimately possible to say which is the most historically accurate?

Do not be judgmental, and remember that ancient historians have very different standards than modern historians. You are to limit your analysis to the accounts of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Plutarch - do not look at modern scholarship or other sources. I want to read what you have to say, not what someone else has to say. Looking at outside sources will result in an automatic F on the assignment. If you are uncertain about something, ask!

Use direct quotes sparingly and when they will specifically illustrate the point you are trying to make. Try to avoid excessive summary. Whenever you quote, summarize, or paraphrase, be sure to cite the ancient author. Cite each text by the name of the author and chapter and sentence numbers, either in the sentence or parenthetically; e.g. "As Plutarch says at 12.1..." or "as explained by Tacitus (15)." Use Times New Roman or a similar serif font, double-spaced, with 1" margins all around. Put a page number at the bottom of each page, and your name and a title at the top of the first page. Papers are due on May 6 by 5pm. Send your paper as a .doc, .docx, or .rtf attachment to cmuntz@uark.edu. Late papers will not be accepted except in cases of documented emergencies.