"I found Rome a city of bricks, and I leave it clothed in marble." These are the words of Augustus (63 B.C.-14 A.D.), the principal architect and first ruler of what we know as the Roman Empire. The Rome of Augustus, was an age of complex contradictions, nuanced evolutions, and ongoing experimentation in culture and politics. It was marked by domestic harmony, economic growth, and government sponsored cultural excellence in the arts; it was also a time of imperial conquests, book burnings, and the brutal repression of political opponents. This class approaches the Rome of Augustus from several directions, considering history, literature, art, architecture, religion, the economy, and politics as we investigate the various ways in which Rome’s first emperor sought to repair and redirect a society fragmented by years of civil war -- and the various ways in which the citizens of Rome reacted to the Augustan reforms: after 500 years of (alleged) representative democracy, why were Roman citizens prepared to accept autocracy? Did they jump, or were they pushed? Special attention is also given to the reception of the age as we explore the many ways in which the “Rome of Augustus” becomes a key ideological construct constantly reinterpreted and readapted in modern Western history. Readings are drawn largely from primary texts, including Augustus’ own account of his rule (the Res Gestae); selections from the works of Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and other Augustan writers; Suetonius’ Life of Augustus; and numerous inscriptions illustrating various aspects of life in Rome as well as in the provinces.

NO PREREQUISITES. Satisfies the Humanities or the Social Sciences Distribution Requirement and the Classical Culture Area