Ancient Roman Empire  
(27 BCE ~ 476 CE)  
Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning  
Spring 2015  
Dr. Douglas Kenning

reading & media suggestions

general history

_Ancient Rome: The Rise and Fall of An Empire Paperback_ (2007), by Simon Baker. This BBC general history will serve as a good introduction for the general reader.

_Rome An Empire's Story_ by Greg Woolf. In the Preface, he says that he has tried to hold his mind to the sense that empire is a movement through historical time not a fixed set of instructions.

contemporary histories

Seutonius, _The Twelve Caesars_ (Penguin Classics ed.). Seutonius gives us first or second-hand accounts of Caesars from Julius to Domitian. But he has political axes to grind & is enamored with racy, tabloid reporting.

specific histories

_A Day in the Life of Ancient Rome: Daily Life, Mysteries, and Curiosities_ (2009) by Alberto Angela (author) and Gregory Conti (translator). A wealth of detail woven into rich tapestry of 2nd-Century Roman life. It tends toward the sensational, but that makes for good reading.

historical fiction

I think historical fiction can be superb, when well researched and the author is a great writer in her or his own right. Some of these include:

Memoirs of Hadrian. Marguerite Yourcenar. An exploration of character as well as philosophical reflection on history

I Claudius. Robert Graves. A classic, which, along with the BBC series with Derek Jacobi, may have defined the Julio-Claudian period for our times.

Pompeii, Harris, Robert. This historical novelist has written a first-rate semi-fictitious well-researched, account of the life of a water engineer (aquarius) under the gun of exploding Vesuvius.

aspects of society

A History Of Education In Antiquity (Wisconsin Studies in Classics) by H.I. Marrou and George Lamb (1982)
Slavery and Society at Rome (Key Themes in Ancient History) by K. R. Bradley (1994)

virtual tour of ancient Rome (ca. 320 CE): http://vimeo.com/32038695

religion & legend

Ovid (43 BCE ~ CE 17), Metamorphoses. Ovid collects the most important Greek myths for his Roman audience, writing as a mythographer & storyteller at a time when neither he nor his readership really believed in the myths any more. But as a consequence, they gain power as psychological archetypes. The permeability of human qualities with the qualities of the natural and physical world are his theme; we are continuous with Nature, and all Nature empowered by qualities we like to call purely human. I like the Penguin translation by Mary Innes, but the lively new American translation by Charles Martin likely will become the definitive text.

Millennium: The End of the World and the Forging of Christendom, by Tom Holland

Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity (Eerdmans, 3rd. ed. 2003)

literature & language

Horace, Odes. Not only elegantly written, but lively commentaries on his times.

Wheelock's Latin, by Frederic M. Wheelock and Richard A. Lafleur (2005) – the way to learn Latin on your own. Need to order the workbook also.

**philosophy & thought**

The Roman Mind: Studies in the History of Thought from Cicero to Marcus Aurelius by M. L. Clarke (Mar 1968)

**general** – worthy works

Almost any book by Mary Beard, who is known for addressing gender issues of classical period, but she is perhaps the world’s spokesman for the common people of the classical world. For example, her latest is Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up. Find her also on YouTube.

R. H. Barrow The Romans (Pelican, 1949 [1951]). One of the best views into the mind and nature of the Roman people.

perhaps the miniseries Rome, but I have never seen it.

Pagan Holiday: On the Trail of Ancient Roman Tourists (originally published as Route 66 AD) by Tony Perrottet. Pretty good.

**provinces**

Britain

Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier by Alan K Bowman (British Museum Press, 1998)

Roman Britain by Peter Salway (Oxford Paperbacks, 2000)