The Declinism Seminars

The Decline of Rome

21st of March 2016
The Swedish Institute, Rome

A SEMINAR ARRANGED BY
AXEL AND MARGARET AX:SON JOHNSON FOUNDATION
The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire remains one of the most compelling episodes in human history. It has endured through the ages as a potent parable of the laws of political gravity – that everything that rises must eventually fall.

For the early Christians the collapse of the Roman Empire was divine punishment for centuries of adherence to paganism and impiety. For Edward Gibbon Rome’s fall was largely a result of the corrosive influence of the Christian Church. For the German historian Oswald Spengler the decline of Rome stood as a prelude to the slow but inexorable collapse of Western civilisation itself. Even today contemporary American political commentators liken the supposed decay of their country with the descent of Rome.

In this seminar a group of experts on the decline of Rome will come together to explore different aspects of the collapse of the greatest empire that the world has ever seen taking in a wide variety of contemporary evidence from histories, religious and philosophical works, legal codes, art and architecture. Subjects for discussion will include examining the plethora of theories that have been proffered by generations of scholars for the decline and fall of Rome including imperial overreach, large-scale invasions by violent and destructive barbarians, governmental venality and corruption and the disastrous impact of morale and resource sapping Christianity.
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Monday 21st of March

12.30 p.m.  LUNCH  Director’s Residence at the Swedish Institute in Rome

2.00 p.m.  Welcome  Kurt Almqvist
            Introduction  Mattias Hessérus

Session 1

2.10 p.m.  Peter Heather  Decline, Fall and the Cultural Turn
2.40 p.m.  Robert Coates-Stephens  Reflections of Decline in the City-Scape of Late Antique Rome

3.10 p.m.  Discussion

3.25 p.m.  COFFEE

Session 2

3.45 p.m.  Neil McLynn  Accentuating the Positive: Decline and Denialism at the End of Empire
4.15 p.m.  Richard Miles  Crying Wolf and the Decline of Rome

4.45 p.m.  Discussion

Concluding Remarks

5.00 p.m.  PJ Anders Linder  Summing-up
Participants

Dr Robert Coates-Stephens  
*Cary Fellow, British School at Rome, Italy*

**Professor Peter Heather**  
*Medieval History, King’s College London, United Kingdom*

Dr Neil McLynn  
*Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom*

Dr Richard Miles  
*Associate Professor, University of Sydney, Australia*

Moderator

PJ Anders Linder  
*CEO and Editor-in-Chief, Axess Publishing, Sweden*

organisation

**President:** Kurt Almqvist  
**Project Leader:** Mattias Hessérus  
**Project Coordinators:** Magdalena Bujak, Amelie Danielsson, Ella Shoshan