This course will deal with the history of the city of Rome and its people from the earliest traces of habitation at the site of Rome down through the consolidation of the Roman victories over the Hellenistic Greek states of the western Mediterranean. We will finish our treatment with the destruction of Carthage and with the Roman sack of Corinth, the capital of the Greek Achaean League. Traditionally, the time frame of our course covers the Regal Period (with its supposed seven kings), the Early Republic, and the Middle Republic. During these centuries Rome advanced from the status of a small Latin town through the conquest of all of the Italian peninsula to the possessor of a large Mediterranean empire. These years saw the evolution of most of the characteristic political institutions and social structures of the Roman people. Unless otherwise specified, all dates in this course will be BC (before Christ) or BCE (before common era), terms that are used interchangeably. There is almost no contemporary literature that survives intact from this early period, except for the plays of Plautus and Terence), and we are left with fragmentary sources, quoted by later writers, early laws like the Twelve tables, and inscriptions to supplement archaeological evidence. The common picture of early Rome is provided by the fragments of the history of Polybius and the more extensive history of Livy (from which we will sample extensively). As we advance through the Middle Republic, more contemporary material will become available.

The content of the classes will include lectures, discussions of assigned readings, and opportunities for questions. Students will be expected to participate in classroom discussion as much as reasonably possible, given the size of the class. The readings will include an older general book (by H.H. Scullard) that covers our entire period and will provide a written framework, a more sophisticated and recent survey (by Tim Cornell) that goes down to period of the Punic (Carthaginian) Wars, and selected readings from Polybius and Livy. Students are not only responsible for the readings, but also for the material presented in the lectures.