

History 325: Late Antiquity Prof. Williams
Discussion 3 Study Questions

Prepare to discuss your answers to the following questions based on your reading of Procopius, *Secret History*.

Bear in mind as you read the following facts: Procopius was an assistant to Belisarius, Justinian's general, and accompanied him on many of his campaigns; he wrote 8 books of histories of Justinian's wars, in which he is neutral or praiseworthy towards Justinian, as well as a panegyric account of Justinian's building projects; and finally, the *Secret History* was probably written at the same time as the *Wars*, but was never intended for public consumption and may have remained largely unread before the 10th century.

1. What is your personal favorite passage of the *Secret History*?
2. How would you describe Procopius's portrayals of Belisarius, his wife Antonina, Justinian, and Theodora?
3. In the passage you chose as your favorite, would you say it is more likely that Procopius is reporting real events without distortion; distorting an account based on real events; or simply making things up?
4. What approach would you say a reader interested in reconstructing the actual facts of Justinian's reign should take to interpreting Procopius? What elements of the *Secret History* are most useful for writing a history of the period?