ARTH 224 920 (2019B): Art of Mesopotamia

Summer Session II
Schedule: MWF 12-2:30pm
Place: TBA

Instructor: Katherine Burge
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Course Description

This is a survey course of three thousand years of the art, architecture and archaeology of ancient Mesopotamia, “the cradle of civilization.” After a brief introduction to the environment and its prehistoric foundations, the course focuses on the urban cultures in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from the “rise of civilization” around 3500 BCE through the end of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires of the middle of the first millennium BCE. We will study the major visual and architectural monuments from a broad cultural perspective, considering how and what they tell us about this long dead, but most important precursor of Western Civilization.

This course meets the General Education Curriculum’s Cross Culture Analysis requirement.

Requirements

1. Students will attend lectures and complete assigned readings on time. Lectures and readings will overlap, but not duplicate each other, and the exams will draw from both.

2. Students will take a mid-term and final exam.
3. Students will research and write a biography of an object on display in the Penn Museum’s Middle East Galleries. This paper should include a formal analysis of the object and all relevant information pertaining to its creation, circulation, use, excavation or acquisition, research, etc. It should also pose and formulate approaches and problems raised by some aspect of the object. The completed assignment should be 7-10 pages, and should include citations using a consistent format.

Students will have the option of posting the results of their research on the Penn Museum’s blog!

Grading

Grades will be based on participation (10%), object biography paper (40%), midterm exam (25%), and final exam (25%).

Course Materials

This course uses Zainab Bahrani’s *Mesopotamia: Ancient Art and Architecture*, Thames & Hudson (2017)

It is available on Amazon.com at a discount from bookstore prices; there are also several copies on reserve at the Penn Museum Library.

In addition there are one or two articles assigned for each class. These will all be available on Canvas and can be found in their appropriate folders arranged by date. On average there is 20-30 pages of reading per class.

Schedule of Classes

**7/5: Course introduction**
Lecture: Overview of course aims and requirements; Background: geography, chronology, history of the field, nature of the inquiry

Readings:
Bahrani, Introduction

**7/8: Neolithic through Ubaid**
Lecture: The emergence of art, symbols as identifiers; Natufian, Pre-Pottery Neolithic: Göbekli Tepe, Jericho; Early Chalcolithic: Çatalhüyük, Hassuna, Sammara, and Halaf cultures, Ubaid period: Eridu, Tell Madhkur

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 1
Feature piece on Gobekli Tepe in *National Geographic* (2011)

Selection TBA

**7/10: Uruk and the Emerging State**
Lecture: Cities, architecture, sculpture, seals, early writing and administration, text and image, performative nature of art, Tepe Gawra, Arslantepe, Susa, Uruk

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 2


**7/12: Early Dynastic Summer**
Lecture: Sumerian city-states, temples and ritual, kingship and dynasties, Lagash and the evolution of historical narrative in image and texts, architecture, sculpture, seals, Diyala

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapters 3


**7/15: Early Dynastic Summer (cont’d)**
Lecture: Royal Cemetery of Ur, Mari Treasure

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 4


**7/17: Akkadian Dynasty**
Lecture: Royal monuments, image of the charismatic king, Sargon, Naram-Sin, royal women, architecture, seals
Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 5


7/19: Neo-Sumerian Period
Lecture: Gudea; Forms of representation: portraiture, statues; The Ur III Dynasty, sculpture, regional art, seals

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapters 6 and 7


7/22: Mid-Term Exam

7/24: Museum Day!
Class will meet in the Penn Museum for a tour of the Middle East Galleries

Readings:
Browse through Middle East Galleries issue of Expedition Magazine

7/26: Old Babylonian Period
Lecture: Isin-Larsa, Old Assyrian, Amorites, Codex Hammurabi, the Palace at Mari, terracotta plaques and public art

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 8


7/29: Late Bronze “International” Period
Lecture: Kassite, Mitanni, Middle Assyrian, architecture, seals, Amarna Archive, Kuduru, the White Obelisk

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 9


**7/31: Neo-Assyrian Period**
Lecture: Performing Empire, palace reliefs, Nimrud, Nineveh, Dur Sharrukin,

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 10


Selection TBA

**8/2: Neo-Assyrian Period (cont’d)**
Lecture: Rock reliefs and the political landscape, monuments, ivories, seals

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 11


**8/5: Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods**
Lecture: Looking to the past: sculptural and architectural appropriation, the Palace at Babylon, seals; Pasargadae, rock reliefs, Bisotun Relief, Persepolis, metalwork, seals

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapters 12 and 13

Selection TBA

**8/7: Hellenistic and Parthian Periods**
Lecture: Hellenism in Mesopotamia, Seleucia, continuity and change under Parthian-Arsacids, Hatra

Readings:
Bahrani, Chapter 14

Selections TBA

**8/9: Final Exam**