

ARCH B222: THE AGE OF ALEXANDER

Fall 2026

Instructor

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Office: Old Library 233; Office Hours: Wed, 1:00-2:00, Fri, 12:00-1:00

Class Meeting

Mon, Wed, 2:40-4:00, Old Library 118

Following the campaigns of Alexander, the Greeks spread across the Middle East as far as Egypt, Central Asia and India, where they encountered many cultures vastly different from their own. The result was the creation of a diverse, multicultural world, connected by shared elements such as the use of the Greek language, but in which every individual region and society was unique. This diversity is especially evident in the art produced in this period, where we see the Greek obsession with human form, preferably nude, mixing with older artistic traditions in Egypt and Mesopotamia that relied on hierarchy and repetition to perform their functions. In Italy the Romans adopted aspects of Greek art as a means of disrupting their rather stodgy political ideology, with mixed results, whereas in India Greek motifs, popular for reasons as yet unknown, were pressed into the service of Buddhism. In this course we shall examine the art of this dynamic period from ca. 300 to 30 BCE. It is organized geographically, beginning in the Greek mainland and moving across the Middle East, North Africa and Europe to Iran, Central Asia and India. We will focus especially on themes of interaction – how do old and new artistic traditions combine? – and identity – what did these combinations mean to the people who made and used them? – as well as on the roles of power and resistance.

Goals

The goal of this course is for students to learn the following:

- An overview of the art, culture and geography of the ancient world during the Hellenistic period, ca. 300-30 BCE;
- An understanding of how contacts between Greeks and others, ranging from armed conflict to peaceful coexistence, affected art and society across West Asia, North Africa and Europe;
- How art, architecture and archaeology can inform us about Hellenistic history and society;
- How modern scholarship about the Hellenistic period has been affected by European colonialist perspectives;

- To analyze different types of historical evidence, including art, literature, documentary sources, and architecture, and to use them to address research questions;
- To distinguish between interpretations of evidence and the evidence itself;
- The ability to present information and ideas orally and in writing to a scholarly audience.

Class Format

The class will consist of discursive lectures and classes devoted to discussions of specific materials or articles. The lectures are mostly organized geographically, with the goal being for students to be able to compare how different regions experienced the impact and aftermath of Alexander's conquests. These lectures will present both the basic historical framework for our course and the archaeological material essential for understanding this period (or that I find particularly interesting, at any rate). The lectures are effectively discussions, however, as I will frequently ask students to think about the material being presented and try to explain it. The discussion classes will focus on certain classes of primary evidence (inscriptions and papyri) and on examples secondary scholarship. The latter form the basis for the written assignments.

You are welcome to use laptops during class. However, any one seen using phones or wearing headphones will be regarded as absent for that class.

Reading Assignments

There is no textbook for this course. All reading assignments are posted on Moodle, under the course period by which they should be completed. The following abbreviations are used below in the course schedule:

Aruz and Valtz Fino 2012 = J. Aruz and E. Valtz Fino (ed.), *Afghanistan: Forging Civilizations along the Silk Road* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012)

Bagnall 1995 = R. Bagnall, *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History* (London: Routledge, 1995)

CCHW = G. R. Bugh (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

CHW = A. Erskine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003)

Lewis 1986 = N. Lewis, *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt: Case Studies in the Social History of the Hellenistic World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986)

OHHRNE = R. Raja (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Hellenistic and Roman Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025)

Stewart 2014 = A. Stewart, *Art in the Hellenistic World: An Introduction*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

Thonemann 2016 = P. Thonemann, *The Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Assessment

Grade Breakdown

<i>Contributions to Class</i>	15%
<i>Papers 1 & 2</i>	15%
<i>Paper 2</i>	20%
<i>Exams</i>	40% (20% each)
<i>Presentation</i>	10%

Contributions to Class (15%)

Students are expected to attend each and every class and to contribute to the course as much as possible. There is, however, no explicit attendance policy. Instead, you are graded based on your contributions in class; the fewer classes you attend, the less you can participate meaningfully. Contributions include (but are not limited to) making substantive comments in the lectures and discussions, asking questions, responding intelligently to the instructors' questions during lectures and discussions and participating in group discussions among students. You are excused from attending class in the event of religious observance, a commitment to an athletic team, or sickness; all such absences must be accompanied by suitable documentation where appropriate. Furthermore, even excused absences will make it difficult to properly internalize this material and students who miss class the least have the best expectation of succeeding.

Paper 1 (15%)

Choose three objects, monuments or texts, each from different class periods, and write a short paper (750-1000 words in length) explaining how all three reflect on one of the themes discussed by Stewart 2014. Your examples should not appear in the relevant chapter of Stewart. Your paper should include descriptions of your objects, discussions of their historical and archaeological contexts, and explanation of how they fit your chosen theme.

Paper 2 (20%)

Write a short essay (1000-1200 words in length) responding to one of the scholarly articles we have discussed during the 'Discussion' classes. Your paper should briefly summarize the argument made in the article under discussion and provide an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.

Discussion articles:

- Ceccarelli 2018
- Ridgway 2018
- Trundle and de Lisle 2022
- Strootman 2020
- Hoo 2023
- Rose 2008

Exams (20% each, for a total of 40%)

There will be two non-cumulative take-home exams. The exams will consist of image identifications and essay questions.

Presentation (10%)

At the end of the term each student will give a brief presentation (~5 minutes) on an object from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the Art Institute of Chicago or the J. Paul Getty Museum. The object must date to the Hellenistic Period (ca. 330-30 BCE) and originate from a region we have covered in the course. Your task is to place your chosen object into one of the themes of Hellenistic art discussed by Stewart 2014. Your object must be approved by the instructor in advance. It cannot be something we can discuss in class or that appears in Stewart.

Links to Museum Collections:

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search>

<https://www.penn.museum/collections/>

<https://www.artic.edu/collection>

<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/>

Grading Policy

I will not normally change grades after the fact, save in cases of calculation errors. It is your responsibility to maintain your grade average at the level you desire. In exceptional cases I will consider offering an extra credit assignment, but poor performance in class does NOT constitute an exceptional case. Late work will be accepted for partial credit (determined at the instructor's discretion) until December 18 at 11:59.

AI

Students are explicitly prohibited by the Bryn Mawr honor code from using AI in any way unless instructed to do so. In this course, the use of any form of AI is not permitted. Violations will be treated as plagiarism.

Equal Opportunities and Title IX

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Access Services Director, Deb Alder, or email her at dalder@brynmawr.edu to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with me as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. Any student who has a disability-related need to tape record this class must first speak with the Access Services Director and to me, the instructor. Because of laws within the State of Pennsylvania, class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website (http://www.brynmawr.edu/access_services/).

All BMC employees (including TAs) are Title IX “Responsible Employees” and therefore are required to share a report of sexual misconduct with the Title IX Coordinator. For further details see <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/policies-guidelines-handbooks/title-ix/am-i-responsible-employee>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

This class meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:40 to 4:00 in Old Library 118. Reading assignments are listed under the class by which they should be completed. All readings are posted on Moodle.

Mon 8/31: Preliminaries

Wed 9/2: Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic World

Reading

- A. B. Bosworth, “Alexander the Great and the Creation of the Hellenistic Age,” in *CCHW*, 9-27
- Stewart 2014, Introduction
- Thonemann 2016, Ch. 1 (“The Idea of the Hellenistic”)

Mon 9/7: Labor Day (no class)

Wed 9/9: The Successors to Alexander

Reading

- W. L. Adams, “The Hellenistic Kingdoms,” in *CCHW*, 28-51
- Thonemann 2016, Ch. 2 (“From Alexander to Augustus”)

Mon 9/14: The Greek Mainland and the Aegean

Revised 8/31/26

Reading

- J. B. Scholten, "Macedon and the Mainland, 280-221," in *CHW*, 134-58
- Thonemann 2016, Ch. 3 ("Demetrius the Besieger and Hellenistic Kingship")

Wed 9/16: Discussion: Hellenistic Inscriptions

Reading

- *A Selection of Hellenistic Greek Inscriptions* (prepared by me)
- P. Ceccarelli, "Letters and Decrees: Diplomatic Protocols in the Hellenistic Period," in P. Ceccarelli et al. (ed.), *Letters and Communities: Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 147-84

Mon 9/21: Pergamon

Reading

- Stewart 2014, Focus I ("The Great Altar of Pergamon")
- U. Kästner, V. Kästner, M. Papini and A. Scholl, "The Kingdom of Pergamon," in C. A. Pícon and S. Hemingway (ed.), *Pergamon and the Hellenistic Kingdoms of the Ancient World* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 26-53

Wed 9/23: Discussion: Roman Copies of Hellenistic Sculptures

Reading

- B. S. Ridgway, "The Ludovisi 'Suicidal Gaul' and His Wife: Bronze or Marble Original, Hellenistic or Roman?" *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 31 (2018), 248-58

Mon 9/28: Eastern Anatolia

Reading

- M. Canepa, "Commagene," in *OHHRNE*, 471-90
- O. Gabelko, "Bithynia and Cappadocia: Royal Courts and Ruling Society in the Minor Hellenistic Monarchies," in A. Erskine et al. (ed.), *The Hellenistic Court: Monarchic Power and Elite Society from Alexander to Cleopatra* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2017), 319-42

Wed 9/30: Syria

Reading

- L. Hannestad, "The Seleucid Kingdom," in D. T. Potts (ed.), *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 984-1000
- A. Lichtenberger, "Art in Hellenistic Syria," in *OHHRNE*, 69-82

Mon 10/5: Discussion: Hellenistic Coins and Empires

Reading

Revised 8/31/26

- M. Trundle and C. de Lisle, "Coinage and the Creation of the Seleukid Kingdom," in E. Anagnostou-Laoutides and S. Pfeiffer (ed.), *Culture and Ideology under the Seleukids: Unframing a Dynasty* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 57-75

Wed 10/7: Midterm Exam Period (no class)

Midterm Exam due 10/9 at 11:59 PM

Mon 10/12 and Wed 10/14: Fall Break (no class)

Mon 10/19: Phoenicia and Palestine

Reading

- C. Bonnet, "The Hellenistic Period and Hellenization in Phoenicia," in B. R. Doak and C. Lopéz-Ruiz (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Phoenician and Punic Mediterranean* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 99-110
- M. J. Goff, "The Hellenistic Period," in S. Niditch, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 241-56

Wed 10/21: Egypt

Paper 1 due

Reading

- Lewis 1986, Ch. 1 ("The Backdrop: Eldorado on the Nile")
- D. J. Thompson, "The Ptolemies and Egypt," in *CHW*, 103-20

Mon 10/26: Discussion: Greek Papyri in Egypt

Reading

- Bagnall 1995, Ch. 1 ("The Culture of Papyrus")
- Bagnall 1995, Ch. 2 ("Ancient and Modern Choices in Documentation")
- Lewis 1986, Ch. 2 ("The Engineer Kleon")
- Lewis 1986, Ch. 4 ("The Strategos Diophanes")
- Lewis 1986, Ch. 7 ("Upward Mobility in the Civil Service: Menkhes, Village Clerk")

Wed 10/28: Visit to Special Collections

Mon 11/2: Mesopotamia

Reading

- V. Messina, "Seleucia on the Tigris: The Babylonian Polis of Antiochus I," *Mesopotamia* 46 (2011), 157-67
- V. Messina, "Parthian Mesopotamia," in P. Leriche (ed.), *Art et civilisations de l'Orient hellénisé: rencontres et échanges culturels d'Alexandre aux Sassanides* (Paris: Picard, 2014), 91-9
- J. MacGinnis, "Hellenistic Rule and Roman Operations in Babylonia and Assyria," in *OHHRNE*, 205-26

Wed 11/4 Iran

Reading

- P. Kosmin, "Alexander the Great and the Seleucids in Iran," in D. T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 671-89
- G. Lindström, "Portrait of a Hellenistic Rule in the National Museum of Iran," in J. M. Daehner et al. (ed.), *Artistry in Bronze: The Greeks and Their Legacy* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017), 183-9
- H. P. Colburn, "The Cities of Persia," in *OHHRNE*, 537-56

Mon 11/9: Discussion: Hellenism in Iran

Reading

- R. Strootman, "Hellenism and Persianism in Iran: Culture and Empire after Alexander the Great," *Dabir* 7 (2020), 201-27

Wed 11/11: Central Asia and India

Reading

- P. Bernard, "Ai Khanum: A Greek Colony in Post-Alexandrian Central Asia, or How to Be Greek in an Oriental Milieu," in Aruz and Valtz Fino 2012, 42-53
- H.-P. Francfort, "Tillya Tepe and Its Connections with the Eurasian Steppes," in Aruz and Valtz Fino 2012, 88-101
- F. Holt, "Coins: 'The Great Guides of the Historian,'" in Aruz and Valtz Fino 2012, 30-41

Mon 11/16: Discussion: Translocalism

Reading

- M. Hoo, "Western, Eastern, Both, or Neither? Translocalism as Alternative Approach to Syncretism and Hybridity in Hellenistic Bactria," *Studia Hercynia* 27 (2023), 124-50

Wed 11/18: Rome

Reading

- J. J. Pollitt, "Rome as a Center of Hellenistic Art," in *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- S. L. Tuck, "The Later Republic, 211-31 BCE: The Origins of a Hellenistic Roman Culture," in *A History of Roman Art* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 77-112

Mon 11/23: Discussion: Roman Portraits

Reading

- C. B. Rose, "Forging Identity in the Roman Republic: Trojan Ancestry and Veristic Portraiture," in S. Bell and I. L. Hansen (ed.), *Role Models in the*

Revised 8/31/26

Roman World: Identity and Assimilation (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 2008), 97-131

Wed 11/25: Presentation and Paper Help

Mon 11/30: The Etruscans

Reading

- A. Jolivet, "A Long Twilight (396-90 BC): Romanization of Etruria," in J. M. Turfa (ed.), *The Etruscan World* (London: Routledge, 2013), 151-79

Wed 12/2: The Celts

Reading

- I. Leins and J. Farley, "A Changing World, c. 150 BC-AD 50," in J. Farley and F. Hunter (ed.), *Celts: Art and Identity* (London: British Museum Press, 2015), 108-27

Mon 12/7 and Wed 12/9: Presentations

Fri 12/18: **Final Exam due**
Paper 2 due

Have You Read the Syllabus?

If you have, please write the phrase 'Antiochus' on your midterm exam to receive an extra point.