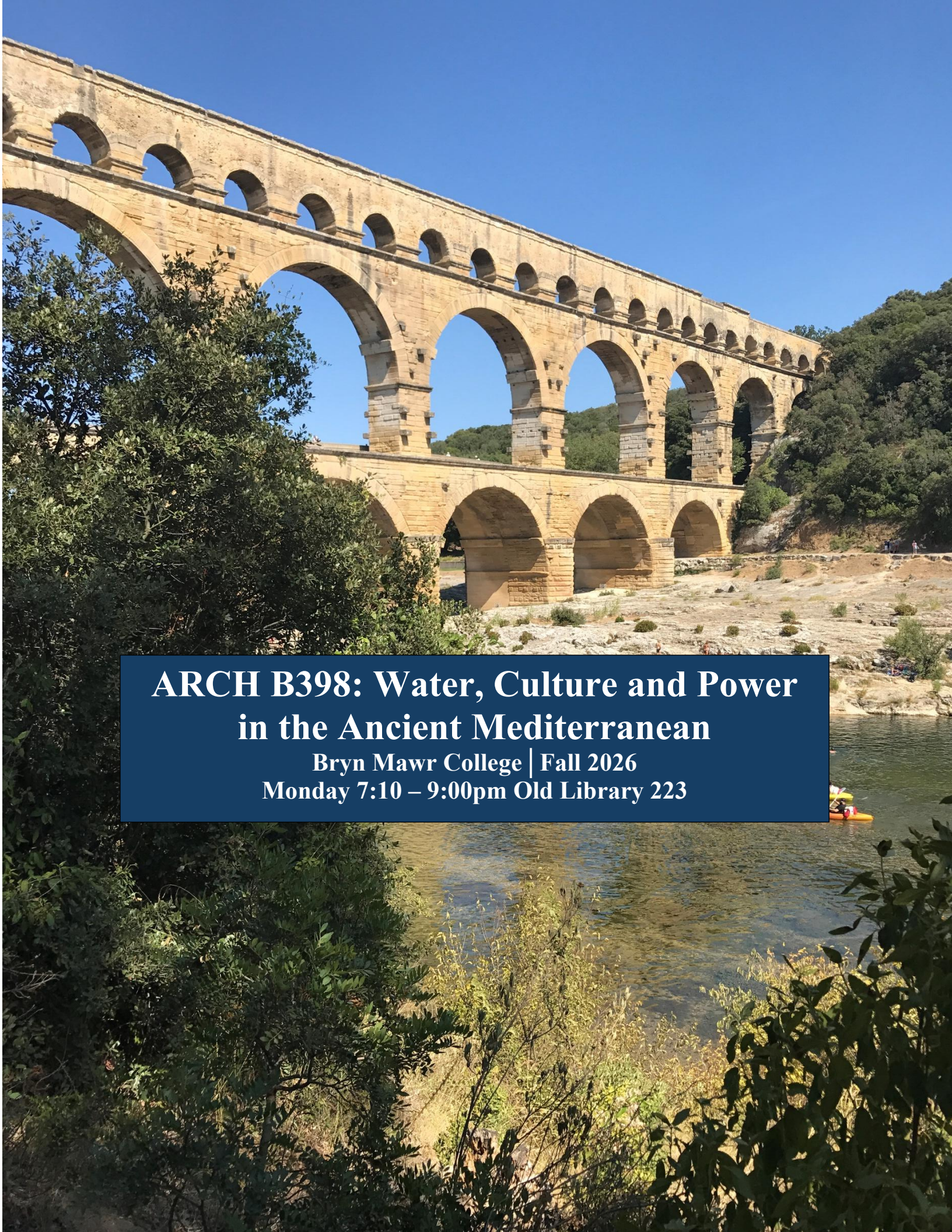




ARCH B398: Water, Culture and Power in the Ancient Mediterranean

**Bryn Mawr College | Fall 2026
Monday 7:10 – 9:00pm Old Library 223**

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Clare Rasmussen (she/her) | ckrasmusse@brynmawr.edu

OFFICE: Old Library 221 | OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Water was more than a basic necessity in the ancient Mediterranean world, it was a symbol of power, prosperity, and identity. This seminar explores how water shaped societies, politics, and culture in the ancient world, including Greece and Rome. Students will consider the different roles water took across the ancient Mediterranean and how local landscapes, climates, and traditions shaped distinctive relationships with water. Through archaeological evidence and critical engagement with ancient texts and modern scholarship, students will examine how water infrastructure and practices materialized broader dynamics of political and economic power, urbanism, religion, and cultural identity. Topics include hydraulic engineering, waterscapes such as ports and harbors, the role of water in ritual and leisure, and the monumentality of access and display.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the role of water in Greek and Roman society and culture.
- Interpret and analyze literary, visual, and archaeological evidence related to various ways ancient people engaged with and encountered water.
- Strengthen research, writing, and critical analysis skills through writing a term paper.
- Gain experience presenting writing and research through several short and long presentations.

COURSE FORMAT

This class is designed as a two-hour long seminar, which will include both lectures and discussions. The weekly readings are essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the ideas and themes discussed in class and are critical for successfully completing your assignments. Each class session will focus on a specific thematic issue or set of case studies that highlight different sites, objects, and perspectives. Please come to class prepared to engage actively— ready to discuss, debate, and exchange feedback on a variety of viewpoints and approaches.

REQUIRED BOOKS

None. All weekly readings will be available on Moodle as PDF's.

See Moodle for a list of bibliography and research resources.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

20%	Short Report (2)
10%	Abstract and Annotated Bibliography
10%	Term Paper Outline
15%	Paper Presentation
25%	Term Paper
20%	Attendance and Participation

Important Dates:

October 5	Abstract and Annotated Bibliography
November 2	Term Paper Outline
December 18	Term Paper

20% Short Reports:

Each student is required to complete **two** in-class short reports during the semester. Students will sign up for a topic corresponding to a specific week's theme and complete the assigned readings in advance. Presenters are expected to demonstrate a strong understanding of the assigned material and facilitate an engaging class discussion. The first report will be on September 14th.

Each report should be a 20-minute presentation with 10 minutes for questions that:

- Provides an overview of the week's topic and its historical and archaeological significance.
- Summarizes and analyzes the assigned readings, highlighting key arguments, evidence, and scholarly debates.
- Synthesizes the scholarship rather than simply summarizing individual works.
- Concludes with 3-5 thoughtful discussion questions designed to encourage critical analysis and class participation.

10% Abstract and Annotated Bibliography:

Students will complete a research proposal consisting of a 500-word abstract and an annotated bibliography. This assignment is designed to help develop a focused research question, identify appropriate scholarly sources, and receive feedback before moving forward with the term paper. Both the abstract and the bibliography should be written in 12-point Times New Roman font and use either the [American](#)

[Journal of Archaeology](#) (AJA) or the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) citation format. Include citations where appropriate in the abstract.

The abstract should include:

- A preliminary working title for your paper.
- An introduction that establishes the topic.
- A clearly defined research question or problem your paper will address.
- An overview of the methodology and types of evidence you will use.
- A summary of your anticipated argument or findings.
- A concluding statement explaining the broader significance of your research.

The annotated bibliography should follow the abstract and include at least 5 scholarly sources that will serve as the foundation of your research. Each annotation (100-200 words) must:

- Provide a summary of the author's main argument and the evidence used to support it.
- Evaluate the source's credibility, methodology, and any potential biases or limitations.
- Explain how the source will contribute to your research project and the development of your argument.

10% Term Paper Outline:

To prepare for the final research paper, students will submit a detailed outline of their proposed paper. This assignment is intended to help organize research, refine arguments, and develop a clear structure before drafting the final paper. This outline is not a simple list of headings. Each major section of the outline should include a clear explanation of the purpose of that section, the evidence that will be analyzed, and how it advances your overall argument. The completed outline should provide a clear roadmap for your final paper.

Your outline should include:

- A logical organization of the paper, including major sections and subsections.
- A description of the evidence, case studies, and primary and secondary sources you plan to discuss in each section.
- An explanation of how each section contributes to your overall thesis.
- A conclusion section outlining your anticipated findings and the broader significance of your research.

15% Paper Presentation:

Each student will present their research project to the class in a 40-minute conference-style PowerPoint presentation, followed by 10-15 minutes of discussion and questions. The presentation should clearly communicate your research question, methodology, evidence, argument, and conclusions while engaging your audience in scholarly discussion. Presenters are expected to assign one or two scholarly readings (around 50 pages) for their classmates to complete at least one week before the presentation. All readings must be approved by the instructor in advance.

Presentation requirements include:

- An explanation of your research question, thesis, methodology, and key scholarly debates.
- A discussion of the primary and secondary evidence supporting your argument.
- A clear presentation of your conclusions and the significance of your research.

Students are expected to practice their presentations beforehand to ensure they remain within the allotted time. Presentations will be evaluated on the quality of research, organization, clarity of argument, effective use of evidence, presentation skills, visual materials, and ability to lead the discussion following the presentation.

25% Term Paper:

Throughout the semester, you will develop and complete an original research paper on a topic of your choice related to the themes of the course. Because this project will be completed in stages, you will submit an abstract, annotated bibliography, and detailed outline before writing the final paper. Your proposed topic must be approved by the instructor.

Your paper should present a clear research question or thesis supported by critical analysis of primary and secondary sources. It must incorporate relevant archaeological, historical, literary, artistic, or material evidence, as appropriate to your topic.

Formatting guidelines for final paper:

- 20-22 pages in length, excluding the bibliography and figures.
- 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with standard 1-inch margins.
- Use [American Journal of Archaeology](#) (AJA) or the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) citation format consistently throughout.

- Figures and images should be placed at the end of the paper following the bibliography. Each figure must be numbered, properly captioned, and fully cited. Refer to each figure in the body of the paper (eg. "... (Figure #).").

The completed paper is due end of the semester.

20% Attendance and Participation:

Regular attendance and active participation are essential components of this seminar. Your participation grade is based on consistent attendance and thoughtful engagement in class discussions. Active participation includes contributing to discussions, asking thoughtful questions, responding respectfully to classmates, and demonstrating careful consideration of the readings and lecture material. Because this course is discussion-based, attendance is mandatory. Excessive unexcused absences or repeated unpreparedness will negatively affect your participation grade.

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING POLICY

If you cannot attend class due to medical reasons, family emergency, religious holiday, or other circumstances beyond your control, please notify me in advance. Excused absences are allowed and will not affect your grade. Arrangements can be made to provide class notes.

Laptops, tablets, and other learning devices are allowed for class use and note taking only. Cell phones must be silenced at all times to avoid disruptions. Students who are noticeably texting or scrolling on their phones during class will have points taken from their participation grade.

Deadlines for all assignments are listed on the course schedule in Moodle and on the syllabus. If you are having difficulty meeting a deadline or have concerns about any aspect of the coursework, please reach out to me as soon as possible—either during office hours or by appointment.

Writing assignments turned in past the due date and time will be subject to a grade penalty, and work submitted more than 72 hours after the deadline will not be accepted. Extensions can be granted in cases of documented extenuating circumstances, such as a medical emergency or a death in the family. Students who anticipate missing a due date should contact me as soon as possible to discuss their situation and, when appropriate, arrange for an extension.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND GENERATIVE AI POLICY

This course is designed to help you develop essential research skills and foster a genuine enthusiasm for both independent and collaborative inquiry. While I strongly encourage discussion and collaboration among students, all graded work (unless otherwise specified) must be completed independently without assistance or

collaboration from anyone. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. In this class, plagiarism includes submitting written work that is wholly or partially taken from an uncited source (whether from the Internet, a peer, generative AI tools and programs (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, etc.), or a published work) and presenting it as your own. Any assignment found to contain plagiarized material will receive a grade of zero. Instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Bryn Mawr Honor Board.

A key learning objective of this course is to strengthen your ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively while maintaining academic and scientific integrity. Relying on generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini can hinder the development of your own critical and creative thinking skills. Please be aware that their output can be inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading. Submitting any work produced by a generative AI tool as your own will be treated as plagiarism and a violation of the Bryn Mawr College Honor Code.

ACCESSIBILITY

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first speak with Access Services. Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to request an appointment to begin this confidential process. If eligible for accommodations as per Access Services, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share their verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>)

Any student who has a disability-related need to record this class must first be found eligible to do so by Access Services and must share this eligibility with me, the instructor. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

CLASS LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1

August 31 Preliminaries and Introduction to Waterscapes

Week 2

September 7 Labor Day- No Class

***Find time to makeup lecture**

Hydraulic Knowledge

Angelakis, A., Mays, L. W., Koutsoyiannia, D., and Nikos Mamasis. 2012. *Evolution of Water Supply Throughout the Millenia*. London: IWA Publishing. Read chapter 2.

Crouch, D. 1993. *Water Management in Ancient Greek Cities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Read chapter 11.

Stampoultzidis, A., Morandi Bonacossi, D., Reculeau, H. et al. 2024. "The Fluidity of Empire: Hydraulics of Neo-Assyrian Canal Systems in Relation to Their Possible Uses." *Water Hist* 16: 165–185.

Week 3

September 14 **Rivers, Ports, and Harbors**
Short Reports: Delos; Piraeus

Campbell, B. 2012. *Rivers & the Power of Ancient Rome*. Chapter Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press. Read chapter 4 (pages 118–159).

Keay, S. 2022. "Rethinking Relationships Between Ostia and Portus." In *Rethinking the Roman City*, edited by D. Filippi, 92–113. London: Routledge.

Week 4

September 21 **Aqueducts, Tunnels and Water Distribution**
Short Reports: Tunnel of Eupalinos; Rome's Aqueducts

Skim: Frontinus *De Aquaeductu*, Book 1.1–23.

https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/De_Aquis/Rodgers/1**.html

Crouch, Dora P. *Water Management in Ancient Greek Cities*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1993. Read chapter 12.

Hodge, 1992. T. *Roman Aqueducts & Water Supply*. London: Duckworth. Read chapters 5 and 10.

Week 5

September 28

Sanitation and Sewers/ Writing Workshop

Short Report: Cloaca Maxima

Bring a draft of your abstract/bibliography to class

Keenan-Jones, Duncan C., John Hellstrom, and Russell Drysdale. 2011. "Lead Contamination in the Drinking Water of Pompeii." In *Pompeii: Art, Industry, and Infrastructure*, edited by Eric Poehler, Miko Flohr, and Kevin Cole, 131–148. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

Koloski-Ostrow, A. O. 2015. *The Archaeology of Sanitation of Roman Italy: Toilets, Sewers, and Water Systems*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. Read chapters 3 and 4.

Week 6

October 5

Conspicuous Consumption: Fountains and Water Display

Short Reports: Fountain Houses in the Athenian Agora; Pompeii's Street Fountains

Abstract and Bibliography of Term Paper Due

Kobusch, P. 2020. "Fountains and Basins in Greek Sanctuaries: On the Relationship Between Ritual Performance and Architecture" In *The Power of Urban Water: Studies in Premodern Urbanism*, edited by C. Nicola, A. Haug and U. Müller, 69-84. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Longfellow, B. 2012. "Roman Fountains in Greek Sanctuaries." *AJA* 116 (1): 133–55.

Richard, J. 2012. *Water for the City, Fountains for the People*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols. Read chapter 3 (pages 47-92).

Week 7

October 12

No Class Fall Break

Week 8

October 19

The Sacred: Water and Religious Spaces

Short Reports: Priene Fountain at Corinth; Anna Perenna Spring

Klingborg, Patrik, von Ehrenheim, Hedvig and Frejman, Axel. 2023. "Ritual Usage of Water in Greek Sanctuaries" *Klio* 105, no. 1: 1-50

Edlund-Berry, I. 2006. "Hot, Cold, or Smelly: The Power of Sacred Water in Roman Religion 400-100 BCE." In *Religion in Republican Italy*, edited by C. E. Schultz and P. B. Harvey, 162-180. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rogers, Dylan K. 2023. "Roman Waterscapes, Architecture, and Religion: Notions of Sacrality and Sensory Experience." In *Water and Sacred Architecture*, edited by Anat Geva, 84–97. London and New York: Routledge.

Week 9

October 26

Leisure: Baths and Hygiene

Short Reports: Thermal Baths of Bath (UK); Baths of Caracalla

Fagan, G. G. 2001. "The Genesis of the Roman Public Bath: Recent Approaches and Future Directions." *AJA* 105 (3):403–26.

Yegül, F.K. 2010. *Bathing in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read chapters 3 and 4.

Eliav, Y. 2000. "The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Encounter Between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture." *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 31, no. 4: 416–54.

Week 10

November 2

Houses and Horti

Short Reports: Hadrian's Villa; House of the Vettii
Term Paper Outline Due

Farrar, Linda. 2016. "Greek Gardens and Groves of the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Periods." In *Gardens and Gardeners of the Ancient World: History, Myth and Archaeology*, 88-127. Oxford: Oxbow.

Jones, R. and Robinson, D. 2005. "Water, Wealth, and Social Status in Pompeii: The House of the Vestal in the First Century." *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, 4: 695-710.

Bedal, L. 2018. "From Urban Oasis to Desert Hinterland: The Decline of Petra's Water System. The Case of the Petra Garden and Pool Complex." In *Water and Power in Past Societies*, edited by E. Holt, 131-158. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Week 11

November 9

Water and Spectacle

Short Report: Water Automata in the Hellenistic World;
Naumachiae in Rome

Martial *Liber Spectaculorum*, 27-30.

Taylor, R. 2021. "Naval Events and Aquacades." In *The Oxford Handbook Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*, edited by T. F. Scanlon and A. Futrell, 266-280. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Finlayson, C. 2012. "New Excavations and a Reexamination of the Great Roman Theater at Apamea, Syria, Season 1-3 (2008-2010)." *American Journal of Archaeology* 116, 2: 277-319.

Aristodemou, Georgia. 2011. "Theatre Façades and Façade Nymphaea. The Link between." *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 135, no. 1: 163-197.

Week 12

November 16

Student Presentations

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Week 13

November 23 Student Presentations

Week 13

November 30 Student Presentations

Week 14

December 7 Student Presentations

*****Term Paper due by end of semester*****