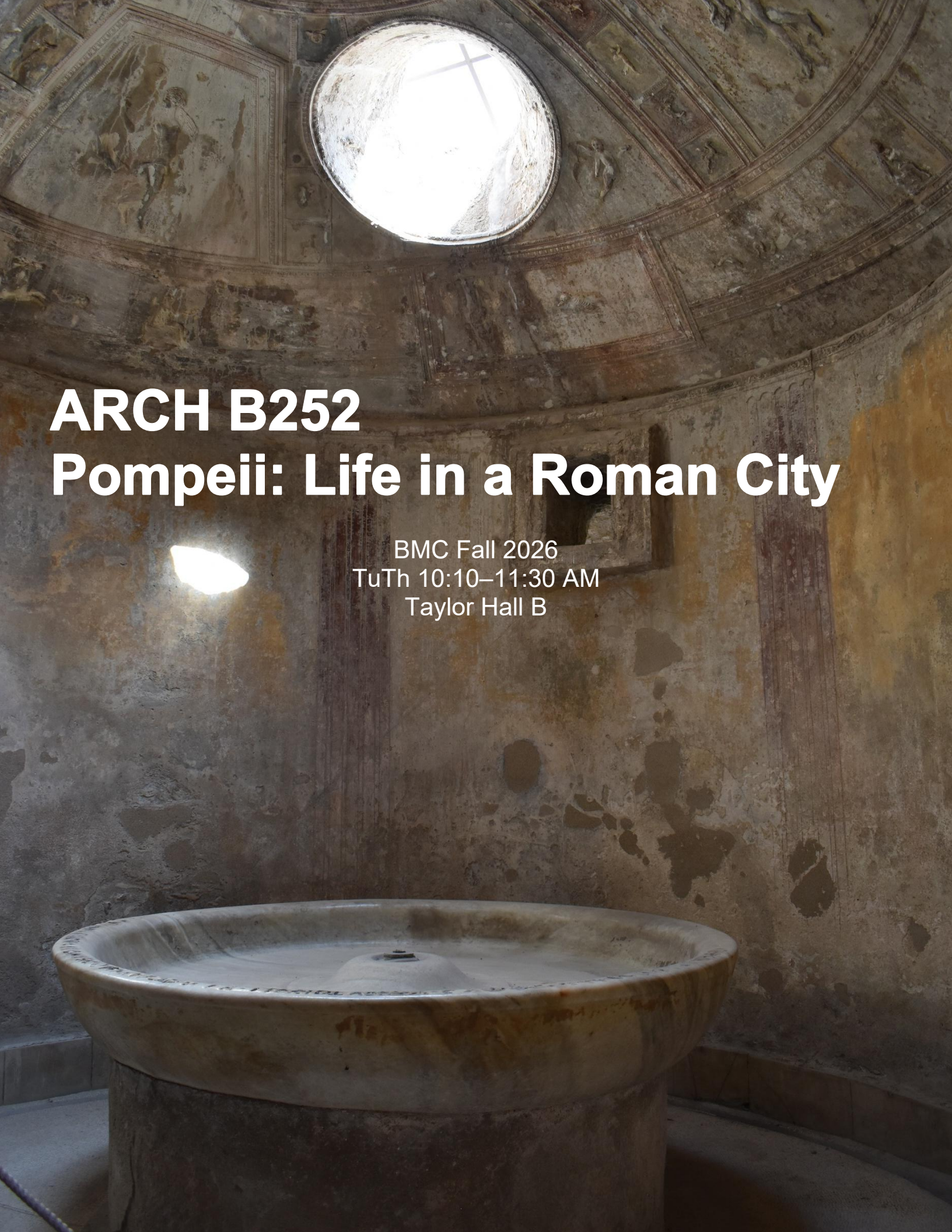


The background image is a photograph of the interior of the House of the Faun in Pompeii. It shows a circular room with a domed ceiling. A large, circular skylight (oculus) is at the top, letting in bright light. The walls are covered in ancient frescoes, though many are faded and damaged. In the foreground, there is a large, shallow, circular marble basin (fountain) mounted on a thick, cylindrical stone pedestal. The overall atmosphere is one of historical significance and archaeological discovery.

ARCH B252

Pompeii: Life in a Roman City

BMC Fall 2026
TuTh 10:10–11:30 AM
Taylor Hall B

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

Office: Old Library 221 | Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00am–12:00 pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Pompeii, most famously known for its catastrophic destruction and unique preservation by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE, has provided archaeologists with the opportunity to investigate Roman culture, art, and architecture through its material remains. This course introduces students to an archaeological study of Pompeii and other sites in the Bay of Naples, exploring what material evidence, art, and architecture reveal about social structure, economy, domestic life, religion, and urban infrastructure. The course also examines how the rediscovery of Pompeii in the 17th century transformed modern understandings of the Roman past and profoundly influenced archaeology, art, architecture, collecting practices, and the rise of Neoclassicism. There are no prerequisites for this course, although prior knowledge of ancient Rome is helpful. Recommended for students interested in archaeology, classics, art history, museum studies, and related disciplines.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Analyze and interpret the urban, sacred, domestic, and funerary landscapes of Pompeii and related sites through archaeological, architectural, and artistic evidence.
- Critically examine the history of excavation and research at Pompeii, evaluating the development of archaeology as a discipline and changes in archaeological methods, interpretations, and priorities over time.
- Synthesize archaeological evidence and evaluate primary and secondary sources.
- Develop foundational skills in academic research and writing through coursework and written assignments.
- Critically review, analyze, and respond to scholarly literature.

COURSE FORMAT

The class will primarily follow a lecture-based format, but we also will engage in class discussions designed to deepen our exploration of the course topics. 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 theme that tells us more about life in Pompeii.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Berry, J. 2007. *The Complete Pompeii. Pompeii*. New York: Thames & Hudson.

OTHER BOOKS AND SOURCES (ON RESERVE IN CARPENTER LIBRARY OR ONLINE VIA TRIPOD)

Beard, M. 2008. *The Fires of Vesuvius: Pompeii Lost and Found*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. (Reserves)

Cooley, A., and M.G.L. Cooley. 2014. *Pompeii and Herculaneum: A Sourcebook*. Second edition. London; Routledge. (Reserves and Online)

Dobbins, J.J., and P. Foss, eds. 2008. *The World of Pompeii*. 1st ed. Oxford: Routledge. (Online)

Flohr, M., and Wilson, A. 2017. *The Economy of Pompeii*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Online)

Laurence, R. 2007. *Roman Pompeii: Space and Society*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. (Online)

Ling, R. 2005. *Pompeii: History, Life & Afterlife*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus. (Reserves)

Longfellow, B. 2025. *The Lives and Deaths of Women in Ancient Pompeii*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. (Reserves)

Poehler, E. 2017. *The Traffic Systems of Pompeii*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Online)

Tuck, S. L. 2025. *Escape from Pompeii: The Great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius and Its Survivors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Online)

Zanker, P. 1998. *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

45%	Writing Assignments (3)
40%	Exams (2)
5%	Map Quiz
10%	Attendance and Participation

Important Due Dates:

September 10: Map Quiz
October 1: Writing Assignment #1
October 22: Exam 1
November 5: Writing Assignment #2
December 3: Writing Assignment #3
December 15: Exam 2

45% Short Writing Assignments:

Over the course of the semester, you will complete three short writing assignments designed to develop your skills in visual analysis, spatial reasoning, and critical reading (15% each). Each paper must be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-pt font. In each assignment, you are expected to construct a clear description and back it up by citing your sources correctly. You may use either AJA (American Journal of Archaeology) or the Chicago Manual of Style. See [AJA Reference Guidelines](#) and [Chicago Manual of Style Guidelines](#). Because archaeology relies heavily on material evidence, you are required to integrate relevant images, maps, or architectural plans into your papers when necessary to support your analysis.

- (1) Artifact/Architectural Analysis: in 500-800 words describe a specific object or architectural space in detail from Pompeii or Herculaneum, moving from physical observation to an interpretation of its daily or social function. You can pick any object from the textbooks and sources provided. Please use scholarly sources only. Images and bibliography do not count toward word length.
- (2) Spatial Analysis: in 800-1000 words examine how various monuments and civic buildings (such as houses, businesses, fountains, baths, or theaters, etc.) relate to one another across the city plan, analyzing how their physical placement imparts information about social structure, city planning, economic life, etc. Please focus on one particular excavated *regio* (region) of Pompeii or Herculaneum. Make sure to describe the structures/monuments first and their locations. Please include a map.
- (3) Article Response: in 1000 words respond to a scholarly article, summarizing the author's main argument, evaluating the evidence used to support that argument, and offering a critical assessment of the author's conclusions (please state your own opinion). You can select an article from either a list provided by the instructor, or you may choose your own with instructor approval.

40% Exams:

You will take two exams, each worth 20% of your grade. The exam format will consist of image-based ID's, defining key terms, multiple choice, and a short essay question. You are not allowed to use any outside materials (e.g., notes, handouts, readings, PowerPoint presentations, etc.) when taking the exams. The first exam will cover the first half of the course, and the second exam will cover the second half.

5% Map Quiz:

Map quiz identifying the main geographic points of interest in the Bay of Naples. A study map will be provided on Moodle.

10% Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is expected and required for success in this course. Any unexcused absences will affect your attendance grade (5% of your total grade). Please sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of every class. Active participation is also an essential component of this course (5% of your total grade). Students are expected to attend class prepared, contribute thoughtfully to discussions and activities, engage respectfully with classmates, and demonstrate consistent preparation by completing assigned readings before class.

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. 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. Make-up exams and extensions on writing assignments will be granted only in cases of documented extenuating circumstances, such as a medical emergency or a death in the family. Students who anticipate missing an exam or assignment should contact me as soon as possible to discuss their situation and, when appropriate, arrange for a make-up assessment or 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 (eg. 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 an 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

Tuesday, September 1 Syllabus; Introduction to the Bay of Naples

Thursday, September 3 Rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum
Reading: Berry Chapter 1 and 2

Week 2

Tuesday, September 8 Pre-Roman Pompeii
Reading: Berry Chapter 3

Thursday, September 10 The City's Urban Development
Map Quiz

Week 3

Tuesday, September 15 Streets and Public Spaces
Reading: Dobbins and Foss Chapter 10

Thursday, September 17 Water and Sanitation
Reading: Dobbins and Foss Chapter 16

Week 4

Tuesday, September 22 Domestic Spaces: The Domus and The Villa
Reading: Zanker pp. 135-159

Thursday, September 24 Citing Sources and Using Zotero Workshop with LITS
Download Zotero, Bring a draft of your assignment to class for peer review.

Week 5

Tuesday, September 29 Decorating the Domus: Frescoes and Mosaics
Reading: Berry Chapter 6

Thursday, October 1 Horti on Display: Gardens and Landscapes
Writing Assignment #1 Due 11:59pm

Week 6

Tuesday, October 6 Spaces for Leisure: Baths and Brothels
Reading: Beard Chapter 7

Thursday October 8 Spaces for Leisure: Spectacles and Sports
Reading: Beard Chapter 8

Week 7

October 13 and 15 **No Class – Fall Break**

Week 8

Tuesday, October 20 Exam review; Introduction to Spatial Analysis

Reading: Ellis 2004

Thursday, October 22 Exam #1

Week 9

Tuesday, October 27 Social Class and Politics

Reading: Berry Chapter 4

Thursday, October 29 Living in the Margins: Women and the Enslaved

Reading: Dobbins and Foss Chapters 35

Week 10

Tuesday, November 3 Memento Mori: Death and the Afterlife; Peer Review

Reading: Dobbins and Foss Chapter 37

Thursday, November 5 Religious Spaces

Writing Assignment #2 Due 11:59pm

Reading: Berry Chapter 9

Week 11

Tuesday, November 10 The Businesses and Economic Life of Pompeii

Reading: Berry Chapter 8

Thursday, November 12 Herculaneum

Look at: Vesuvius Challenge <https://scrollprize.org/>

Week 12

Tuesday, November 17 Villas of the Bay of Naples; Peer Review

Reading: Zarmakoupi 2014 Chapter 2

Thursday, November 19 Archaeological Sciences and Pompeii
Reading: Bukreeva et al. 2016

Week 13

Tuesday, November 24 Special Collections Visit
Reading: Versluys 2014

Thursday, November 26 No Class- Thanksgiving

Week 14

Tuesday, December 1 64-79 CE and after The End
Reading: Tuck 2025 Chapter 2

Thursday, December 3 Debate: The Ethics of Displaying Human Remains
Writing Assignment #3 Due 11:59pm
Reading: Piombino-Mascali and Sablone 2026; Dwyer 2010 Chapter 1(look at images only)

Week 15

Tuesday, December 8 Discussion of Pompeii in Pop Culture
Watch: Pompeii (2014 film) (DVD on reserves) (also available on Netflix)
Reading: Lapatin 2010

Thursday, December 10 Exam Review

Final Exam December ____ TBD