

Representations of Race & Ethnicity in the Ancient World CLST 1205 & ANCH 1205



Romare Bearden, *Black Odyssey: Cyclops* (1977)
7th century BCE Wine Jar, blinding of the Cyclops

Tuesdays, Thursdays 10:15-11:44

Spring 2025

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Course Snapshot

Modern political and artistic movements often appeal to an ancient past in order to construct their own identities. The ancient world was a diverse place. How did ancient peoples understand themselves and others? How can we make sense of race and ethnicity in the ancient past? And how are perceptions of the past used today to construct or dismantle structures of power?

You will be introduced to ancient evidence (words and images and objects), as well as to new and emerging research on how ancient peoples of the ancient mediterranean world understood themselves and others. We will investigate both how ancient peoples around or near the Mediterranean (e.g. Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Persians, and Nubians) understood difference and also how modern eras have appropriated ancient identities.

Quick Facts

- Introductory course: no background in ancient history or classical studies required.
- Readings posted to Canvas or distributed in Xerox.
- Classtime emphasizes active learning and collaboration.
- Class time includes trips to the Penn Museum to work with ancient materials and hear from experts.

Learning Outcomes and Transferable Skills

- Analyze and evaluate complex evidence.
- Write persuasively about enduring, intergenerational problems.
- Develop public speaking skills over time in a small setting.
- Acquire broad sense of emerging field of research.

Assignments and Evaluation:

- 25% Regular Preparation and Participation
- 25% Midterm Essay (on a topic of your choice, with guidance)
- 25% Midterm Test
- 25% Final Project + Presentation (on a topic of your choice, with guidance)

Example Course Topics**Week**

- 1 Ancient World in the Modern Imagination (part 1)
- 2 Egyptian Tales
- 3 *Odyssey*
- 4 Africa: Egyptian and Nubian materials
- 5 Asylum-seekers and Assimilation
- 6 Persians: Ideas of of Asia
- 7 Hippocrates: Medicine and Climate Determinism, Greeks and Asians
- 8 Aristotle and his legacy: enslavement in antiquity and beyond
- 9 Greek and Sanskrit: Changing perceptions of the east
- 10 Rome and African Royals
- 11 Rome and Northern Europeans
- 12 Rome: Immigration and Community
- 13 Rome and Asia
- 14 Ancient World in the Modern Imagination (part 2)
- 15 Student Project Presentations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The University of Pennsylvania provides students who register with the [Student Disability Services](#) with a range of support options and will provide you with a letter to give to me stating the accommodations to which you are entitled, without disclosing other private medical information about you. If you know or believe you might have a disability of some kind, please consult the Disability Services website or contact the office at 215-573-9235 or vpul-lrcmail@pobox.upenn.edu. And then please meet with me as soon as possible so that we can work together on facilitating your participation and graded work.