ARTH 5250   Borderlines: Roman Provincial Art   Wed. 3:30-6:30

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Dept. of History of Art; Graduate Groups in Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World, and Ancient History
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https://arth.sas.upenn.edu/fields-study/greek-roman-etruscan

[Fall 2023: to discuss the course, email to set up a meeting on Zoom or in person.]

"What is the `Roman'? This course looks at objects, images and monuments of multiple communities and peoples around the enormous Roman *imperium*; it explores how material and visual cultures  engaged both local and `international' identities in that proto-global and colonial context."

A longer description, from 2018: the title of this course comes from a wish to think about where and how borders are drawn, physically/ mentally, in constructing and dividing worlds and populations - and disciplines of study. Borders are also locations of interchange and communication.

`Roman provincial art` is a very active scholarly category: we test how it might be productive, sampling visual culture outside the empire's Italian heartland from the Late Republic into Late Antiquity. Rome's arts were always in dialogue with those of neighboring cultures; imperialist expansion into the Mediterranean world and beyond meant that cultural relations across many boundaries – social, ethnic, territorial - potentially became cultural politics. Of related interest are relationships between visual and material culture within the Roman world's formal boundaries, in proto-global and imperial contexts, and those of peoples along and beyond those frontiers. (In Late Antiquity some of them took up rule within the old imperial boundaries, and came to cultural terms with their new lands.) `Style' is a fraught issue: what does attributed crudeness in regional practice add up to, and what were the aims of apparently trans-Mediterranean forms of display? do `arts' engage identity formation, enforced or discrepant viewing? To analyze relations between the empire's local and `international' visual cultures is to critique models of Romanization, center-periphery and network interaction, cultural fusion, translation and hybridity, creole and subaltern studies. It is also a glimpse, often, into the economies and production of art and artifact as consumable goods, and the social and cultural phenomenon of taste.

Where: our physical terrain of study is in western Eurasia and in northern Africa. The Roman empire at its widest expanse ran from Britain to the borders of Iran, from the sub-Sahara to central Europe and the Black Sea. This course engages also with cultures beyond the Roman frontiers, with, eg, forays further eastwards possible into Central and South Asian spheres, depending on who takes this course,

When: The seminar's temporal domain stretches, selectively, from the late 3rd c. BCE and the Hellenistic/ Republican world into "Late Antiquity". That might include looking at the 5th-8th c. world of the former imperium and its rivals under not-Roman rule (invader kingdoms in the west Med. and NW Europe/ more Sasanian, or Ummayad, or Central Asian material in the east).

No specific course prerequisites for graduate students. The course is of potential interest to grad students in, for instance, History of Art, Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World, Ancient History, Classical Studies, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Religious Studies, Anthropology, History.

Undergraduates with some advanced background in the humanities/ social sciences may enrol with Prof. Kuttner's permission. To inquire about this, email akuttner@sas.upenn.edu to set up a meeting to discuss your interest in the course, and your experience with reading scholarship and writing research papers.

Languages: **Primary ancient sources (Greek, Latin, etc.) will be taught in translation**. Anyone who commands some knowledge of ancient languages can help the group out with what they know.

Modern languages: **it is expected that grad students be able to comprehend readings in at least one of the triad Italian/ French/ German;** Spanish for some topics is handy as well, as are other modern languages. People who command them can help the group out
No not-English competence is expected of undergrads. But tasks will occasionally send undergrads, too, to look at something in non-Anglophone museums and archives' websites, or at the images in an article or book not in English: Google Translator and dictionaries can supply caption translations..

All materials in this course are free. There are no assigned purchases. There is no textbook.
When we use ancient texts, they will be available online or as pdfs. This course uses a Canvas site: all assigned materials, if a document or PPT or image I or students supply, will be posted here.

Reference resources: besides the assigned readings for this week or that, I will give you a set of references for exploring Roman histories and art histories, object-centered work, etc. that can help with this course. These will center not least on work available online, in our library, our Canvas pdf files, and elsewhere. If you would like to look around a bit in advance of the course, let me know. I will post syllabi with readings from other seminars, also - some mine, some others' (on methods in ArtH, on the object, on violence in ancient art, on late antiquity, on narrative in ancient art, etc).

YES, we will visit the Penn Museum once as a group, and make use of some of its holdings! You will visit into museums often, virtually, in this course and in your research, and physically if you can. You will think also about how monuments and sites are tended (or not) in the terrain of our study. Critique of the role of museums of `art', `archaeology', anthropology etc. is very important to studying the past in the present. It is imperative to grasp how forms of imperialism and recuperation from it, and nationalisms present as well as past, have impacted on the physical and virtual museum and archaeological park, when it comes to studying of situations of empire and identity-formation in the deep past.

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Workload:
This is a seminar, and our weekly sessions should be thought of as a workgroup, to which all bring their ideas, their queries, and a willingness to listen to and engage with other minds and eyes. Therefore, all will read and look at things assigned in advance.

Reading:
Graduate students should expect to read 150-250 pages a week. Grad auditors are expected to read as well. Undergrads should expect to read ca. 100-130 pages a week.

Looking:
A lot. Instructions may ask students to spend 10 or 15 minutes taking a glance at things in a given week; for some topics, instructions to go look might take up an hour or so to execute.

Typically, instructions for the week will include looking in advance at the material trace of antiquity and reconstructions of it, before coming to seminar and along with reading texts.
    I will sometimes pre-post a PPT to look at. This also means probing the open web (Google Image is a verb in this class) as directed, using the visual archives of the internet commons on sites like Wiki and Flickr, and turning to the digital databases of museums (including our own), archives, excavations, projects at virtual reconstruction, and, sometimes, public-facing websites that are serious but not academic. Maps (and critique of maps) matter also.
    When it comes to the variety of graphic modes that `illustrate', document and analyse the material trace, including forms of website design, it is hoped you will hone your awareness of how these affect perception, knowledge-making, and response.

Rabbit holes:

It is hoped you will have problems tearing yourself away from searching for things online, as well as within the virtual and physical library. The skills of productive searching are ones always to practice.

The Tasks:

Speaking/ Participation: roughly 25 % of the grade.

Class participation will be part of the grade: coming to class with tasks done, and taking part in discussion, is your job as a student. If you have to be absent, you must notify Prof. Kuttner in advance. But if you could not do the reading, come anyway, unless ill; everyone is allowed one downtime day without penalty. If you are ill (stay home) and up to listening in, I can Zoom you into the room.
    Emergency absences: of course allowances will be made for these, for family and medical issues, waiting for the plumber, etc.

 All are expected to find a way (and I will work to facilitate this) to engage orally in our weekly sessions; but contributing written queries and observations, to share with others, can count also towards participation.
    You can write to me about your thoughts, directly; this course might make use of a digital forum on the Canvas platform for comments, also.
    I might assign small commentary tasks to pool for dialogue.
    I might assign group annotation of image/text on Perusall.

Student presentations: roughly 25 % of the grade.

Everyone is going to present **a substantial (30 minute) solo report** once.

You will have other formal chances, as well, to be the discussion leader - **at least one small presentation, or response to texts and things, of ca. 10 minute**s.
    If the course is large enough to create several teams of two-three people to make these smaller presentations, that's great.

Writing: roughly 40 % of the grade

Research paper: for grad students, 20-25 pages of text, plus bibliography and illustrations.
For undergrads, 15 pages of text.

Small writing tasks (commentary, precis etc): as portfolio, roughly 10 % of the grade.
 Some writing tasks will be ungraded. These may include a takehome early on in the course that engages with physical stuff in reach of campus.

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Topics and structure

The first two-four weeks of seminar will have me moderating the workshops and supplying readings and visuals. After that, student presentations start to kick in as well, though I will be moderating and contributing too, throughout the course.

In 2023, after introductory discussion, in the first of weeks of the course I will lead discussion of the last kingdoms of the Hellenistic age, in Africa and the Near East in their interactions with `Rome', and of the visual culture of Roman presence in the Mediterranean in the Late Republic outside areas of direct control as well as within them. These sessions put questions of race, ethnicity, identities, and disciplinary taxonomies very prominently into play.

After that: topics will range around in time and space. By week 2, when the enrolment stabilizes, students will be given options to choose from when I know people's background and interests, and hear more of these when the course first meets. The size of the group partly determines what we can do, also. Students who come from adjacent discipplines and from other epochs and areas of study are very welcome to steer our group to good comparative studies for our work together.

Students can also approach me at any point up to topic selection, including before the semester, to ask if a relevant topic already of interest to you could fit into the syllabus. Such a topic might mean stuff (`Can we have the Library of Celsus?' `Any Roman silver ...?') or it might mean methods and models (`Is there a chance to try out critical fabulation ...?') or themes / phenomena (`Deathways ...?' `Indigene religion ...?') or kinds of people and ultures. It might mean a primary text (`Can I have Sidonius praising Theoderic ...?' `Can we look at Lucian's On the Syrian Goddess?'). It might mean a region - or a Penn Museum object... etc.