
Ancient Egypt

ARTH 420 B01 [41188] (3) Advanced Studies in Ancient Art

Prerequisite: ENGL 302/ENGL 302
and 6 credits in Art History at the 300 level.

ARTH 599 B01 [40664] (3) Special Topics in Art History

Prerequisite: Baccalaureate degree or permission of instructor.

George Mason University
History and Art History Department
Richard S. Mason - rmason@gmu.edu
Office: Robinson B 373A - by appointment

Summer 2012, Session B
Class:
TuTh 4:30-7:10 p.m.
Research Hall 201

Course Description and Goals

Art History 420/599 focuses on the amazing civilization of ancient Egypt. In this course, we will explore virtually every aspect of that long-enduring civilization. We'll travel from the Great Pyramids, the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, to the Valley of the Kings, where were once hidden the tombs of the most powerful pharaohs, as well as of the "Boy King," Tutankhamun. We'll visit the village of the workers who decorated - and robbed? - those royal tombs. We'll also study the animal-headed gods and goddesses worshipped by the Egyptians and we'll tour the enormous temples dedicated to those strange divinities. We'll see vivid scenes of daily life depicted in brightly painted reliefs and we'll reflect upon the complex status of women in this traditional society. And we'll witness the dramatic conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great and the tragic death of Cleopatra, the last Macedonian-Greek ruler of Egypt.

In the course of our survey of ancient Egyptian civilization, we'll encounter those mysterious hieroglyphs inscribed on towering obelisks, as well as the three other writing systems used by the ancient Egyptians. We'll read passages in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," as well as ancient love lyrics to the living. We'll watch over the Roman conquest of Egypt, the advent of Christianity and the disappearance of Egypt's most ancient religion, the transformation of Egypt upon the arrival of Islam, and, finally, the opening up of Egypt to the western world with the arrival of Napoleon's troops in 1798.

We will view the brilliant achievements of the ancient Egyptians in the major arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting. Throughout our exploration of this ancient civilization, we'll learn the fascinating stories of those archaeologists who have brought the buried past to light.

Our goal throughout is an educationally challenging, intellectually stimulating, and rewarding experience.

Required Texts

Robins, Gay. *The Art of Ancient Egypt*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008 Revised Edition. ISBN 978-0-674-03065-7

Herodotus. *The Histories*. Translated by Aubrey de Selincourt. Revised by John Marincola. New York: Penguin, 2003 Further Revised Edition. ISBN 978-0-14-044908-2

Tentative Syllabus

Students are responsible for the reading assignments listed on the syllabus and for any announcements, information, or assignments given in class. The readings are to be completed before the class for which they are assigned. Additional reading assignments may be announced in class. Quizzes or in-class writing assignments based on the readings may be given - with or without prior announcement - at the class for which the assignments have been made. Grades for such work would be factored into the final course grade.

Like the mind, the syllabus is subject to change.

Week 1

1. Tuesday, June 5 **Introduction**
The Rediscovery of Ancient Egypt

 2. Thursday, June 7 **The Beginnings of Egyptian Civilization**
Robins, *Art*,
Chapter 1: "Understanding Egyptian Art," pp. 12-18 only
- up to: *Principles of Egyptian art*
Chapter 2: "Origins: The Early Dynastic Period," pp. 30-39
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Week 2

3. Tuesday, June 12 **The Old Kingdom**
Robins, *Art*, Chapter 3:
"The First Flowering: The Old Kingdom (I)," pp. 40-57

 4. Thursday, June 14 **The Old Kingdom**
Robins, *Art*, Chapter 4:
"A Golden Age: The Old Kingdom (II)," pp. 58-67 - up to: *Non-royal tombs*
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Week 3

5. Tuesday, June 19 **Test 1**
The First Intermediate Period
Robins, *Art*, Chapter 5:
"Diversity in Disunity: The First Intermediate Period," pp. 80-89

 6. Thursday, June 21 **The Middle Kingdom**
Robins, *Art*, Chapter 6:
"Return to the Heights: The Middle Kingdom (I)," pp. 90-101
- up to: *Private Funerary Art*
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Week 4

7. Tuesday, June 26

The Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate PeriodRobins, *Art*, Chapter 7:"Change and Collapse: The Middle Kingdom (II)," pp. 110-118 - up to: *The human figure*

8. Thursday, June 28

The New Kingdom: The Early Eighteenth DynastyRobins, *Art*, Chapter 8:"A New Momentum: The New Kingdom (I): Ahmose to Amenhotep III," pp. 122-137 - up to: *Non-royal tomb chapels***Week 5**

9. Tuesday, July 3

Test 2**Akhenaten and Tutankhamun**Robins, *Art*, Chapter 9:"The Great Heresy: The New Kingdom (II): The Amarna Period and its Aftermath," pp. 148-156 - up to: *Non-royal tombs*
Read: *The aftermath of Amarna and Conclusion*, pp. 158-165

10. Thursday, July 5

Ramses the GreatRobins, *Art*, Chapter 10:

"The Glories of Empire: The New Kingdom (III)," pp. 166-192

Week 6

11. Tuesday, July 10

Museum Assignment Due**The Third Intermediate Period**Robins, *Art*, Chapter 11:"Fragmentation and New Directions: The Third Intermediate Period," pp. 194-200 - up to: *Non-royal tombs*

12. Thursday, July 12

The Late PeriodRobins, *Art*, Chapter 12:"Looking to the Past: The Late Period (I)," pp. 210-218 - up to: *The elite*.**Week 7**

13. Tuesday, July 17

Alexander the Great and Ptolemy IRobins, *Art*, Chapter 13:"The Final Flowering: The Late Period (II) and Ptolemaic Period," pp. 230-245 - up to: *Burials*.

14. Thursday, July 19

Ptolemaic and Roman EgyptRobins, *Art*, Chapter 14: "Epilogue," pp. 252-255**Week 8**

15. Tuesday, July 24

The End of Ancient Egyptian CivilizationThursday, July 26 **Final Exam: 4:30-7:10 p.m.**

Students are required to take all the tests when they are assigned. NO MAKEUPS will be given without an ACCEPTABLE excuse from a doctor or the student's academic dean/director.

GRADING		ARTH 420	ARTH 599			
Reading Response Papers Approximately 6; 1 page each		20%	20%			
Museum Assignment		30%	40%			
Class Presentation/ Discussion leadership			10%			
Class Participation		10%	10%			
Tests		40%	20%			
A+ 100-99	A- 93-90	B 86-83	C+ 79-77	C- 72-70		
A 98-94	B+ 89-87	B- 82-80	C 76-73	D 69-60	F 59-0	

All students are responsible for understanding, conforming to, and upholding the Honor Code. "Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty must report all alleged violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Committee. Any student who has knowledge of, but does not report, an Honor Code violation may be accused of lying under the Honor Code." - George Mason University.

CHEATING WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE

Our major goal of this course is to attain an understanding of ancient Egyptian art. We will learn about the archaeological discoveries that have brought to light so much of that art and we will look closely at that art since it reveals so much about the world of the ancient Egyptians, their ideas and beliefs, and their views about their own past, present, and future.

Questions on quizzes or tests may include:

1. Slide identifications of works seen in class or shown in the texts.
2. Dating of major periods, historical figures, and works of art.
3. Location of important sites on maps.
4. Definitions of technical and stylistic terms and concepts.
5. Knowledge of ancient Egyptian ideas and beliefs, including identification of gods and goddesses.
6. Identification of historical figures, of those ancient writers who had first-hand knowledge of ancient Egypt, and of those modern explorers and archaeologists who have brought the past to light.
7. Questions on the readings and lectures.

ABSOLUTELY NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE TO BE USED IN CLASS.

Throughout this course, you are expected to be considerate of your fellow students. Late arrivals, early departures, and talking in class are distracting to others. Such behavior is not acceptable and may be counted against your grade.

Doing Well

Please review the syllabus carefully and seek clarification of any assignments or instructions that might seem unclear.

Do not take this course unless you plan to attend class regularly. You will be responsible for all material presented in class, including slides. In a single class, roughly six per cent of the course material is covered. So, missing one class could result in the drop of one letter grade for your final grade in the course.

Coming to class on time means that you have the advantage of any review that is covered at the very beginning of class.

Cross-referencing your class notes with the reading assignments and illustrations in the texts is an excellent way to integrate the material covered in the course. You can do this, for example, by simply adding in the margins to your class notes the page references to illustrations in Robins. Do NOT, however, do this during class. Flipping through the books in an attempt to find one illustration distracts you from taking notes on the material that is being presented; doing so is also distracting to others and, consequently, is not allowed.

If you miss class on the day when a hand-out is distributed, please ask a fellow student for a copy of the hand-out. Graded work will be handed back only once during class; you are responsible for picking up graded work when it is handed back. If you are absent from that class, please request the return of your work.

If there has been an error in grading, clearly note the error on the first page of the quiz/test and return your test to me. **DO NOT DELAY.** Individual students are responsible for requesting the return of any work submitted for re-evaluation.

Accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities, in accordance with law and university policies. Students requiring accommodations must register with and provide documentation to the University's Disability Resource Center. This must be done well in advance before the first test in case alternate arrangements need to be made.

Please feel free to e-mail me and I will do my best to reply promptly to your messages. You may wish to ask me to clarify a point made in class, to raise an unexplored topic at our next class, or to request an appointment for us to meet. You can do that quickly and easily by e-mail. On e-mail messages to me, please always include under the subject heading: **ARTH 420** or **ARTH 599**. Do not include attachments in e-mail messages.

Grades will **not** be sent via e-mail.

Museum Assignment

Write a paper, approximately 5 pages in length about the exhibit of Egyptian art at The Walters Art Museum (www.thewalters.org), with a major focus on one specific work. Students in **ARTH 599** need to write a longer paper, 7-10 pages, incorporating pertinent research from reliable sources.

The Walters Art Museum; 600 North Charles Street; Baltimore, MD
"Egyptian Art" - Level 2, Centre Street Wing

Include in your paper a brief critique of the exhibit. Discuss in general the objects in the exhibit. What, for example, are the objects made of? What have you learned from these objects? Do the labels or walltexts inform you about the excavation history of the objects? How informative or instructive is the exhibit? Does the exhibit succeed in conveying its stated themes? How well are the works displayed? Comment briefly on: selection and organization of objects for display, labels and wall texts, lighting, etc.

Select one object (preferably one you like) from the exhibit. Make a catalogue entry, including the following information:

1. Identification - a concise heading identifying the work. Specify the type of work and material. Is it a vase, a sculpture in the round, a relief? If you make use of the museum label or wall text, make clear that you have done so. Use quotation marks as required.

2. Approximate size. You might, for example, record that a statue is "about 5 feet 4 inches in height; approximately life-size." If you choose a vase, figurine, or some other object, give the height, width, and thickness. Remember: DO NOT TOUCH! You may only be able to estimate the exact size. Be sure to indicate whether the object is complete or not; you may not, for example, "maximum preserved height."

3. Condition of state of preservation - this can be really important. What's real? Is anything missing? Is anything restored? Can you tell by looking? Does the museum label tell you?

4. Description. Accurately and objectively describe the object. What strikes you about the work you've chosen?

5. Illustration. Illustrate the work in a sketch or photograph. Be sure to indicate the scale of the work on a sketch.

6. Discuss the work within the context of Egyptian art. What can you say about the subject and style of the work? What is the evidence for the date of the work? You may compare this one work with related objects in the same exhibit, with works in other exhibits, and/or with works illustrated in Robins or other sources. Your use of any sources must be fully documented.

7. General conclusions. What do you think is the significance of the work you have chosen? What have you learned?

The major purpose of this assignment is to have you see actual works of ancient Egyptian art, not PowerPoint images or illustrations in a book. This assignment will also introduce you to one of the major collections of ancient Egyptian art in the United States. Make the most of this assignment by showing in your paper that you have benefitted from this experience.

Museum Assignment

You must cite and document any sources that you have used, including museum, labels, wall-text, or website. For references to another individual's statements/interpretations/ideas, or to illustrations, you can concisely and properly refer in your text to a source; for example: Robins, *Art*, p. 196, Fig. 235. Your bibliography should include full documentation regarding publication.

Your paper must be typed double-spaced and stapled - at the top left corner - No plastic binders. On the first page, identify your paper by putting your name, the course (ARTH 319), and the date all in the upper right corner. Proofread for spelling, grammar, syntax, and style. Submit two copies, one of which will be returned to you.

Your paper should be well-organized and clearly written. Pay close attention to style and content in writing your paper. Account is taken of carelessness, incorrect spelling and punctuation, poor use of English, lack of necessary documentation, and failure to follow directions. Your paper should reflect how much you have observed and learned from this entire experience. Feel free to express your own insights, backing up your observations with specific examples and arguments. Use your creative imagination and your abilities in critical thinking.

A = Exceptional work. Well-written, well-presented, well-argued. Shows a clear mastery of facts, concepts and interpretations; thorough knowledge of this subject. Insightful and imaginative. Remarkable in all respects.

B = Good work, certainly better than average. Good organization. Competent and careful. Obvious evidence of serious effort.

C = Average but acceptable quality. Adequate complete of the assignment.

D = Thin ice. Passing but unsatisfactory.

F = Failure. Unacceptable as college-level work.

PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE

Plagiarism in written work is defined as:

"1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.

"2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement."

George Mason University, University Catalog [2003-2004].

All written work is due in hard copy in class on the due date of Tuesday, July 10. Papers are to be handed in personally at the beginning of class. Papers not submitted in class at that time will be marked down 5%. E-mail submissions are not acceptable. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per day. Late papers may not be graded before the submission of final grades; in such cases, a grade of IN will be recorded.

Please feel free to discuss your paper with me if you have any questions or problems.

Other Exhibits of Egyptian Art

You might enjoy the exhibit of some Egyptian art and artifacts at:
The National Museum of Natural History (near the IMAX Theater)

"Origins of Western Culture"

Constitution Avenue at 10th Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Freer Gallery of Art (Room 16)

"Charles Lang Freer and Egypt"

Jefferson Drive or Independence Ave. at 12th Street, S.W., Washington, DC