

**Syllabus**  
**Art and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East**  
**ARTH 319 Spring 2024**  
**Monday and Wednesday 3:00-4:15 pm**  
**Art and Design Building L008**  
**Professor Jacquelyn Williamson**

This course satisfies **Global Understanding for the Mason Core**

**Contact information and Office Hours:**

Email: [jwilli98@gmu.edu](mailto:jwilli98@gmu.edu)

Office hours: Offered virtually, at a time convenient to you, by appointment. To schedule an office visit, email me. We will decide on a good time, then I will send you a custom zoom link.

Please note: Unless told otherwise, professors are to be addressed by the professional title as given by the university and their peers: in this case “Professor” and/or “Doctor” (not “Mr.” “Ms.” “Miss” “Mrs.” These titles indicate marital status and/or gender identity and are not professional titles for University instructors.)

**Course Description:**

Mesopotamia is considered the cradle of Western civilization. The earliest urban centers in this region appeared by 3500 BCE, near modern-day Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Urbanism also brought with it the emergence of temples and palaces and other large-scale elite institutions. Writing developed, and flourished. The arts of Mesopotamia, from painting to sculpture, follow an exciting course for several millennia.

This class explores the art and architecture of Mesopotamia (ancient Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria) starting in 3500 BCE. We will explore spectacular structures and objects in order to gain insight into the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia. We will also focus on many sites which have in recent years been damaged or destroyed by war. This class will include the most up-to-date scholarship on Mesopotamian art. Assignments will encourage critical thinking and awareness of difference, to enable understanding otherness.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Class participation and exercises, which are also used to document your attendance
- Assigned readings, including websites and documents on the Internet/Blackboard.
- Two short critical thinking papers (2 page minimum, not including bibliography, must cover an entire two pages at minimum)
- a midterm and a final exam.

**Assignments and Grade percentages: (see more details below, after the lecture and readings schedule under “class policies”):**

Class participation 20%  
1<sup>st</sup> critical thinking paper 15%  
2<sup>nd</sup> critical thinking paper 15%  
Mid-term 25%  
Final exam 25%

Excuses or requests for late assignments, make-up exams, etc., will only be accepted if they reach Professor Williamson BEFORE the assignment is due or the exam begins, and will be approved only at Professor Williamson's discretion.

### **Course Goals and Objectives:**

Students will understand the development of the art and architecture of ancient Mesopotamia and will be able to engage intellectually with specific monuments through a close visual analysis of their forms. Students will also situate these monuments in the broader historical and cultural contexts and develop a knowledge of the chronological and geographical parameters of ancient Mesopotamia. Students will also engage in the analysis of scholarly arguments, develop critical thinking, and understand how to apply evidence to construct arguments.

This course will also focus upon the following outcomes/objectives

1. the development of intercultural competencies.
2. individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.
3. how one's own values influence interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.

### **Add-drop deadlines**

Please note the following add-drop deadlines:

January 23	Last day to add a class
January 30	Last day to drop a class with no tuition penalty
February 6	Last day to drop a class (with tuition penalty)
February 21-March 25	Student self-withdrawal period (with tuition penalty)

It is your responsibility to observe the add-drop deadlines to ensure that you are properly registered for specific courses.

### **Assignment and test dates:**

**February 19: 1<sup>st</sup> critical thinking paper due**

**February 26: Midterm exam**

**April 3: 2<sup>nd</sup> critical thinking paper due**

**May 6: Final exam**

**Course Readings and Lectures:**

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Zainab Bahrani, *Mesopotamia*, Thames and Hudson, 2017.
- Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC*, 3rd rev. edition, 2016.
- Several free OER (Open Educational Resources) modules created by Dr. Marian Feldman at The Johns Hopkins University. These are posted on an open-access website, OpenStax CNX, hosted by Rice University (cnx.org). You will look at the title posted in the reading and look for it on the OpenStax cite. Often this can be accomplished with a simple google search.

**TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:**

- GMU email accounts—**only GMU accounts** will get announcements. Note that due to privacy requirements, I can only respond to GMU accounts.
- Ability to find on-line text documents from the Internet and Blackboard.
- Computerized word-processing with spell-checkers
- Internet access

**LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE**  
**(Students will be notified of any changes)**

**Note on reading assignments below:**

- **"Bahrani"** is short for Zainab Bahrani, *Mesopotamia*, 2017.
- **"Van De Mieroop"** is short for Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC*, 3rd rev. edition, 2016.
- **"OpenStax CNX"** is short for the free OER (Open Educational Resources) modules created by Dr. Marian Feldman at The Johns Hopkins University. These are posted on an open-access website, OpenStax CNX, hosted by Rice University (cnx.org). You will look at the title posted in the reading and look for it on the OpenStax cite. Often this can be accomplished with a simple google search.

**Assigned reading should be done before the dates below (they are due dates, not start-by dates).**

## **Class schedule:**

### **Jan. 17 – Introduction and Methods**

Bahrani: read Introduction

### **Jan. 22 – The Search For Mesopotamia: history of archaeology in the region**

Bahrani, Chapter 1, pp. 14-27

Van de Mieroop, Chapter 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3

### **Jan. 24 – Prehistoric Mesopotamia**

Bahrani, Chapter 1, pp. 28-37

Van de Mieroop, Chapter 1.4

### **Jan. 29 – The Uruk Period I: Urbanism, Colonies, Trade**

Bahrani, Chapter 2, pp. 40-46, 57-60

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 2.1 and 2.3

### **Jan. 31 – The Uruk Period II: Art and Writing**

Bahrani, Chapter 2, pp. 46-57

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 2.2

OpenStax CNX: Module “Cylinder Seals and the Development of Writing in Early Mesopotamia.”

### **Feb. 5 – Early Dynastic Sumer I: Temple art and architecture**

Bahrani, Chapter 3

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 3.1 and 3.2

OpenStax CNX: Module “The Development of Sumerian Temple Architecture in Early Mesopotamia” and “Mesopotamian Votive Statuary from the Early Dynastic Period”

### **Feb. 7 – Early Dynastic Sumer II: The Royal Cemetery at Ur**

Bahrani, Chapter 4, pp. 85-102

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 3.4

OpenStax CNX: Module “The Royal Cemetery of Ur and Sumerian ‘Kingship’ in Ancient Mesopotamia.”

### **Feb. 12 - Early Dynastic Sumer III: Historical Narrative in Art – The Stele of the Vultures, cylinder seals**

Bahrani, Chapter 4, pp. 102-109

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 3.5

### **Feb. 14 – Art of the Akkadian Period Dynasty: Charismatic Kings: Sargon the Great of Agade and the Divine King, Naram-Sin**

Bahrani, Chapter 5

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 4.1

OpenStax CNX: Module “Sargon the Great and the Charismatic Rulers of Ancient Akkad of Mesopotamia” and “The ‘Victory Stele’ of Naram-Sin of Akkad and the Development of the Public Monument in Ancient Mesopotamia”

**Feb. 19 – After Akkad: Independence. The Second Lagash Dynasty and Their Pious King, Gudea**

Bahrani, Chapter 6

OpenStax CNX: Module “Mesopotamian Piety and the Art of Gudea.”

<https://cnx.org/contents/CBMOHvTD@2/Mesopotamian-Piety-and-the-Art-of-Gudea>

**First critical thinking paper due**

**Feb. 21 – Midterm Review**

**Feb. 26 – Midterm Exam, online 3:00 PM to 4:15 PM**

**Note that the class MAY go asynchronous over the class meetings highlighted in blue below**

**Feb. 28 - The Third Dynasty of Ur (also called the Neo-Sumerian Period)**

Bahrani, Chapter 7

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 4.2

OpenStax CNX: Module “Ur III: Continuity and Erasure.”

Spring Break

March 4-8

**March 11 – The Old Babylonian Period: The age of Hammurabi**

Bahrani, Chapter 8

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 5.4 and 6.2

OpenStax CNX: Module “Amorite Rulers in Mesopotamia: The Palace of Zimri-Lim at Mari, and Hammurabi, King of Babylon.”

**March 13 – The Late Bronze Age, pt. I: The Mitannians and Kassites. International Relations: Egypt**

Bahrani, Chapter 9, pp. 201-211

Van De Mieroop, Chapters 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 8.1, and 9.1

OpenStax CNX: Module “Late Bronze Age Internationalism and the International Artistic Style.”

**March 18– The Late Bronze Age, pt. II: The Hittites and Assyria**

Bahrani, Chapter 9, pp. 211-221

Van De Mieroop, Chapters 6.1, 8.2, and 9.2

**March 20 – The Neo-Assyrian Empire I: Ashurnasirpal II and The End of the Late Bronze Age**

Bahrani, Chapter 10, pp. 225-231

Van De Mieroop, Chapters 10 and 12

OpenStax CNX: Module “Ashurnasirpal II, King of Assyria, and his Palace at Nimrud.”

**March 25 – The Neo-Assyrian Empire II: The throne room at the Center and the Boundaries of the Empire: Ashurnasirpal II**

and Shalmaneser III

Bahrani, Chapter 11, pp. 232-236, 256-269

**March 27 – The Neo Assyrian Empire III: Reform and Burial – Shalmaneser III, Tiglath-Pileser III and the Queens’ Tombs**

Bahrani, Chapter 11, pp. 253-256

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 13.1, 13.2, and 13.3

OpenStax CNX: Module “Neo-Assyrian Palace Reliefs of Kings Tiglath Pileser III and Sargon II.”

**April 1 – The Neo Assyrian Empire IV: Palaces of Sargon II at Khorsabad and Sennacherib at Nineveh**

Bahrani, Chapter 10, pp. 236-244

**April 3 – The Neo Assyrian Empire V: The Final Glory: Ashurbanipal**

Bahrani, Chapter 10, pp. 244-249

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 13.4 and 13.5

**Second Critical thinking paper due**

**April 8**

**Class does not meet**

**April 10 – The Neo-Babylonian Empire: The City of Babylon**

Bahrani, Chapter 12

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 14.2

OpenStax CNX: Modules “The Ancient City of Babylon” and “Mesopotamian Cosmology and Mythology.”

**April 15 – The Persian Empire I: Cyrus to Darius I**

Bahrani, Chapter 13, pp. 293-299

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 15

**April 17 - The Persian Empire II: The Royal City of Persepolis**

Bahrani, Chapter 13, pp. 300-321

Van De Mieroop, Chapter 16.1, 16.2, and 16.3

**April 22 – Alexander of Macedon and the Problem of Hellenization**

Bahrani, Chapter 14  
Van De Mierop, Chapter 16.4

**April 24 – Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs: The Significance of the Past in the Present**  
Bahrani, Epilogue

**April 29**  
**Review**

**Final exam**

### **CLASS POLICIES**

**Attendance and Class participation: are necessary to pass this course. Attendance is marked by the in-class exercises (called 'Class Thinks'.)**

**Late work will be graded down five points per weekday and ten points over a weekend.** Plan ahead--last-minute hard-disk and printer failures do not constitute legitimate excuses. Make-up tests and elaborate medical excuses will require verification with a physician's or associate dean's excuse. There will be no make-up final exams.

Written work is a major part of the course and will count heavily towards your final grade. Papers must be written in good formal English, with full documentation in standard Chicago or MLA format. Please submit papers typed, double-spaced, and proofread. Spelling and grammar count. Badly written work will be downgraded, returned for a rewrite, or flunked, as I see most appropriate. All students are expected to use word-processors with spell-checkers. For help with writing, please contact The Writing Center (web site below).

Late written work: Papers are due on the day specified. Late papers will be lowered five points a day (not per class day, but every day) during the week (Mon-Fri) and lowered ten points over a weekend. If you need an extension, you must ask for it before the due date, not on or after, if you want to avoid a penalty.

Learning disabilities: Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then, please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Religious holidays: I have planned this course according to the George Mason University calendar. If you observe a religious holiday that the University does not, please let me know and I will make necessary accommodations for you (but not for the whole class).

English as a Second Language: If English is not your first language, I will be happy to help you do your best in the writing assignments by previewing papers, offering extra help, etc. But the result must be good standard written English. You will want to work with The Writing Center, or see their web page for English language help, at: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>. You may also want to work with the English Language Institute (ELI).

GMU Honor code: George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited.

All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

#### GRADING POLICIES

Assignments must be completed on the scheduled date. If there has been an emergency, it must be documented by a note from the dean's office or your doctor. In those cases, there will be one make-up test given, probably during the subsequent class.

Final grades may be raised or lowered from strict average in the following circumstances:

- Class participation improves/deteriorates.
- Reliability is stellar (always on time, always prepared, etc.) or poor (bad attendance, never prepared)
- Significant improvement over the semester (Student begins semester poorly but then does better)

Borderline grades may vary from strict numerical average if there is a pattern to grades over time (up or down).

Attendance and Class participation: for this class, this is defined as doing the reading, working through the materials posted to Blackboard each week, and the discussion board assignments. This is necessary; much of the material will only be covered in our lectures. Although this is an online asynchronous class you must keep up with the assignments and lecture material each week.

#### **Class participation grade:**

"A" Level: Great class participation—student demonstrates understanding of subject and the ability to think critically about it, makes connections with other students and encourages friendly and positive discussion, no "one-upping."

"B" level: Normal class participation—student shows up on time, keeps up with classwork, participates in group activities, does not cause problems.

"C" level: Student shows poor class attendance, does not pay attention, is not up to date with reading, is disruptive, etc.



“D-F” level: Student will get a D-F in class participation automatically if they use their personal technology devices in any way that is not connected to the classroom. IE no Facebook, Tinder, Snapchat, etc. etc. etc. (You are allowed to monitor emergency campus alerts of course.)

## DO NOT PLAGIARIZE

### What is it?

To plagiarize is (according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary Definition) “to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own; use another's work without crediting the source.” In other words: copying someone else's text/speech and trying to pass it off as your own. This includes cutting and pasting from the internet.

### How to avoid it?

It is very easy to avoid plagiarism: simply put the words in quotes and CITE the original writer/source. (Citation means using either MLA or Chicago methods for citation – google these if you do not know these methods.) I take this very seriously. If you plagiarize anything, even something as simple as a museum label, I will fail your work and report your violation of the honor code to GMU.

Grades will be lowered for lateness, lack of proofreading, bad English, lack of necessary documentation/supporting evidence/footnoting, faulty logic, or failure to follow directions for the assignment. Please study the directions for writing assignments, elsewhere in this syllabus and in the “assignments” section of Blackboard.

Late written work: Papers are due on the day specified. After that, late papers will be lowered five points a day, or half a grade, during the work week (Mon-Fri) and lowered ten points over a weekend. Note that this makes even “A” work into “F” work after ten days.

If you need an extension, you must ask for it before the due date if you want to avoid a penalty.

GMU requires you to activate your GMU e-mail account to receive official campus communications. If you prefer to use another address, you must activate the e-mail forwarder. I will use GMU addresses exclusively.

Other important resources:

GMU Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Website:

<http://integrity.gmu.edu/compliance/titleIX.cfm>

If you or anyone you know has been subjected to any form of harassment (due to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), please consider a visit to GMU's Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. They will be supportive and discreet. GMU is proud of its diverse student body and committed to protecting the rights and the dignity of all students.

Religious holidays: University Life religious holiday calendar

<http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/>

It is the obligation of students, within the first two weeks of the semester, to provide faculty members with the dates of major religious holidays on which they will be absent due to religious observances.

Student privacy:

student privacy and student rights under FERPA <http://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

Student services:

Online Education Services, University Libraries <http://library.gmu.edu/for/online>

Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services: <http://caps.gmu.edu/>