Art 328
Commemorative monuments and cultural representations: architecture and the city in the ancient Near East

Reed College × Spring 2005

syllabus

Classes: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:40 to 4:00 pm. in Library 41.
Instr.: Ömür Harmansah (Library 321)
Office Hours: Fridays 9-12 am and by appointment (e-mail: omur.harmansah@reed.edu).

Course Description

This course is a selective and analytical survey of architectural history in the ancient Near East. Readings and discussions will focus on the development of urban and architectural traditions in their socio-cultural and economical context. The Near Eastern world and the variety of its archaeological landscapes will be explored from prehistory into the Hellenistic period. Emphasis will be placed on Southern and Northern Mesopotamia, Syria and the Central Anatolian plateau in the Bronze and Iron Ages. In the ancient Near East, monumental buildings were usually considered as bearers of both textual and pictorial representations. These texts were either displayed on the architectural surfaces of monuments, or ceremonially deposited in the foundation pits as offerings during the construction. Such literary compositions and visual narratives were effective tools in the construction of social identity and historical consciousness among the public. The construction of buildings, therefore, coincided precisely with the writing of history, offering a fundamental challenge to their makers and their audience alike. The use of precious building materials and innovative architectural technologies contributed the commemorative nature of architecture. This course intends to see the production of architectural and urban space in this light, as a social enterprise, a festive event where the economic and cultural resources of a society are diverted into a productive undertaking. Building projects of Near Eastern rulers from various periods will be studied comparatively. Important lines of inquiry in the discussions will be the idea of commemoration and historical narratives, ideological aspects of architectural and sculptural display, and the development and circulation of construction materials and techniques, as well as architectural knowledge.

Books ordered through Reed Bookstore:

There may be occasional assignments of sections from these books but the students are expected to start reading them right away as the semester starts and our class discussion will often touch upon them. Matthews should be read in the first three-to-four weeks while the rest will be more extensively used throughout the semester.


Practicalities:

Each student is required to do the weekly readings for the course and participate in class discussions. For every meeting there will be a body of archaeological material from the Ancient Near East and a theoretical problem, which will be discussed analytically in reference to assigned readings.

This is a course in the course of being constructed, so expect changes in the reading list for every week. A hand-out will be distributed every week on Tuesdays and those will include updates on the syllabus for the following week (readings, discussion schedule, short assignments etc) as we move along in the semester.
1. **Short writing assignments and brief class presentations:** There will be a series of short assignments spread throughout the semester. Students will occasionally be asked to volunteer to present in class a selected critical article or book chapter related to the overall topic of the week. The assigned student will also guide the discussion on that reading. On the following week, the same student will submit a 4-5 page response paper pertaining to the problems addressed in the article and raised during the discussion. Depending on the number of students in class, all students will present and write on 1 or 2 articles by the end of the semester.

2. **Research project:** The students will choose a research topic in collaboration with the instructor and turn it into a project. The project should involve an analytical and critical discussion of a theoretical approach and its application to an archaeological case study. The main aim in the research project is the bridge the apparent gap between theoretical discussions in archaeology and the material evidence. The project will involve a number of a 15-20 min presentation and a number of submissions throughout the semester (proposal, draft, final paper). Take note of submission dates on the syllabus and start thinking about your research project within the first three weeks of the semester.

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**Weekly schedule**

**January 25 Tuesday**
Introduction to the course: what we will study, how we will study. Mesopotamia and its multiple definitions of history.

**Readings of interest**


**January 27 Thursday**
A environmental and historical orientation: physical geography, natural resources, modes - structures of human habitation, cultural landscapes, major routes of circulation. A brief overview of what is going to be studied: the idea of the long-term development, and the transformation of landscape with human activities.

**Readings:**


**February 1 Tuesday**

**Readings**


**February 3 Thursday**
Near Eastern Archaeology: approaches to texts, material culture and social landscapes. Materiality of texts and textuality of material culture.

**Presentation (Leela+Michelle)**

Readings

Presentation (Julie)

February 8 Tuesday

Readings

Presentation (Alexandra)

February 10 Thursday
The archaeological problems of the later Neolithic: Social complexity and material practices. Simplicity or complexity on the way to urbanization? Emergent elites and craft specialization.

Readings

Presentation (Allie)

February 15 Tuesday
State formation and the emergence of urban societies in Southern Mesopotamia during the 4th Millennium BC: The ceremonial nature of first urban centers; monumental temple architecture in Ubaid sites, the Uruk urbanization. The sites of Eridu and Uruk.

Readings:
Matthews, *The archaeology of Mesopotamia*. Chapter 4, pp. 93-126.

Presentation (Lotus)

February 17 Thursday

Readings

Presentation (Megan)

February 22 Tuesday

Readings

February 24 Thursday
The royal cemetery of Ur: burials and funerary rituals. The symbolism of the prestige materials and skilled craftsmanship.

Readings

March 1 Tuesday

Readings

March 3 Thursday
Royal rhetoric and the public monument in the Akkadian kingdom: early manifestations of interregional trade and territoriality. Mythologies and ideologies of the territorial state. The monumental stele, annalistic texts and the ideology of conquest.

Readings

March 8 Tuesday

Readings
Van de Mieroop, A History of the Ancient Near East, Chapter 4: pp. 59-78.


**March 10 Thursday**
[Research Paper topic proposals with preliminary bibliography due.]

Discussion of Catalhoyuk assignment


**March 12-20 Spring Break**

**March 22 Tuesday**

New cities, new ideologies, new architectural traditions: the Middle Bronze age urbanization in Northern Mesopotamia. The case of early 2nd millennium Ebla, and its urban landscape.

**Readings**


**March 24 Thursday**

Middle Bronze Age in Northern Mesopotamia; nomads, trade and the problem of the Middle Euphrates. Pastoral nomadism in the steppe and the relationship of nomads with the cities; Rowton’s concept of enclosed nomadism. The palace at Mari and its wall paintings.

Excerpt from documentary Grass: a nation’s battle for life.

**Readings**


**March 29 Thursday**

Late Bronze Age in the Anatolian Plateau; the Hittites and their empire. Sites: Bogazköy (ancient Hattusha); Extramural open-air sanctuary at Yazılıkaya (royal cult center). Eflatunpinar, spring sanctuary; Ortaköy (ancient Shishupluwa), palace architecture. The idea of empires and imperial landscapes. Rock reliefs and landscape commemoration.

**Readings**


**March 31 Thursday**


**Readings**


**Presentation (Chris)**

April 5 Tuesday

Readings
Blake, Emma; 2004. “Space, spatiality and archaeology,” in *A companion to social archaeology*, 215–229. (Reserve Main CC72.4 C67)

Presentation (Arini)

April 7 Thursday

Readings

Presentation (Julia)

April 12 Tuesday
[Ann Hamilton's public lecture on Reed campus. Hamilton visits Reed between April 10th and 13th. Students who wish to know about her work and meet her, see Omur.]
Neo-Assyrian monuments of the periphery and about the periphery: rock reliefs, exotic gardens and bronze gates. Bronzes from the Mamu temple at Balawat (Imgur-Enlil). Geography, commemoration and the royal rhetoric; the case of the Sources of the Tigris rock reliefs. Paradeisos or the exotic royal garden in the Assyrian capital. Nineveh and Sennacherib’s Carving of the Bull program from his Southwest palace.

Readings

Presentation (Linnane)

April 14 Thursday
Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian period and afterwards: in archaeological evidence and post-classical myth. The so-called “hanging-gardens” and the tradition of royal gardens (paradeisos) in the Ancient Near East. Myth and the historicity of the image of the city.

Readings

Presentation (Rachel+Amanda)

April 15 Friday
Talk at Portland Art Museum (1219 S.W. Park Avenue), Whitsell Auditorium 6:00 pm.
Dr. Frederick N. Bohrer, Associate Professor of Art, Hood College, and author of Orientalism in Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe.

April 19 Tuesday
[Research Paper drafts due.]
Student presentations of research topics. Each presentation: 10-15 min. Discussion 15 min.

Julia  Sacred tree of life in Assyria
Maya  Museum space and the presentation of archaeological knowledge.
Arini  Household activities, materiality and spatiality of house interiors and social memory in Çatalhöyük houses.
Christopher  Inanna

April 21 Thursday
[Research Paper drafts due.]
Student presentations of research topics. Each presentation: 10-15 min. Discussion 15 min.

Julie  Why settle? Tracking the transition from nomadism in the ancient Near East
Rachel  Purifying and protective rituals for foundations in Gudea’s temple

April 26 Tuesday
[Research Paper drafts due.]
Student presentations of research topics. Each presentation: 10-15 min. Discussion 15 min.

Molly  Women, households and everyday life in ancient Mesopotamia
Megan  City laments and the royal rhetoric: imaginations of the early Mesopotamian city
Amanda  Reception and popularization of Near Eastern artifacts in Europe
Allie  The cult of Inanna: a psychological, sociological and archaeological approach.

April 28 Thursday
[Research Paper drafts due.]
Student presentations of research topics. Each presentation: 10-15 min. Discussion 15 min.

Leela  Irene Winter’s approach to images and ideology
Michelle  The shifting meaning of the Near Eastern object in academic writing
Lotus  Place and power: the case of ancient Babylon and its modern interpretations.
Linnane  Hanging gardens of Babylon

May 12
Research Papers due.