

AH 209 / ARST 209

THE ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

University of Illinois at Chicago ~ School of Art and Art History ~ Spring 2017



SYLLABUS

A course with Ömür Harmanşah, Associate Professor of Art History

Meets TUESDAYS and THURSDAYS 9:30-10:45 am at SH 304

Office Hours: TUESDAYS 1:00-3:00 pm (and by appointment)

E-mail: omur@uic.edu Office: Henry Hall 211B.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Who lived in the Tower of Babel? Who was buried in the Royal Tombs of Ur? How were the ziggurats built? Peoples of the Ancient Near East produced a unique body of works of art, artifacts, and monuments, using a remarkable variety of materials and technologies, and created a long-lasting and diverse visual and material culture. This introductory lecture course investigates the art, architecture, and visual culture of Near Eastern societies from prehistoric times to the time of Alexander the Great (ca. 330 BC). The art and architecture of the earliest urban centers in ancient Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Syria, Iran and the Levant will be studied. We will explore not only how modern scholars make sense of pictorial, sculptural and architectural forms of Near Eastern art, but will also investigate various technologies of production.

Art can be broadly described as the creative and imaginative work of human communities and individuals using their material skills and acquired bodies of knowledge, in order to build a meaningful world around them. Architecture involves the building arts that on the one hand allow human communities to construct shelters, houses, and public monuments, while on the other hand characterizes the culturally specific way that they shape the space, the landscape, and the environment around them. Material culture includes everything that one uses in everyday life from kitchen utensils to writing implements, from clothing to cell phones. These are our intimate companions as we live in and make sense of the world. We tend to categorize them as fetishes, souvenirs, heirlooms, tools, knick knacks, voodoo dolls, marionettes, toys, furniture, relics, fossils, pots and pans, amounting to what we cumulatively call "material culture". Visual culture is the culture of looking at and seeing the world in a particular way and producing images that reflect and embody those specific ways of seeing. In this course, we explore these different categories of things, monuments, and art that are produced by the ancient Near Eastern cultures.

We will start with a discussion of the history of research in/on the Middle East, by the antiquarians, the first archaeologists in the 19th century and the establishment of the first museums to exhibit their finds. The chronological journey of the course starts with the Palaeolithic cave paintings and Neolithic figurines from the oldest, prehistoric communities in the Middle East, and take us all the way to the time when the Middle East was gradually Hellenized after the conquests of Alexander the Great and the collapse of the last Near Eastern empire- the Achaemenid Persian Empire. The survey will highlight precious, sacred objects such as the Uruk Vase, burial goods such as the Royal Tombs of Ur, public monuments such as the Stele of Naram Sin or the Law Stele of Hammurabi, architectural complexes such as the Assyrian Palaces, legendary wonders such as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon or the Tower of Babel.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the course is to offer a well-rounded background in the art, visual culture, and architecture of the Near Eastern cultures before Alexander the Great. It focuses on the first literate societies of ancient Mesopotamia and what follows with the development of its territorial states such as the Akkadian Kingdom and its empires such as the Assyrian and Persian Empires. Selected case studies from this history will be presented in a chronological way and they will be discussed in their geographical, historical, socio-cultural, political and sometimes economic context. While studying these works, we will often consult ancient texts from the Near East, including monumental inscriptions or literary works such as the Epic of Gilgamesh.

The course also aims to make students familiar with the methodologies and core concepts of art history, archaeology, and ancient history of the Middle East and provide them the basics of acquiring literacy in those fields. Some of the core concepts that will be covered throughout the semester are style, iconography, representation, monument, narrative, memory, image-breaking or iconoclasm, symbolism, context, technology, craftsmanship, landscape, and space. Reading and writing assignments, museum visits and guest lectures will allow students to become familiar with research methodologies that are used for closely engaging with works of art and architecture.

The essential objective of this course is therefore to provide students critical skills and literacy in understanding and working with works of art in the ancient Near Eastern world. This involves looking at, critically describing, and articulately speaking and writing about works of art, and being able to study them in close relation to their historical and cultural context. Beyond this specific objective, the course aims to help students develop analytical seeing, reading and writing skills more broadly, especially in the Humanities and the Social Sciences.

BOOKS ORDERED AT THE UIC BOOKSTORE:

The following two books are available for your purchase at UIC Bookstore. It would be very beneficial if you could purchase them, since we will be reading several chapters from these books. I will also place a copy of each in the library reserve desk.

The following is our main art historical textbook. We will follow this book pretty closely throughout the semester. The book's author Zainab Bahrani, who is a professor of art history at Columbia University will be visiting UIC campus on March 2-3, 2017 and giving talks. You will have a chance to meet her and ask your questions during our March 2nd meeting.

- Bahrani, Zainab; 2017. *The Art of Mesopotamia*. New York: Thames and Hudson.

The following book is a historical overview of the Near East. We will also read selected sections from this book

- Liverani, Mario; 2014. *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy*. London and New York: Routledge. [This book is also available to you from UIC library as an e-book. If you like readings things online, you can visit: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/uic/detail.action?docID=10814895>

READINGS ON BLACKBOARD

The pdf copies of all the readings other than the two textbooks will be posted on the Blackboard. Once you are in the designated Blackboard page of our class, simply choose "Course Readings" from the left hand side menu. The readings will be listed under the folder of each week. Please bring print-outs of all readings to the class discussion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Class meetings: Students are required to attend all lectures and do the readings in the syllabus in a timely manner. The weekly schedule below lists all the required readings by the date by which the reading should be completed. Participation in the occasional discussion sessions is an important contribution to the class. Tuesday meetings are dedicated completely to Ömür's lecture with the last 5-10 minutes reserved for questions. Thursdays usually will be shorter lectures (45-50 minutes) to be followed by discussion on that day's specific reading (see weekly schedule before).
- Writing Assignments: There will be three writing assignments during the semester. We will start with a very brief one, with a short essay on a curious map of the Middle East of your choice. Second will be an artifact analysis following a visit to the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago campus. The final paper is a library research paper, and you will be asked to develop your topic in conversation with Ömür during the second half of the semester.
- Exams: There will be two exams, a midterm and a final. Both exams will include visual identifications and comparisons as well as a short essay that will be written in response to a prompt that you will be able to select out of three options.

GRADING

- 5 % WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1- *Curious Maps of the Middle East* (1-2 pages) Due by **January 24th Tuesday, 5 pm** on Blackboard.
- 15 % MIDTERM EXAM (Visual identifications and comparison + 1 short essays) in classroom **February 21st Tuesday**.
- 20 % WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2- Analysis of an artifact from the Oriental Institute Museum-cultural biography of things (4-5 pages and a drawing of the object). Due **March 17th Friday** by 5 pm on Blackboard.
- 20% FINAL EXAM (Visual identifications and comparison + 2 short essays) (**April 27th** in class)
- 25 % RESEARCH PAPER:
 - Abstract of the project proposal (1-2 paragraphs plus preliminary bibliography) to be posted on the Blackboard by **April 14th Friday, 5 pm**.
 - Final Paper (8-10 pages) is due, by 5 pm. Ömür is happy to read your draft and give you feedback if submitted by last of finals by **May 5th Friday, 5 pm** on Blackboard and hard copy in Ömür's Mailbox in Jefferson hall department office.
- 15 % ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION in class discussions.

Note on grading: You must complete all the requirements in order to get a passing grade from this class.

Attendance policy: If you will miss a class meeting for health reasons, travel obligations, or emergencies, please inform your professor (ahead of time if possible) and indicate your reason/excuse and present him written documentation. Ömür will be happy help in catching up with what you missed. If you have more than 5 unexcused absences, you might fail the class.

Religious Holidays: The UIC Senate Policy on religious holidays is as follows: "The faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago shall make every effort to avoid scheduling examinations or requiring that student projects be turned in or completed on religious holidays. Students who wish to observe their religious holidays shall notify the faculty member by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, the students shall notify the faculty member at least five days in advance of the date when he/she will be absent. The faculty member shall make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize the student for missing the class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give the student an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance. If the student feels aggrieved, he/she may request remedy through the campus grievance procedure."

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to follow the University of Illinois's ethical code of conduct and academic integrity. "Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Students and faculty alike must obey rules of honest scholarship, which means that all academic work should result from an individual's own efforts. Intellectual contributions from others must be consistently and responsibly acknowledged. Academic work completed in any other way is fraudulent. It is your responsibility to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions. "I did not know" is not an excuse. Ask instructors for clarification if you are unsure of their expectations." Here are the links to the University's Academic Integrity and Plagiarism information pages:

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/academicintegrity.html>

<http://www.provost.illinois.edu/academicintegrity/students.html>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1. January 10-12



TUESDAY: *Introduction and the course overview.*

THURSDAY: *Where exactly is Mesopotamia, Near East, Middle East? The politics of defining a region.* [We will also discuss your first writing assignment: Curious Maps of the Middle East]

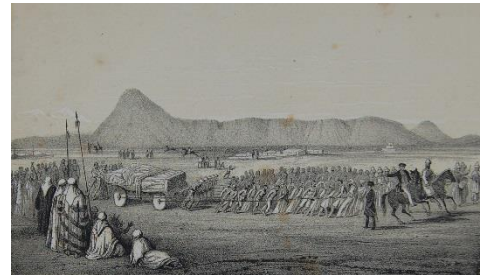
Read: Scheffler, Thomas; 2003. " 'Fertile crescent', 'Orient', 'Middle East': the changing mental maps of Southwest Asia," *European Review of History* 10/2: 253-272. [Blackboard]

Week 2. January 17-19

TUESDAY: *Exploring the exotic and Biblical Lands: Orientalism and the history of archaeology in the Middle East.*

Read: Bahrani 1-27

THURSDAY: *Near Eastern Art: where does it stand in world art history today?*



Read and compare the two different perspectives to the same question: Z. Bahrani, "Ancient Art: The Aesthetic Dimension" in *Infinite Image*. Reaktion Books 2014, pp. 15-48. [BlackB]

Winter, Irene J.; 2002. "Defining 'Aesthetics' for Non-Western Studies: the case of ancient Mesopotamia," in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*. M.A.Holly and K.Moxey (eds). Clark Art Institute and Yale University Press, 3-28. [Blackboard]

Week 3. January 24-26

[Jan 24th TUESDAY by 5 pm. **Writing Assignment 1** is due on Blackboard]

TUESDAY: Before history: art and archaeology of the prehistoric communities in the Near East. Palaeolithic caves, statues of Ain Ghazal, Göbeklitepe.



Read: Bahrani 28-34

THURSDAY: The agricultural revolution and the first settled communities: the art of the Neolithic village in Anatolia. Çatalhöyük.

Discussion Reading: Ian Hodder, "Materiality, Art and Agency" in *Çatalhöyük: Leopard's Tale*, Thames and Hudson, 185-206. [BlackBoard]

Week 4. January 31-February 2

TUESDAY: Landscapes of the Near East: understanding the environment.

Read: Liverani 17-33.

THURSDAY: Chalcolithic and the changing face of clay: regional identities, new technologies, social cohesion. Samarra, Halaf and Ubaid.

Discussion reading: Wengrow, David; 1998. "The changing face of clay: continuity and change in the transition from village to urban life in the Near East," *Antiquity* 72: 783-795..



Week 5. February 7-9



TUESDAY: "Civilizing" Uruk: First Cities and the Invention of Writing in Southern Mesopotamia. Formation of a ceremonial center around temples, the "wealthy neighbor"

Read: Liverani 61-92.

THURSDAY: New monumental architecture of the temple. Discussion: Narrative and performative images in the temple complex. Uruk and Tell al Ubaid

Read: Bahrani 38-61, also Epic Of Gilgamesh (relevant sections).
[Blackboard]

Week 6. February 14-16

TUESDAY: Into the Bronze Age: Early Dynastic Period in the South: Khafadje, Tell Asmar.

Read: Bahrani 64-83; Liverani 93-114.

THURSDAY: Royal Tombs of Ur: Collective wealth, collective death and the politics of violence. Discussion: What is the meaning of death and sanctified violence in the Royal Tombs? Precious Gifts for the Dead.

Read: Bahrani 87-109. Text: Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta

Discussion Reading: Susan Pollock; 2007. "The Royal Cemetery of Ur: Ritual, tradition and the creation of subjects," in *Representations of Political Power: Case Histories from times of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East*. M. Heinz and M. H. Feldman (eds.). Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 89-110.



Week 7. February 21-23

TUESDAY: Midterm Exam



THURSDAY: Guided Visit to the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago. Meet Prof. Harmanşah at 9 am in the Oriental Institute Museum lobby. Start working on Assignment II (Museum Artifact Analysis).

Read about the history of the Oriental Institute here:

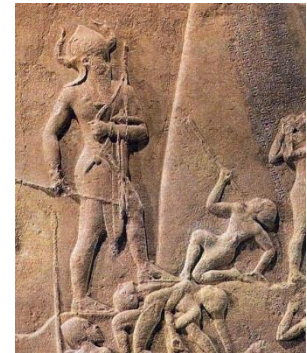
<https://oi.uchicago.edu/about/history-oriental-institute>

Week 8. February 28-March 2

TUESDAY: After the Battle is Over: Narrative in Early Mesopotamian art

Discussion Reading: Irene Winter; 1985. "After the battle is over: the stele of the vultures and the beginning of historical narrative in the art of the ancient Near East" *Studies in the History of Art* 16:11-32.

THURSDAY: Art of the Akkadian Empire from Sargon to Naram Sin: Rock reliefs and steles as victory monuments and the idea of landscape.



Guest: Prof. Zainab Bahrani will be on UIC campus on March 2nd and 3rd and you will have a chance to hear her speak. Attendance to her talk on March 3rd organized by the Art History department is required.

Read: Bahrani 113-133. Compare: Winter, Irene; 1996. "Sex, rhetoric and the public monument: the alluring body of Naram-Sin of Agade" in *Sexuality in Ancient Art*, N.B.Kampen (ed.), Cambridge: 11-26.

Week 9. March 7-9



TUESDAY: Girsu and Ur: Mesopotamian art and the ruler as shepherd of his people. Gudea and the metaphor of diorite statue.

Read Bahrani 134-173. Liverani 155-170.

THURSDAY: Nippur and Ur: Urban space and city fabric in southern Mesopotamia.

Discussion Reading: Westenholz, Joan Goodnick; 1996. "Ur – The capital of Sumer," in *Royal Cities of the Biblical World*. J.G. Westenholz (ed.). Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum.

Week 10. March 14-16

TUESDAY: Cities and nomads along the Tigris and the Euphrates: North Syria and Iraq in the Middle Bronze Age: Mari, Ebla and Assur.

Read Liverani, "The Mari Age" 221-237.

Documentary: *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life*.

(directed by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack) A 1925 documentary that follows the journey of the Bakhtiari, a nomadic tribe in Iran, as they herd their livestock up snow-covered mountain passes to get to the grazing lands on the other side of the mountains.



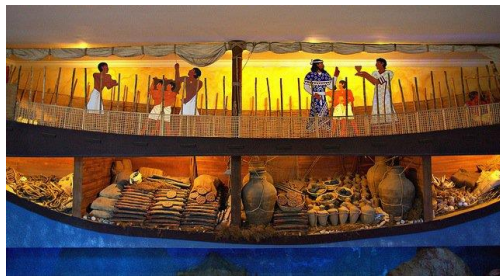
THURSDAY: Hammurabi the Just King: The law code and other stories about an ancient Mesopotamian king. The emergence of the erotic and the mass-produced terracotta imagery in southern Mesopotamia. The witches in the house, dogs that bark at the gate.

Read Bahrani 174-198.

FRIDAY: March 17th by 5 pm on Blackboard: **Writing Assignment 2** is due (Museum Artifact Analysis)

March 20-24 Spring Break

Week 11. March 28-30



TUESDAY: Traders, entrepreneurs and seafaring in the Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age. Uluburun Shipwreck and the International Style at Ugarit and other places in the Levant.

Read Liverani 271-289. Feldman, M. H.; 2002. "Luxurious forms: refining a Mediterranean 'international style,' 1400-1200 BCE," *Art Bulletin* 84: 6-29.

THURSDAY: Archaeology and the art of the Hittites: Sacred waters, holy mountains and rock reliefs of an empire. Hattusha: The city of festivals and wild mountains.

Disc. Read J.D. Hawkins; 1998. "Hattusa: home to the thousand gods of Hatti," in *Capital Cities: Urban Planning and Spiritual Dimensions*. J. G. Westenholz (ed.), Bible Lands Museum: Jerusalem.

Week 12. April 4-6

TUESDAY: After the fall of the Empire: Syro Hittite states in Syria and Anatolia during the Early Iron Age. The formation of a shared architectural culture. Suhis-Katuwas dynasty at Karkemish.

Read Liverani 448-457. Stefania Mazzone; 1997. "The gate and the city: change and continuity in Syro-Hittite urban ideology," in *Die orientalische Stadt: Kontinuität, Wandel, Bruch*. G. Wilhelm (ed.), SDV Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag: Saarbrücken: 307-338.



THURSDAY: Art of the Assyrian Empire: Construction of the Assyrian palace as a mirror image of the political geography of the universe. Nimrud, Balawat Gates, Source of the Tigris

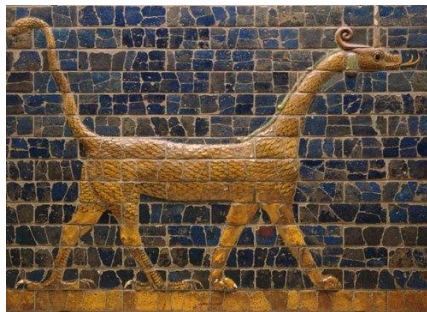
Read Bahrani 222-249. Liverani 475-496.

Week 13. April 11-13

TUESDAY: Art of the Assyrian Empire Continued: Khorsabad and Nineveh, legendary cities of Western Asia. Rock Reliefs of the Assyrian kings at the edges of the Empire.

Read Bahrani 250-269. Liverani 497-517.

THURSDAY: Babylon, the city of wonders: Tower of Babel and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Building program of the king Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus. The city as a work of art. Akitu festival and the renovation of the cosmic order.



Read and compare these two: Jeremy A. Black; 1981. "The new year ceremonies in ancient Babylon: 'taking Bel by the hand' and a cultic picnic," *Religion* 11: 39-59.

Andrew R. George; 1993. "Babylon revisited: archaeology and philology in harness," *Antiquity* 67: 734-46.

FRIDAY April 14th by 5 pm on Blackboard: Abstract and preliminary bibliography of your final paper project.

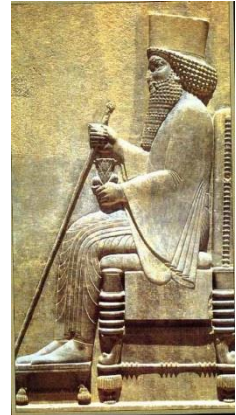
Week 14. April 18-20

TUESDAY: Art of the Achaemenid Persian Empire: From Cyrus to Xerxes, from Pasargadae to Persepolis.

Read Bahrani 290-320. Liverani 554-570.

THURSDAY: The legacy and heritage of the Mesopotamian history. Cultural memory and the past in the present. The conquests of Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic art and architecture of the Seleucids in Syria. A hybrid art of Mesopotamia and Greece.

Read Bahrani 322-359.



Week 15. April 25-27

TUESDAY: Review for the Final and the closing discussion.

THURSDAY: Final Exam

Final Papers due the last day of finals May 5th 2017, by 5 pm on Blackboard and hard copy in Ömür's mailbox in Jefferson Hall Art History Office.