**AWAS 2750 and ARCH 2313**

**ART & VISUAL CULTURE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**

[CRN: 25769]

Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies and
Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World
Spring 2013

**Syllabus**

Peoples of the Ancient Near East produced a unique corpus of artifacts and monuments, using a remarkable variety of raw materials and technologies of making, and created a diverse culture of visuality and materiality from prehistory onwards. This graduate seminar investigates the art, architecture, and visual cultures from Anatolia to the Iraqi southern alluvium, from the Levant to Iran and the Caucasus shared this common pictorial language in a variety of ways. 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. Selected bodies of archaeological, architectural and pictorial evidence from the Near East will be scrutinized while also debating relevant art- and architecture-historical methodologies and discourses in direct relationship to that material. Conceptual issues such as narrative, representation, perspective, agency, materiality, facture, technology, style, iconography, symbolism, landscape, space, and power will be explored.
The main objective of the seminar is not to provide students a comprehensive and thorough survey of art in Near Eastern history, therefore the readings do not concentrate on canonical textbook level works such as Henri Frankfort’s *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Orient* (1954), Anton Moortgat’s *Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (1969), W. Orthmann’s *Propyläen Kunstgeschichte. Band 14: Der alte Orient* (1975), Pierre Amiet’s *Art of the Ancient Near East* (1977), Dominique Collon’s *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (1995). All of these volumes are extraordinary efforts to make sense of Near Eastern art as a stream of tradition from prehistory to the Hellenistic Period, yet most of them remain out of date and fail to cover the central disciplinary debates in the field. The main objective here is first of all to understand where art historical approaches to ancient Near Eastern cultures stand, and obtain the best representative cross-section of the ongoing debates, its historiographic methodologies, and its epistemological trends (those pertaining to knowledge production). This involves engaging with the central thinkers of the discipline today such as Irene J. Winter, Holly Pittman, Zainab Bahrani, John M. Russell, Ann Gunter, Marian Feldman and others, understanding the evolution of the discipline in recent decades with impact from broader disciplinary fields of Near Eastern Studies, art history, architectural history, archaeology, visual culture studies, material culture studies and cultural studies. What are the intellectual foundations of the discipline and what cross-disciplinary currents of debate is it impacted by today?

### Books available at Brown Bookstore


### Course wiki

A wiki is created for this course and we will use this site actively throughout the semester. Weekly reading materials, powerpoints, announcements, assignments and discussions will be posted on the wiki. Students registered or auditing the course will have access to contribute to the pages of the course wiki which facilitates collaborative work. At the end of the semester, the accumulated work within the frame of this seminar will be archived in the wiki. Please familiarize yourself with the page, and make sure to check the site regularly.
http://proteus.brown.edu/artandvisualculture2013/Home

Readings and reserves

All readings will be posted on the course wiki in pdf format except for the readings from books that are available at Brown Bookstore (see the list above). Copies of those books will be available at Rock Reserve Desk. I will also create a mini reserve library that will include a set of reference books. These will be kept on a specific shelf in the Joukowsky Institute library (2nd floor corridor). Please use those books at the Institute and leave a note with your e-mail address if you have to remove it from the building for any extended period of time.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to do weekly readings comprehensively, and contribute to seminar discussions as much as possible. A graduate seminar is only successful if all participants collaborate effectively with critical debate and collegial responsibility.

1. Presentations and leading discussion
All students will be asked to volunteer for short presentations in class on selected articles or a specific body of archaeological/textual material, and to lead class discussion around those materials. This will allow us to cover a larger body of literature collaboratively. The presentations should cover the gist of the argument in the article, raise relevant and provocative discussion questions, and should last somewhere between 8-10 minutes at most.

2. Response Papers
In the first half of the semester (Weeks 2-6), the written tasks will involve a series of brief response papers (5 in total) in response to our discussions during the seminars (to be posted on the wiki one week after each discussion). These response papers will be brief, creative and dynamic essays that are inspired by some aspects of your weekly reading and the discussion that ensues it.

3. Research project
In the second half, students will focus on their research project. There will be no exams. Students will choose a research topic in collaboration with Ömür and turn it into a project. The project should involve an analytical and critical discussion of a relevant art historical problem, or body of material or monument relevant to our seminar discussions (drawing comparisons from outside the Near East are always welcome when relevant). It would be very beneficial for the whole group if topics are elected from areas that are not comprehensively covered during the regular gatherings, such as iconoclasm, connoisseurship, issues of heritage and museum exhibition, wall paintings, etc.

The research project’s presentations will include
• a project proposal of 250-300 words with preliminary bibliography (Due March 15th)
• a 15-20 min class presentation (To be scheduled for April 18th and 25th)
• a 6-8 page paper draft, due on the day of your presentation. Feedback will follow.
• 14-20 page final paper (12-font, double spaced, excluding images and bibliography) (Due May 13th)

Grading will be based on class participation (20%), oral presentations (10%), response papers (20%), research project (50%). Class participation includes regular attendance and contribution to seminar discussions. Since this is a seminar meeting only once per week, missing a class means missing a large quantity of material. Apart from sicknesses and family emergencies, please try not to miss any of the meetings. If you do have to miss the a seminar, arrange with Ömür for ways to make this up. Please note that an extra amount of writing assignment may be required from the students who miss seminar meetings.

Resources

In this class, we will not be reading Some reference books that you can consult if you need background reading canonical text book type of material but we will be focusing on close reading of specific bodies of material or specific art historical problems to get a good crosssection of the disciplinary debates.

Ömür’s research bibliography on JIAAW wiki is always helpful (although not updated in recent years):
http://proteus.brown.edu/harmansah/4971

You have access to several study collections on ArtSTOR, a massive image database that Brown Libraries are subscribed to:

http://www.artstor.org/index.shtml

Karen A. Bouchard, the Scholarly Resources Librarian for Art and Architecture has kindly offered to help Art in Antiquity students, and she is accessible:
Address: Rockefeller Library, Box A, 10 Prospect Street
Phone: (401) 863-3218   E-mail: Karen_Bouchard@Brown.edu

Brown Image Collection Resources:
http://libguides.brown.edu/profile.php?uid=56435

Reference Collection: (located in Joukowsky Institute Library Reserve Shelf, Rhode Island Hall 2nd Floor corridor)


**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Week 1. January 24. Introduction.** Discussion of goals, objectives, and format of the seminar.

**Week 2. January 31. What is art, art history, visual culture, visuality.** The canon of Mesopotamian art history, and its critiques.


**Week 3. February 7. Rock art, Symbolism and the Neolithic: architectural enchantments, animal narratives in Göbeklitepe and Catalhöyük.**


**Week 4. February 14. Powerful objects, powerful vision: Technology, agency and new perspectives on material culture.**


**Week 5. February 21. Mesopotamian Prehistory of the Image, the Text and the Narrative: Event, Ritual and Violence**


**Week 6. February 28. In Small Things Forgotten, or The Cultural Life of Figurines: Representation of Gender, Sexuality and Corporeality**


**Week 7. March 7. Monument and Memory: Kudurru, Stele, and Obelisk**


**Week 8. March 14. Diplomacy by Design: Late Bronze Age Koine in the Eastern Mediterranean**


*March 15: Final Project Proposals Due*

**Week 9. March 21. Rock Reliefs and Spring Monuments in Hittite Anatolia, the Assyrian West and Achaemenid/Sasanian Iran**


March 23-31 Spring Recess

Week 10. April 4. Wall Reliefs, Wall Paintings and Ivories: Official Discourse, State Performance and the Imaging of Empire in the Iron Age


**Week 12. April 18. Presentation of Research Projects**

**Week 13. April 25. Presentation of Research Projects and Final discussion**

Reading Period April 26-May 7

Final Papers due May 13, 2013 Monday 5 pm.