**ARCH 2240**

**GRADUATE SEMINAR: KEY ISSUES IN MEDITERRANEAN PREHISTORY**

**Instructor: Prof. John F. Cherry**

**Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World**

**105 Rhode Island Hall**

**E-mail:** [**john\_cherry@brown.edu**](mailto:john_cherry@brown.edu)

**Office hours: Wednesdays 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., or by appointment**

**Fall semester 2012, Wednesdays 3 – 5:20 pm, Rhode Island Hall 008**

**Class wiki address: http://proteus.brown.edu/medprehistory2012/Home**

**Short description:**

*This seminar is intended for students both with and without prior knowledge of this field, and particularly for those preparing for the Joukowsky Institute’s Mediterranean Prehistory graduate field exam. Its scope is the entire Mediterranean basin, from its first peopling until ca. 500 BC. The focus is on key transformations in economic, social, and political structures and interactions; on explanations for these changes; and on current issues where fresh data or new approaches are transforming our understanding.*

**SYLLABUS**

This seminar is intended for graduate students both with and without prior knowledge of this field, and (by request) particularly for those preparing for the Joukowsky Institute’s graduate Mediterranean Prehistory field exam. Its aim is to provide a thoughtful overview of developments in the world’s largest inland sea, a challenging but opportunity-rich environment adjacent to the riverine cores of the earliest civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt. The seminar’s scope is the entire Mediterranean basin, from its first peopling until the mid-first millennium BC and the beginning of the Classical era. The primary focus is on key transformations in economic, social, and political structures and interactions, and the types of explanations that have been advanced to account for these changes.

Mediterranean archaeology is one of the world’s richest sources for the reconstruction of ancient, pre-literate societies, as a result of its unrivalled depth and breadth of exploration, and an unparalleled range of information from the field, beneath the sea, and in the laboratory. The seminar will consider ideas and information from the European, western Asian, and African flanks of the Mediterranean, as well as the coasts and islands at its heart, in order to focus on the varied trajectories and interactions that created this maritime world. A primary emphasis will be on currently “hot” issues, as well as areas where fresh data or new techniques and approaches are transforming our understanding. An underlying premise is that the Mediterranean is a political and social arena in which the past is very much alive in the present; coping with current predicaments demands an informed knowledge of how its societies, cultures, and economies first emerged and engaged with each other.

Such a seminar in the past has been difficult to configure, in the absence of a single, synthetic, up-to-date, and comprehensive text to use as the framework for discussion. The only book that previously made claim to cover this field is David Trump’s *Prehistory of the Mediterranean* (1982), long out of print, hopelessly out-of-date, woefully under-illustrated, and intended mainly as a short popular introduction to the subject. Now, however, this seminar can make use (by permission of its author) of the pre-publication text of Cyprian Broodbank’s magisterial volume *The Making of the Middle Sea: An Archaeological History of the Mediterranean from its Earliest Peopling until the Iron Age* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013). This book appears likely to reconfigure discussion in the same revolutionary way that Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell’s book *The Corrupting Sea* (2000) did for the Classical and post-Classical Mediterranean world.

The sequence of topics, intentionally, mirrors the chapters of *The Making of the Middle Sea*, which is organized chronologically in progressively shorter time-periods, but whose framework is consistently Mediterranean-wide (rather than region-by-region). These topics will include (but are by no means limited to): the Mediterranean as a unit of analysis; the constraints and opportunities for human settlement in Mediterraneoid environments; the impact of the changing configurations of land and sea over the past million years; the arrival of *Homo* in the Mediterranean; patterns and processes in the peopling of different parts of the Mediterranean; Neanderthal and Homo sapiens interactions; the Mesolithic “problem” in the Mediterranean; the establishment of sedentary communities; the spread of domesticated plans and animals; origins of metallurgy and other pyrotechnologies; craft specialization; the inception of local and regional networks of exchange and social interaction; archaeological indicators of growing social inequality and complexity; impact of growing connectivities with Egypt, the Levant, and the Near East; the first states and empires in the Mediterranean; varieties of urbanism; effects of the adoption of writing systems; the coming of the age of iron in the Mediterranean; “orientalization”; the rise of the city-state.

**Organization of the seminar**

The seminar will be oriented around the ten chapters of Broodbank’s book (as detailed below). Each week, for the first ten regular meetings of the seminar, we will focus in great detail on one chapter (each ca. 35-55 pages, ca. 20-35,000 words). Students (probably in pairs, depending on enrollment), will take turns in helping direct and enrich the discussion for a given week by:

1. In consultation with the instructor, selecting (and making available to the seminar, via the class wiki site) three or four additional articles or chapters that provide supplementary in-depth treatment of several key issues addressed in the Broodbank book-chapter for that week.
2. Compiling (as a pdf or powerpoint, to be posted to the class wiki site) a small gallery of images illustrative of key material and themes for discussion that week — maps, chronological tables, photos and drawings of sites, artifact assemblages, etc.
3. Preparing a series of critical questions and key issues for consideration and discussion by members of the seminar.

This sequence of classes will take the seminar to the week before the Thanksgiving Break (the class will not meet on the Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving). The two weeks before and after Thanksgiving will provide a hiatus, during which students will be working on the topic of their term papers, meeting individually with the instructor for detailed discussion of their research projects, and preparing a Powerpoint presentation. These will be presented to the seminar in the final two weeks of classes (and, if necessary, in an additional scheduled meeting during the Reading Period. The final term paper will be due by 5 p.m. on December 15.

**Schedule of seminar meetings**

*Week 1 (Sept. 5).*

Introduction to the seminar; organizational matters; allocation of student duties.

*Week 2 (Sept. 12).*

General approaches to Mediterranean prehistory; historiography; the Mediterranean as a unit of analysis. [Broodbank Ch. 1]

*Week 3 (Sept. 19).*

Environment, geography, and Mediterranean ecosystems. [Broodbank Ch. 2]

*Week 4 (Sept. 26).*

The earliest Mediterranean: 1.8 million to 50,000 years ago. [Broodbank Ch. 3]

Week 5 (Oct. 3).

The Modernization of the Mediterranean (50,000-10,000 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 4]

*Week 6 (Oct. 10).*

Brave new worlds on sea and land (10,000-5,500 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 5]

*Week 7 (Oct. 17).*

How it might have been (5,500-3,500 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 6]

*Week 8 (Oct. 24).*

The devil and the deep blue sea (3,500-2,200 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 7]

*Week 9 (Oct. 31).*

Pomp and Circumstance: The big and small worlds of the second millennium (2,200-1,300 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 8]

*Week 10 (Nov. 7).*

From sea to shining sea (1,300-800 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 9]

*Week 11 (Nov. 14).*

The end of the beginning (800-500 BC). [Broodbank Ch. 10]

*Week 12 (Nov. 21).*

*Thanksgiving Break. Hiatus — preparation of term paper presentations.*

*Week 13 (Nov. 28).*

Oral presentation of term papers (1).

*Week 14 (Dec. 5).*

Oral presentation of term papers (2). An additional class may be scheduled during the Reading Period, if required to accommodate all student presentations.

*Week 15 (Date to be determined)*

We will meet with Prof. Broodbank for a wrap-up discussion, having read the concluding chapter of his book (Ch. 11).

**Readings**

All required readings will be made available as pdf files in a password-protected forum on the Joukowsky Institute wiki site established in association with this seminar (password to be given out in class). Average length of readings per week will be ca. 100-125 pages. The password to access the readings will be provided at the first meeting of the seminar.

Each class revolves around the relevant chapter from Broodbank’s text (each ca. 35-55 pages). This central reading will be supplemented by 3 or 4 additional in-depth readings, amounting to ca. 75 additional printed pages, selected in collaboration by the instructor and the student(s).

**Grading**

• Active and regular contribution to the discussions in class (35%).

• In specific assigned weeks, selecting the supplementary readings; creating an image gallery as a pdf or powerpoint; preparing and pre-circulating a set of critical questions and key themes for discussion; and taking responsibility for summarizing and leading a discussion of particular issues (20%).

• A research project (discussed in advance with the instructor), to be presented to the class (15%).

• A final paper of ca. 20-25 pages (graduates) or ca. 12-15 pages (undergraduates), based on the oral presentation due on December 15 (30%),.

**Other Information**

Several of the graduate students who plan to participate in this seminar have made a successful application to the Graduate International Colloquium Fund of the Office of International Affairs to support a short series of lectures and seminar discussions with the title ***Before Mare Nostrum***. It is currently intended that four senior distinguished Mediterranean prehistorians (Profs. Curtis Runnels, Prof. Bernard Knapp, Prof. Robert Chapman, and Prof. Cyprian Broodbank) will visit Brown throughout the semester to present a public lecture and engage in informal discussion with students. The final visit, by Prof. Broodbank in mid-December, will provide an opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion of issues that have arisen in the course of our semester-long consideration of his book manuscript; we will read his final summation chapter (Ch. 11) in preparation for this visit.