

Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt and the Near East

ART 320, Spring 2007

Dr. Glenda Swan

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MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m.

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Course Description and Goals

A chronological study of the material cultures of ancient Egypt and the Near East with emphasis on understanding these works within their social and political contexts.

Required Materials

Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*, Yale University Press; Fifth Edition, 1996 (ISBN 0-300-06470-5).

Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, Harvard University Press, 2000 (ISBN 0-674-00376-4).

Evaluation

Class Attendance and Participation: 10%

Quiz 1 (Friday, February 2nd): 10%

Midterm (Friday, March 2nd): 25%

Quiz 2 (Monday, April 2nd): 10%

Final (Wednesday, April 25th): 25%

Paper (see schedule, but final paper due by Monday, April 30th at 5:30 p.m.): 20%

Grading

All work is evaluated on the grading scale outlined in the Rhodes College Catalogue: A, excellent; B, good; C, satisfactory; D, passing; and F, failure (with pluses and minuses where appropriate). The American Heritage Dictionary definition of “excellent” highlights its rarefied state, defining it as something “of the highest or finest quality; exceptionally good of its kind.” Thus, only a student that demonstrates a real command of the subject, integrating and even extrapolating from the course materials to craft creative and compelling arguments that are articulated and supported in a consistently outstanding manner will earn an A; while excellent students typically dedicate significant time and effort to their coursework, only the *results* of that time and effort are evaluated.

Attendance and Participation

In order for students to make meaningful contributions to class discussion, it is expected that *all assigned readings will be completed in advance* of the class in which they will be addressed, as outlined in the accompanying calendar. The professor reserves the right to use a variety of methods to evaluate student participation and preparation for class. Such methods include – but are not limited to – unannounced quizzes, in-class exercises, short take-home assignments and/or having a randomly chosen student answer a particular question or even lead class discussion; some of these methods may be graded by the professor or fellow students, while others are not formally graded at all; all are intended to help students prepare for the format and content of the exam. While there is no strictly applied mathematical formula that corresponds to student success in such events, repeated failures clearly demonstrate a lack of meaningful engagement with course material that will be reflected in a student’s participation grade.

Of course, students cannot participate in class in any way if they are not present. Therefore, students will be monitored in regard to their *regular and prompt attendance* in class. Because

late arrival is so disruptive to a discussion class, any student arriving more than five minutes late to class will be marked late, which will effectively count as half of an absence. Occasionally, a student may find that some compelling need arises that causes them to miss class completely; such matters are at the discretion of the student and the professor requires no explanation. However, missing more than two classes will result in a five-point deduction in the student's final attendance and participation grade, with every additional absence thereafter resulting in an additional one-point deduction. If the student has a serious illness or other crisis that will cause the student to miss class, it is important to promptly notify the professor and *be prepared to provide written documentation* upon the student's return. If the professor feels that the absences were unavoidable, any missed classes will be considered as *excused* when they are figured into the attendance portion of the final grade.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the student to stay current with the course. Students are responsible for all of the lecture and discussion material presented in class, as well as any audio-visual materials shown. However, these are all one-time only events: none of these materials will be repeated. Therefore, if you are absent – even if your absence is “excused” – *you should first contact other students for notes and then read about that material in the text*. If any of the missed material still remains unclear, contact the professor, who will then be pleased to help you.

Lecture on Tuesday, March 27th at 7:00 p.m.

This lecture is considered to be a normal class period with regard to student attendance.

Late Work and Missed Exams

Any required materials that are *not turned in at the start of the class* for which they are due are immediately *lowered by five points*. Further late materials are lowered by ten points for each day after the due date; no late papers will be accepted more than four days after the original deadline. No electronic submissions of work are accepted.

Make-up exams are given only at the discretion of the professor. In addition to *timely notification*, the professor *may require written documentation* from the student before allowing a student to attend a make-up exam. If the student has a valid, documented excuse that causes them to miss a substantial portion of the course, such as an extended hospital stay, the professor may then decide to remove an exam or paper from the evaluation method of the course, effectively increasing the percentage value of the other course requirements. Incompletes are very rarely allowed.

Computer Use

Several different elements of the course require computer access. Course documents and some required scanned readings are located on the course website in the WebCT system (<https://webct.rhodes.edu>); contact ITS (x3890) if you need more information about how to login to WebCT and self-enroll in this course. Some required journal readings may be accessed through the “Knowledge Portal” of the Rhodes College Library as part of the collection of “Online Journals in Licensed Databases.” Other helpful links may include the following:
Institute of Egyptian Art & Archaeology: <http://academic.memphis.edu/egypt/index.html>
Annual Egyptological Bibliography: <http://www.leidenuniv.nl/nino/aeb.html>
Bibliographic Abbreviations: <http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/4482/AHmag.html>
Ancient Near East Web Links: <http://www.asor.org/outreach/links/aneciv.html>
Ancient Near East Web Links: <http://www.etana.org/abzu/>
Ancient Near East Web Links: <http://www.cofc.edu/~piccione/hist230/hist230weblinks.html>
Recommended Reading: http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/DEPT/RA/RECREAD/REC_READ.html

Academic Honesty

All work in this course must be completed in accordance with the Honor System at Rhodes College. Remember that every direct or indirect source of information – magazines, newspapers, books, encyclopedias, catalogues, websites, films, etc. – must be fully cited so that the reader can clearly identify all used sources, with any direct quotes placed in quotation marks. Taking *any* information or idea from a source without proper citation is plagiarism, even if one completely changes the grammar, language, sentence structure and/or organization. Consult the discussion of violations of the honor code at www.rhodes.edu/files/Honor_Constitution.pdf. For specific questions in regard to course material, contact the professor *before* turning in the material.

Paper

The subject of the paper is an art historical analysis of an object from the University of Memphis' Egyptian collection. The paper should make an argument as to how the work would have been viewed and understood in its original context. The paper must place the chosen object in its original cultural, historical, social, political and stylistic context in addition to addressing the object's known – or probable – original physical context, appearance and function.

The professor will help direct students progress over the semester by requiring that they turn in evidence of their progress for periodic review. These materials will only be “graded” with regard to on-time completion and substandard performance; failure in either of these categories will result in a three point loss from the final grade of the paper for each occurrence:

- Students must inform the professor in writing of their chosen work by **Wednesday, Feb. 7th**.
- Students must provide the professor with at least 6 reputable bibliographic sources they *believe* may be useful in their paper by **Wednesday, March 7th**.

The final paper should be 1500-2100 word long, excluding the other required elements of cover page (with honor pledge) and bibliography; the actual word count must be included at the end of the paper. The paper must cite at least three academically established bibliographic sources (scholastic books or peer-reviewed articles). If the paper makes reference to any other relevant images – as is common in art historical practice – reproductions of those images (black and white photocopies are fine) must accompany the paper; these images should be clearly labeled with the identifying information for that image as well as the source of the image itself. The formal elements of the paper must follow the guidelines of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (available at the library reference desk) with citations made in footnote format. A lack of proper spelling, correct grammar, clear organization or any other problems with the formal elements of the paper – such as failing to follow the directives set forth in the paper's requirements – will also negatively impact the grade of the paper. **The paper is due by 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 30th**; for information about late penalties, consult the “Late Work” portion of the syllabus.

Plan ahead, as you will need to visit other local libraries and/or inter-library loan items! The multi-library catalog available through the Rhodes Library website (select “Knowledge Portal” then “Online Libraries Web Page” then WorldCat) is an essential resource. Online databases – including some listed on the syllabus under “Computer Use” – are another helpful starting resource, but remember that they are not comprehensive; plan on using footnotes in texts and journals to track down other useful journals and texts. With regard to the process of writing an art history paper more generally, potentially helpful sources include Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide To Writing About Art* (on reserve at the Rhodes library), David Carrier's *Writing About Visual Art* (available as an electronic resource through the Rhodes library), Ronald Fry's *Improve Your Writing* (available as an electronic resource through the Rhodes library), and the Rhodes Writing Center (<http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/>).

Special Needs

If a student has a documented disability and which to receive academic accommodations, the student should first contact the Office of Student Disability Services (x3994) and then provide the professor with an accommodation form *as soon as possible*.

Midterm and Final Exams

All the material discussed in class and the required readings is indispensable for exam preparation. In addition, the content and format of the exam are frequently modeled in class to provide students with greater familiarity regarding the design and evaluation of exam questions. Yet, while many slides may be shown in class, students will only be held responsible for *certain* images on the exam. The required images – and the basic identifying information for each image – will be posted as part of a powerpoint presentation on the course website in the WebCT system (consult the “Computer Use” section for more information on this virtual location). This list will be updated regularly, with the last update occurring no later than four days before each exam. *For the final, students are responsible for all the images they were required to know for the midterm, but these images would appear only in the compare and contrast section of the final and need to be identified only by culture, period and title (as applicable).*

In order to identify, discuss and/or cite an image on an exam, students are required to know the BASIC IDENTIFICATION FOR EACH SLIDE, which *may* include all of the following:

- Culture
- Period
- Title
- Date

While all necessary identifying information will be available to students through the images posted as part of a powerpoint presentation on WebCT, remember that memorization of this information is only the first step toward achieving proficiency with the course materials.

EXAM FORMAT:

- Slide Identification (5 Slides with 30 seconds for each slide: 10 points total, each blank 0.5)

The first section will be a series of single slides with provided blanks and students will have to provide the basic identification for each slide.

- Unknown Slide Discussion (1 Slide, 5 Minutes: 10 points)

This section consists of a single slide for which the student has not been held responsible. Students should try to place this image in its cultural and temporal context using the skills of visual analysis in comparison with known images. Explaining why you would attribute this image to a particular period, artist and date is the most important part of this question.

- Answer Questions about Individual Slides (4 Slides with 5 Minutes for each slide: 40 points)

This section will be a series of single slides for which students will have to provide the basic identification and then answer the question associated with that slide. The difficulty and complexity of the questions will vary and may even require students to cite additional required slides in the course of answering the question.

- Compare and Contrast Two Slides (2 Pair, 10 Minutes: 40 points)

This section consists of a slide pair for which students will first have to provide the basic identification for each slide and then briefly explain some of the most significant elements that these two slides *do* and *do not* have in common. Again, note that on the final, students are responsible for all the images they were required to know for the midterm, but these images would need to be identified only by culture, period and title (as applicable).

Strategies for Learning Art History

Review class material repeatedly! Expect that it may take some time for you to accustom yourself to the unique process of studying for this class. Most students find it very difficult to cram for Art History classes. Even the straightforward factual information is usually inexorably linked to images, which are notoriously difficult to remember without repeated exposure. In addition, an Art History class requires students to do much more than simply regurgitate information about images. Students are required to make sophisticated visual and mental connections in association with these images. Furthermore, students need to express these observations clearly and articulately within the context of a cogent argument. Fortunately, however, these are far from impossible tasks. Attend class regularly, having already read the material for that lecture. Most importantly, treat the study of Art History as an ongoing process over the course of the entire semester. You want to be well prepared enough so that you can get a good night's sleep the night before the exam. Review the lecture material after each class and arrange a larger review of the material weekly. Ask your instructor if anything is unclear to you! Consider making note-cards or photocopies for self-quizzing and form study groups with other students. Remember that because the exams are comprehensive, cramming for exams will hurt not only your performance on that exam, but on the exam that will follow. Keep this course from being overwhelming by staying current with the material!

Constantly expand associated information! Begin by reviewing the images and associating the work with its own basic identifying information. As you begin to familiarize yourself with the images and its basic information, begin to think about the things that make that image significant. Roughly, you can think of each work in terms of *style, context and meaning*. Style refers to the elements of the work's appearance, especially those that allow you to associate the work with a specific culture and historical period. Context refers to the physical placement of that work as well as its placement within its larger cultural, historical, social, religious and/or political context. Meaning refers to the significance of that work, which includes how it was understood by contemporary viewers of the work as well as why it is art historically significant today. Obviously, this is a process that also requires some critical evaluation: some works are more significant than others and some information is more important than the rest. Larger themes that keep reappearing in different cultures and periods are natural exam questions. Class lectures are an obvious guide for identifying significance.

Practice comparisons! After you are familiar with the works as individuals, begin to compare them with others: what are some significant similarities and differences? You should quickly realize that not all comparisons are equally effective and – rest assured – Art History instructors also avoid such bad matches for exams. However, an effective comparison will impel your mind to see and consider similarities in style, context or meaning between works that might at first glance seem to have nothing in common, which ultimately leads to greater understanding and meaning of the two works individually.