

HNRS 122

Ancient Pompeii: A Window on Ancient Roman Art and Society

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Office Hours: 12:00–1:00 Mondays or by appointment

Course Description

Since its rediscovery over 200 years ago, the Roman city of Pompeii has fascinated the modern world. This minor Roman town, entombed by a volcanic eruption in AD 79, has fired the imagination of both scholars and artists. As an example of Roman civilization, Pompeii gives us a view into a past society that has had a tremendous impact on Western European and North American architecture, art, law and literature. This class will use the unparalleled physical remains of Pompeii's art, architecture and infrastructure as well as primary Roman literary source material in translation to explore the complex urban and cultural environment of this ancient civilization. Class discussion, critical reading of sources, visual analysis, application of critical ideas will all play significant parts in our multi-disciplinary approach to interpreting this familiar yet "foreign" culture.

Learning Objectives

To obtain an in-depth knowledge of the structure and decoration of Pompeii
To understand the cultural forces that shaped the urban structure of Pompeii
To gain a broad understanding of ancient Roman civilization
To perceive the interconnected nature of culture and urban form
To apply basic concepts of civic design within a cultural context

Textbooks*

Joann Berry, *The Complete Pompeii*. 2007. Thames & Hudson

Gregory Aldrete, *Daily Life in the Roman City: Rome, Pompeii and Ostia*.
2009. University of Oklahoma Press [also available in digital format]

Blackboard: some readings will be available as pdf documents on our Blackboard page under the Course Content tab on the left-hand side of the screen. To login, go to <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu> and use your Mason username and password (same as email).

*Both the Berry and Aldrete texts are required reading for the class. Reading assignments are listed on the syllabus and should be done prior to the class meeting on the day that they are assigned. You are not required to bring these texts to class. Discussion material will often be found on Blackboard; copies of discussion documents should be brought to class.

Grading Percentages

City plan quiz	Thursday, September 17 th	5%
Exam 1	Tuesday, October 3 rd	20%
Exam 2	Thursday, November 16 th	25%
Discussions, Attendance and Participation		20%
Design Project Due	Final exam period (date to be announced)	30%

Grading Scale:

A+ (100-97) A (96-93) A- (92-90) B+ (89-87) B (86-83) B- (82-80) C+ (79-77)
C (76-73) C- (72-70) D (69-60) F (59 and below)

Exams

Exams will include visual analysis material, short answers and essays. Images viewed in class and images from the textbooks will comprise a significant portion of each test. When preparing for class and studying for exams, treat the visual components of each assignment with the necessary attention. Your notes from class lecture and discussion will also be crucial in preparing for the exams. A review guide will be uploaded to Blackboard one week prior to each exam. Neither notes nor textbooks will be allowed for the exams themselves. You will need an exam book, preferably the large format Blue or Green book.

Note-taking

Although the readings in your textbook are critical for the course, class lectures will distill the critical information in the text and include material not found in the textbook; it is from the class lecture that exams will primarily be constructed. You must take thorough notes in order to be prepared for the exams. If there are terms on a slide, include the term, its definition and application in your notes. This is a class based on close reading of materials and that means attention to details; most people are not able to retain all of the specific details without studying copious notes taken during lecture. Do not assume that showing up to class and simply “listening” will be sufficient to prepare you for exams.

City Plan Quiz

In order to discuss Pompeii efficiently, you must be very familiar with the basic layout of the city and its most important structures/features. At the end of the syllabus, I have supplied a list of these essential elements; for the quiz, you must know these features and be able to locate them on a plan of the city. The city plan on pages 8-9 in your Berry textbook can be used as the basic map of the city. You may not be familiar with the function of each of these structures initially, but by the conclusion of the class, you will be able to explain their presence as well as locate them on a plan.

Discussions

As you look through the syllabus schedule, you will see that some class periods are designated as “discussions”. On these days, there may be some lecture, but the bulk of our class time will be spent talking about the reading assignments for those days. Keeping up with the reading is important for every class meeting, but it is especially necessary in order to have productive discussions. Read the discussion material carefully before class, take note of essential ideas/concepts and bring a copy of the discussion documents to class with you to facilitate our unpacking of these often complex works. Attendance and active participation in these discussions is required of every class member and will count as part of the 20% of your final grade. Often, the class will divide into smaller break-out groups, so do not count on anonymity during these discussions. On the syllabus, the title of these days will be prefaced with “Discussion.” If it appears that the majority of the class is not prepared for these discussions, reading quizzes will be added as part of the participation grade.

Group Projects: Design Your Own Roman City

The class will culminate with a project, undertaken by approximately five groups with each group having approximately 5 members. The project will involve “world building” in order to design your own Roman city, analogous to Pompeii and other sites preserved in the archaeological record. Although I expect this to involve imagination and creativity and to be enjoyable, the final product should be well grounded in the “best practices” of urbanism illustrated through Pompeii, the other sites discussed in class, and the reading from throughout the semester. Portions of the project will be done in class but outside class time will also be necessary. A final written document—produced by each group—will be required and will function as the final exam for the class. This exercise counts 30% of your final grade, so it should be approached seriously and with careful attention to detail. It will act as a

concrete demonstration of the concepts that you have mastered over the entire semester. Details on the process and requirements of the project will be provided when appropriate during the semester.

Important Notes

- **Attendance at exams is MANDATORY: no make-up exams will be offered without a doctor's excuse or other official documentation. If you miss an exam, you must contact me within 24 hours to schedule the re-take with valid documentation. Make up exams must be taken within ten academic days unless cleared with me in advance.**
- **Absences during discussion meetings and group project days will negatively impact your final grade. Attendance during lectures is also expected; exams will draw heavily from lecture material so being present to ask questions and take notes for yourself is advisable.**
- **I encourage questions and open discussion in class. Please, however, refrain from "quiet" talking to one another during lectures. It is distracting both to your classmates and to myself. If you persist in this during lectures, I will ask you to leave the classroom.**
- **Please turn off cell phones when class begins. Texting during class will be treated the same as talking during lectures.**
- **Use of electronic devices (including cell phones) during exams will be treated as an honor code violation. At the very least, you will receive a "0" on the exam.**
- **Arrive on time for class. Coming in late is disruptive for everyone. If you have a class prior to ours which causes a problem with arriving on time, please discuss it with me early in the semester.**
- **Discuss any special academic needs with me at the start of the term. Do not wait until after the first exam or later!**
- **Since the material in this course is based on the art and literature of other cultures, some topics of violence, gender, and sexuality may be contrary to individual beliefs, but we will deal with them in an academic and intellectual manner.**
- **All reading assignments should be completed before class each day. The lengths of these assignments vary so keep pace with the syllabus.**
- **No extra credit assignments are offered in the course.**
- **The schedule and pace of the course may be adjusted as needed. If the need arises, a revised syllabus will be announced and uploaded to Blackboard. It is your responsibility to keep up with the most recent version of the syllabus**

Finally, all GMU policies on academic honesty will be applicable in this class. If you are unfamiliar with these policies, please visit <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/> and acquaint yourself with them.

Schedule for the Semester: Assignments should be read for the date indicated, *carefully* and *completely before class*. My lectures will assume that you are familiar with the assigned material and will often cover additional topics: on exams, you will be responsible for information from the text as well as lecture

Pompeii

August

Week 1

T 29 Introduction

Aldrete: Chapter 14

Th 31 Rome and the Cities of the Empire
Aldrete: Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 (through "Brief Survey of Roman History")

September

Week 2

T 5 History of Pompeii and the AD 79 Eruption of Mt. Vesuvius
Berry: 6-33; 233-243

Th 7 Discussion: Eruption of AD 79 and its Date
Blackboard:

Primary texts excerpted from A. Cooley's *Pompeii and Herculaneum: A Sourcebook*.

G. Rolandi, A. Paone, M. Di Lascio, G. Stefani, "The 79 AD eruption of Somma: The relationship between the date of the eruption and the southeast tephra dispersion," *The Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*.

Focus on the results of the study and the incorporation of the scientific data with more traditional archaeological and literary sources.

Week 3

T 12 Discussion and Lecture: Pompeii's Rediscovery and Impact on the Modern Age
Berry: 34-41; 46-63
Blackboard:

Meyer Reinhold, "American Visitors to Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Paestum in the Nineteenth Century" in *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Special Issue: Paestum and Classical Culture: Past and Present (Spring, 1985), pp. 115-128

Th 14 The Structure of Roman and Pompeian Society
Berry: 86-91; 102-119
Aldrete: Chapter 5 and Appendix I

City plan Quiz (see final page of this syllabus)

Week 4

T 19 Discussion: Sexuality and Gender in the Roman Empire
Aldrete: Chapter 8, "Sex and Sexuality"
Blackboard:

Excerpts from *The Satires* by Juvenal

Frances Bernstein, "Pompeian Women," from *World of Pompeii* (2007): 526-537.

Th 21 The Forum and Economics of Pompeii
Aldrete: Chapter 14, "Public Buildings"
Berry: 120-123; 126-133; 210-233

Week 5

T 26 Discussion: City planning and Organization of space
Blackboard:

Roger Ling, "A Stranger in Town: Finding the Way in an Ancient City," *Greece and Rome* 37 (1990): 204-214.

Ray Laurence, "Deviant Behaviour" excerpt from *Pompeii: Space and Society*

Th 28 Bath Culture Among the Romans
Aldrete: Chapter 8 “Baths”
Berry: 150-153

October

Week 6

T 3 **EXAM 1**

Th 5 Ancient Roman Spectacles and Entertainment
Aldrete: Chapter 9

Week 7

T 10 [Tuesday classes do not meet this day; follow your Monday academic schedule](#)

Th 12 Entertainment at Pompeii

Berry: 134-149

Blackboard:

Primary sources on entertainment from Pompeii, excerpted from Cooley, *Pompeii: A Sourcebook*

Week 8

T 17 Discussion: Spectacles and Entertainers in the Roman World

Blackboard:

Robert Knapp, “Fame and Death: Gladiators,” from *Invisible Romans* (2011): 265-289.

Th 19 Religion in Pompeii

Aldrete: Chapter 10

Berry: 186-209

Week 9

T 24 [To Be Announced](#)

Th 26 Discussion: Religion in Roman life

Blackboard:

Keith Hopkins, “World Full of Gods (Time Travel in Pagan Pompeii, The Roman Context of Christianity)” from *World Full of Gods: The Strange Triumph of Christianity* (2001).

Excerpts from James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (2007).

Week 10

T 31 Houses: Forms, evolutions and functions

Aldrete: Chapter 6, “Domus” and “Insulae”

Berry: 154-161; 178-185

November

Th 2 Domestic Art: Fresco and Mosaic decoration

Berry: 162-177

Week 11

T 7 Discussion: Reading and Writing the Roman House

Blackboard:

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, excerpts from *Pompeii: Houses and Society* (pdf Blackboard)
Petronius, *Satyricon* sections 38-50 ("Banquet of Trimalchio")

Th 9 Villas: From Elite Luxury Living to Agricultural Centers

Blackboard:

Eric Moorman, "Villas Surrounding Pompeii and Herculaneum," from *World of Pompeii* (2007): 435-454.

Week 12

T 14 Tombs, Death and Burial

Aldrete: Chapter 6, "Burial" and "Funerary Inscriptions"

Berry: 92-101

Blackboard

Petronius, *Satyricon* sections 70-72 ("Tomb of Trimalchio")

Th 16 **EXAM 2**

Week 13

T 21 **To Be Announced**

Th 23 **Thanksgiving: No class**

Week 14

T 28 City Design Project, Day 1

Blackboard:

J.B. Ward-Perkins, *Cities of Ancient Greece and Italy* (1974): 27-36

W. MacDonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire: An Urban Appraisal* (1988): 5-32.

Th 30 City Design Project, Day 2

Aldrete: Chapter 3, "Infrastructure"

Week 15

T 5 City Design Project, Day 3

Blackboard:

Sarah Cormack, "The tombs at Pompeii," from *World of Pompeii* (2007): 585-606

Th 7 City Design Project, Day 4

To be announced

Due date for project reports: To Be Announced

Pompeii City Plan Quiz (Thursday, September 14th)

Be prepared to label and/or mark on a plan of Pompeii the following structures or features:

Marine Gate
Herculaneum Gate
The Vesuvius Gate
Stabiae Gate
Nuceria Gate
Via dell'Abbondanza
Forum Plaza
Forum Baths
Stabian Baths
Suburban Baths
Temple of Isis
Triangular Forum
Theater
Odeon
Amphitheater
Large Palaestra
Lupanar
Castellum Aquae (small square just inside the Vesuvius Gate)
House of the Faun
Villa of the Mysteries

Also be able to generally define the areas of the 9 Regions of Pompeii.

The plan on pages 8-9 of your Berry textbook includes most of the structural features with a numbered key. The regions are color-coded on this same map.