

## **ARTH229: ART OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**

Spring 2008

Thursday 5:30-8:30

WILLIAMS HALL 5

Dr. Wu Xin

Office Hours: 4:30-5:30 at Jaffe 306

wuxin@sas.upenn.edu

### Preliminary Syllabus

#### Course Description:

This is a survey course of three thousand years of the art and architecture of Mesopotamia, "the cradle of civilization." After a brief introduction to the environment and its prehistoric foundations, the course focuses on the urban cultures in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates river from the "rise of civilization" around 3500 B.C. through the conquest of the region by Alexander The Great in the late of the first millennium B.C.E. We will study the major visual and architectural monuments from a broad cultural perspective, considering how and what they tell us about this long dead, but most important precursor of Western Civilization.

#### Required Written Work:

First paper is a formal analysis of an object from Mesopotamia. You will make your selection from a group of five objects pictures of which will be available on the Blackboard site by January 24th. This paper is meant to be a formal description of your selected object. Further this paper should pose and formulate approaches problems raised by some aspect of the object. It should not be longer than 3 pages. It is due February 7th. I will be happy to review drafts if requested.

The second paper can, but does not have to grow out of the first. This paper can address either a particular object or object type, or you can address a problem that can be addressed through visual, or architectural material. You must make an appointment to discuss the paper with me no later than March 1st so that I can guide you in the directions that your research might take. The second paper will be no longer than 20 pages. It should be illustrated, footnoted and have an accurate bibliography. The final paper will be due on April 25th. Late papers, without exception, will be graded down one half grade. So, if you ask for an extension, regardless of reason expect to be downgraded. So, plan accordingly.

#### Required Examinations:

Midterm: March 6th (slide identification/comparison and essay)

Final: Choice of two-hour slide exam or take home essay

For both of these exams, the information provided in the lectures will be essential, so make sure to attend lectures. Material and points of view will be presented that are not available in any of the readings.

Required Reading:

Text Books (available on Amazon.com)

Roaf, Michael. The Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East, Oxford, 1990

Collon, Dominique. Ancient Near Eastern Art. British Museum 1997.

The following books are also required, especially for the pictures. These are on reserve in the University Museum Library.

Aruz, Joan, ed. Art of First Cities New York, 2003.

Frankfort, H. The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, 4rd revised edition, Pelican History of Art, 1970.

Moortgat, A. The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East. Phaidon, London and New York, 1969.

Orthmann, W. Der Alte Orient, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, vol. 14, Berlin, 1975.  
(primarily for photographs)

Strommenger, E. and M. Hirmer, 5000 Years of the Art of Mesopotamia (primarily for photographs) Abrams.

In addition there will be one or two articles that are assigned for each class. These will be available on Blackboard.