TRAJAN’S FORUM – CONTROVERSY AND REDISCOVERY

The most grandiose among Rome’s imperial fora, the Forum of Trajan (AD 105-12) is currently undergoing a spectacular scholarly controversy and rediscovery, with two teams of scholars defending opposing positions on the basis of recent excavations (1991-2007). At issue are not only the disposition of the entire complex and its powerful political message, but whether a monumental temple precinct of Trajan even existed. We will explore facts and debate concerning the forum in as many aspects as possible and put this into the context of similar structures in Rome itself, in the Greco-Roman East and – most importantly – in Trajan’s other huge forum in Roman Spain (Tarragona).

Schedule of classes and topics

Jan. 26 (I) Rome’s Imperial fora and Forum of Trajan: evidence and issues.
   What’s the problem with Trajan’s forum?
   * study Claridge and Packer-1995 handout; skim Packer-1998 handout; consult Packer monograph; review images shown (course web-site)

Feb. 2 (II) Back to the basics – what do we know? History of research, scholarly methods, and hypothetical ‘card-house building’. – Find your piece of evidence in Trajan’s Forum (incl. Basilica Ulpia, Column of Trajan, and Markets of Trajan)
   * prepare your special piece for presentation in class

Feb. 9 (III) The parts and the whole – special aspects of Trajan’s forum, according to your selection.
   Oral presentation. – First Paper (on structural/archaeological aspects)
   announced and explained.
Feb. 16  (IV) **Oral presentation** of draft for First Paper, with discussion and critique. **Submit paper two weeks later, i.e. Mar. 2!**

Feb. 23  (V) The parts and the whole – complementary aspects of Trajan’s forum, pt. 1.

Mar. 2  (VI) The parts and the whole – complementary aspects of Trajan’s forum, pt. 2. **First Paper due.**

Mar. 7-15  Spring Break

Mar. 16  (VII) Looking for comparanda in Rome – the other imperial fora.

Mar. 23  (VIII) Comparanda outside Rome – the forum complex of Tarragona. **Second Paper announced and explained.**

Mar. 30  (IX) topic t.b.d. – Presenting ideas for your Second Paper.

Apr. 6  (X) topic t.b.d. – Research for your Second Paper continues.

Apr. 13  (XI) **Oral presentation** of your selected topic for Second Paper; to be submitted **Friday, May 1st, 5 pm!**

Apr. 20  (XII) **Oral presentation** – ctd.

Apr. 27  (XIII) The Forum of Trajan – special aspects (as you prefer)

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Requirements

• Regular attendance of seminar sessions, with homework readings, writings, and sketchings and oral class presentations.

• Seminar journal with well-organized entries covering the full seminar, incl. discussions. Suggested is a hard-bound log-book (available at Book Center, 34th St.).

• Two papers (ca. 6–9 typewritten pages plus sufficient illustrations, with captions and sources), to be presented orally beforehand.

33 % + 67 %

Bibliography (preliminary)

• books (on seminar reserve in FFA):


  N. Bernacchio et al., I luoghi del consenso imperiale: il foro di Augusto, il foro del Traiano (1995). overview of traditional status-quo, before recent excavations

  F. Coarelli, La colonna Traiana (1999). specifically on the Column of Trajan, with essay of P. Zanker

furthermore (not on reserve):
fine summary of latest excavation results and reconstructions

lucid, in part highly speculative account on Roman architecture

de Rome”)
magisterial presentation of Roman architecture, a standard work

sound account on vault construction, incl. Forum of Trajan

well-illustrated reference book on Roman building techniques

- articles (selection):

  suggested compromise between Packer and ‘anti-traditional’ solution – handout to be distributed

  summary of ‘traditional’ scholarship, before recent excavations – handout to be distributed

  ‘light’ summary of Packer’s publication of Trajan’s forum – handout to be distributed

  J.E. Packer, “Templum Divi Traiani Partici et Plotinae: a debate with R. Meneghini,”
  strong advocacy of traditional solution for Trajan’s forum (anti-Meneghini), with summary of arguments

  expanding on Meneghini’s solution of Trajan’s forum

  lucid study of Trajanic building procedures

  important articles by four authors (incl. Meneghini) on latest excavation results and analyses,
  advocating a new, anti-traditional solution of Trajan’s forum – the debate is launched in full force

  a basic study on Imperial building procedures and technology

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THE PANTHEON – NAGGING QUESTIONS

Upon scrutiny, ancient Rome’s seemingly best-known monument turns into a maze of nagging questions. Agreement does not even exist on the precise building date, the commissioning emperor, or the function of this puzzling structure – not to mention the profound uncertainties about its Augustan predecessor. A recent international conference in Switzerland, where brand-new digital documentation of the Pantheon’s architecture was presented, only underscored the deeply uncomfortable situation. We will explore the Pantheon in as many aspects as possible. Starting with analyses of its technical structure (including marble quarrying and brick production) and the relevant ancient text sources, this investigation will also cover the complex history of modern research on the Pantheon (along with latest scholarly contentions) as well as its paradigmatic impact on later, ancient and post-antique domed architecture, most famously Michelangelo’s cupola of St. Peter’s.

Schedule of classes and topics
Jan.  28     (I)  The building and its questions (structure, design, date, function) – an overview

                      * study MacDonald, ch. 2 & 3, and explore the building’s basic features

Feb.  4     (II)  Structural aspects.  –  The Augustan predecessor.  – History of research

                      * read De Fine Licht, esp. pp. 25-146, and prepare a special structural aspect for presentation in class

Feb. 11    (III)  Technicalities – from blue prints and brick-laying to cupola construction.

                          Oral presentation.  –  First Paper (on structural/archaeological aspects of Pantheon) announced and explained.

Feb. 18    (IV)  Oral presentation of draft for First Paper, with discussion and critique.  Submit paper two weeks later, i.e. Mar. 3!

Feb. 25    (V)  Design issues and the “grand change of plans” – Wilson Jones’ factoids.

                      * read Wilson Jones, Principles of Roman Architecture, 176-213.

Mar.  3     (VI)  Brick production and the issue of date – Hetland’s heresy.

                      * study Hetland, JRA 2007, 95-112.  –  First Paper due.

Mar.  8-16  Spring Break


Mar.  24    (VIII)  Studying followers – from Pergamon back to Rome and beyond.

                          Second Paper announced and explained.
Mar. 31  (IX) topic t.b.d. – Presenting ideas for your Second Paper.

Apr. 7     (X) topic t.b.d. – Research for your Second Paper continues.

Apr. 14   (XI) Oral presentation of your selected topic for Second Paper; to be submitted Friday, May 2nd, 5 pm!

Apr. 21   (XII) Oral presentation – ctd.

Apr. 28   (XIII) The Pantheon – special aspects (as you prefer)

*

Requirements

• Regular attendance of seminar sessions, with homework readings, writings, and sketchings and oral class presentations.

• Seminar journal with well-organized entries covering the full seminar, incl. discussions.
  Suggested is a hard-bound log-book (available at Book Center, 34th St.).

• Two papers (ca. 6–9 typewritten pages plus sufficient illustrations, with captions and sources), to be presented orally beforehand.
  33 % + 67 %

1/7/08 LH
Bibliography (preliminary)

• books (on seminar reserve in FFA):

still a fine overview

the standard publication

well-illustrated analysis of building procedures

basic account on late-19th c. excavations

state of affairs up to 1920s

exhibition catalogue, with state of affairs up to 1990 and ‘Apollodoros-hypothesis’

lucid and highly speculative

magisterial presentation of Roman architecture.

sound account on dome construction, incl. the Pantheon’s

well-illustrated reference book on Roman building techniques

• articles (selection):

the ancient blue-prints for the Pantheon’s pediment

tackling the Augustan/Agrippan Pantheon

important summary of recent excavations

Due to the holiday on January 21st, the first meeting will be **Monday, January 28th**. Recommended is an advance glance at the reserve books for this seminar in Fisher Fine Arts Library. Especially important are De Fine Licht’s fundamental publication *The Rotunda in Rome* (1968) and Mark Wilson Jones’ *Principles of Roman Architecture* (2000).

**Bibliography**

**basic studies:**
- Fine Licht
- Beltrami

**earlier overview:**
- MacDonald

**broad architectural context:**
Gros, Archit. Romaine

building technicalities, dome structure:
  Lynn Lancaster
  J-P. Adam

specific aspects:
  LH (planning)
  Hetland (brickstamps)
  LTUR (LaRocca: recent excav.)

contentious:
  Heilmeyer (Apollodoros hypothesis)
  Wilson Jones (plan change hypothesis)
  Gruben, Türen (Augustan structure hypothesis)
  Ziolkowski