ANCIENT HISTORY (ANCH)

ANCH 025 Ancient Middle Eastern History and Civilization
A cultural history of Middle Eastern civilization from the invention of writing to the rise of Islam.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 026 Ancient Greece
The Greeks enjoy a special place in the construction of western culture and identity, and yet many of us have only the vaguest notion of what their culture was like. A few Greek myths at bedtime when we are kids, maybe a Greek tragedy like Sophokles' Oidipous when we are at school: these are often the only contact we have with the world of the ancient Mediterranean. The story of the Greeks, however, deserves a wider audience, because so much of what we esteem in our own culture derives from them: democracy, epic poetry, lyric poetry, tragedy, history writing, philosophy, aesthetic taste, all of these and many other features of cultural life enter the West from Greece. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi had inscribed over the temple, "Know Thyself." For us, that also means knowing the Greeks. We will cover the period from the Late Bronze Age, c. 1500 BC, down to the time of Alexander the Great, concentrating on the two hundred year interval from 600-400 BC.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: McInerney
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 027 Ancient Rome
The Roman Empire was one of the few great world states-one that unified a large area around the Mediterranean Sea-an area never subsequently united as part of a single state. Whereas the great achievements of the Greeks were in the realm of ideas and concepts (democracy, philosophy, art, literature, drama) those of the Romans tended to be in the pragmatic spheres of ruling and controlling subject peoples and integrating them under the aegis of an imperial state. Conquest, warfare, administration, and law making were the great successes of the Roman state. We will look at this process from its inception and trace the formation of Rome's Mediterranean empire over the last three centuries BC; we shall then consider the social, economic and political consequences of this great achievement, especially the great political transition from the Republic (rule by the Senate) to the Principate (rule by emperors). We shall also consider limitations to Roman power and various types of challenges, military, cultural, and religious, to the hegemony of the Roman state. Finally, we shall try to understand the process of the development of a distinctive Roman culture from the emergence new forms of literature, like satire, to the gladiatorial arena as typical elements that contributed to a Roman social order.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Cam Grey
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 046 Myths and Religions of the Ancient World
This course will survey the religions of the ancient Middle East, situating each in its historical and socio-cultural context and focusing on the key issues of concern to humanity: creation, birth, the place of humans in the order of the universe, death, and destruction. The course will cover not only the better-known cultures from the area, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, but also some lesser-known traditions, such as those of the Hurrians, or of the ancient Mediterranean town of Ugarit. Religion will not be viewed merely as a separate, sealed-off element of the ancient societies, but rather as an element in various cultural contexts, for example, the relationship between religion and magic and the role of religion in politics will be recurring topics in the survey. Background readings for the lectures will be drawn not only from the modern scholarly literature, but also from the words of the ancients themselves in the form of their myths, rituals, and liturgies.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Frame
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 129 The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire?
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 146 Ancient Mediterranean Empires
What constituted an empire in antiquity and how was imperialism legitimized? Which measures were used to maintain and organize imperial power? How did foreign rule affect the daily life of people all over the Mediterranean? In this course we will discuss and compare ancient empires from Achaemenid Persia to Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic kingdoms of his successors to the emergence of Rome as one of the most successful and influential empires in world history. Topics that will be discussed include ancient ideas and concepts of imperial rule, patterns of political, economic and cultural power and their interrelations as well as imperial crises and local resistance. All texts will be discussed in translation. There are no prerequisites.
Taught by: Wilker
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
ANCH 202 Cleopatra
Cleopatra VII (70/69 30 BCE) is one of the most famous women in world history. She has been remembered, admired, and reproached as a power-hungry Hellenistic queen, as the last pharaoh of Egypt, as a self-confident female ruler, and as the vicious seductress of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Her supposedly extravagant lifestyle, her political schemes, but also her integrity in choosing suicide over submission have inspired poets, artists, and historians from her own time to our modern world. In this seminar, we will take a closer look at some of the common perceptions and stereotypes that have shaped the image of Cleopatra for more than 2000 years. The main focus, however, will be on the historical queen, her biography, and the political and cultural contexts of her life. We will use ancient literary texts, papyri, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological evidence to analyze Cleopatra’s rise to power, how she presented herself to her subjects, and how she was perceived by others, as well as her role in the tumultuous events that led to the end of the Hellenistic period and the rise of imperial Rome under the rule of Augustus. No prerequisites, but some background in Hellenistic and/or Roman history will be helpful.
Taught by: Julia Wilker
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 220 Near East in Hellenistic and Roman Times
In this course, we will study the history of the Hellenistic and Roman period a from a Near Eastern perspective. From the conquests of Alexander the Great to the end of Roman rule in late antiquity, this region was the scene of conflicts, but also of peaceful and fruitful interactions between Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Jews, Syrians, Arabs and many other societies. What was the impact of Greek and Roman rule and how did the inhabitants of the region react to these fundamental changes? On the other hand, how did they influence the culture and worldview of their conquerors? We will use historical texts, documents and archaeological evidence to discuss the political, cultural and religious encounters that made the Near East a key region of Greco-Roman history. All texts will be discussed in translation. No prerequisites, although it would be useful to have taken ANCH 026 and/or ANCH 027.
Taught by: Wilker
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 275 The Roman Underbelly
Conventional histories of Rome tend to focus on the actions of the named individuals who wrote the texts that have come down to us, or are the subjects of those texts. But these individuals constituted only the tiniest fraction of the population of the Roman world. In this course, we will explore the lived experience of the other 95%: peasants and the poor; prostitutes, pimps, and criminals; bandits and pirates; magicians and soothsayers. Drawing on the scattered and problematic textual sources, archaeological evidence and comparative perspectives from better-documented contexts, we will examine the various roles that these individuals played in Roman society, the collection of often discordant or dissonant attitudes of their wealthier and more powerful contemporaries, and the challenges and opportunities that attend the social history of marginality in the ancient world. No prior knowledge of Roman History is required, although it would be useful to have taken ANCH 027, the introductory survey course. Texts will be discussed in translation.
Taught by: Cam Grey
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 301 Lies My Ancient History Teacher Told Me
The neat, comforting narratives that we construct of the histories of ancient Greece and Rome cover up a collection of controversies and debates that continue to rage in contemporary scholarship. Can we use the Homeric epics as sources of early Greek history? Who was responsible for the Peloponnesian War? How can we best explain Rome’s acquisition of empire? How new was the political revolution of Augustus? What were the main reasons for the rise of Christianity? In this course, we explore these and other controversies, focusing on both modern scholarship and the ancient sources. All texts will be discussed in translation. No prior knowledge of Ancient History is required, although it would be useful to have taken ANCH 026 and/or ANCH 027.
Taught by: Grey
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 303 Power and Peril: The Paradox of Monarchy among Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Jews
We imagine Ancient Greece and Rome as the cradles of democracy and republicanism, the early Judea as pious theocracy, but the evidence tells us that monarchy was the most common and prevalent form of government in antiquity (and the premodern world in general). Despite their ubiquity, the King was a polarizing figure in reality and in conception. On the one hand, some idealized the monarchy as the ideal leader, and monarchy provided the language with which to describe and even imagine the very gods but on the other, monarchs were widely reviled in both theory and practice, from the Greek tyrant to biblical Saul. The Emperor Augustus loudly denied his own affinity to the office of king, even as he ruled alone and was revered as a god. In other words, kings stood both for the ideal ruler and the worst form of government. This class confronts the paradox of the King. This class will take a special look at the idea and institution of kingship in the Near East, among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans to assess and discuss similarities, differences, and mutual influences among these cultures. Through the lens of the king we will explore the idea of god, government, human frailty, and utopianism. Why did the rule of one prevail, why was it so attractive to so many? How was royal rule legitimized? What role did religious beliefs play for keeping a monarchical system stable? What did people expect from their rulers and what happened if the ruler failed to fulfill these expectations? How was the concept of monarchical rule adopted and transferred into other spheres, such as religious belief systems or hopes for messianic kingship? While kingship is a rich field of scholarly inquiry, the question of its ubiquity, and the entanglement and divergences of these three cultures is rarely studied in context and in comparison.
Taught by: Julia Wilker, Natalie Dohrmann
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
ANCH 305 Jewish Diaspora in the Roman Empire
Under the Roman Empire, Jewish communities developed and flourished especially in the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Northern Africa, and Italy proper. In many of these cities, the Jews formed a considerable part of the population; they influenced the cultural, social, and political communal life and developed an identity that was distinctively different from that in Judea. In this seminar, we will trace Jewish life in the Diaspora under Roman rule. How did Jews and non-Jews interact? What was the legal status of Jewish communities under the Roman Empire? What caused conflicts and how were they solved? What can the history of Jewish Diaspora communities tell us about minorities in the Roman Empire in general? We will use literary texts, inscriptions, papyri, and archaeological material to answer these questions and many more.
Taught by: Julia Wilker
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 311 Disasters in the Ancient World
Natural disasters occupy a powerful place in our imagination. Stories of floods, plagues, earthquakes and storms excite and horrify us, and communities mobilize their resources quickly in response to these events. In the ancient Mediterranean world, natural disasters could take on potent meaning, indicating the anger or disfavor of the gods, acting as warnings against certain courses of action, or confirmations of individuals’ fears or suspicions about the world in which they lived. In this course, we explore the evidence for some disasters in the ancient Mediterranean world, the ways in which contemporaries reacted to those disasters and interpreted their causes. This project is, of necessity, multidisciplinary, involving textual, archaeological, geological, and comparative materials and drawing on methodologies from history, political and archaeological science, and the emerging field of disaster studies. In the process, we will gain an appreciation of the social structures of communities in the period, the thought-world in which they operated, and the challenges and opportunities that attend such a project. No prior knowledge of Ancient History is required, although it would be useful to have taken an introductory survey course. Texts will be discussed in translation.
Taught by: Grey & Ristvet
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 323 Greek World After Alexander the Great
This class is designed as a detailed investigation of the world created by Alexander the Great. We will cover the three hundred year period known as the Hellenistic Age from the career of Alexander the Great (354-323 BC) until the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium (31 BC). This was a period during which the world of the Greeks underwent extraordinary and far-reaching changes, as Greek culture was established as far afield as northern India, central Asia and Egypt. In the same period kingdoms controlled by Alexander’s Successors used Greek culture to define their rule, establishing a Greek culture of the elite in regions which previously had been dominated by the Persians. As Greek and non-Greek worlds collided, a new interpretation of Greek culture emerged, giving rise, among other things, to universities and professional schools, state subsidized health care, triumphalist architecture, the heroization of the noble savage, coinage with royal portraits, the deification of men and a multitude of other social, artistic and political forms familiar to us. It was an age of radical change, dislocation, as Greek populations colonized regions previously unknown to them.
Taught by: McInerney
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 330 The Rise and Decline of Macedonia
In this course, we will study the rise and development of Macedonia from a tiny kingdom on the northern fringes of the Greek world to one of the major powers of the region and beyond. Regarded by the Greeks as an at least semi-barbarian culture on the periphery, Macedonia became the dominant power in the Greek world during the fourth century BC and its king Alexander the Great set out to conquer the world. After his death, Macedonia was one of the Hellenistic kingdoms competing for power and influence in the Mediterranean until it finally came under Roman control. Topics that will be discussed include questions of ethnicity and identity, Macedonian kingship, culture and society (including the role of women) and the role of Macedonian traditions in the Hellenistic era in general. Special emphasis will therefore be laid on critical reading and interpretation of ancient literary texts, documentary evidence and archaeological material. That will be discussed include questions of ethnicity and identity, Macedonian kingship, culture and society (including the role of women) and the role of Macedonian traditions in the Hellenistic era in general.
Taught by: Wilker
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
ANCH 384 The Hellenistic and Roman Near East
In this course we will study the history of the Hellenistic and Roman period from a Near Eastern perspective. From the conquests of Alexander the Great to the end of Roman rule in late antiquity, this region was the scene of conflicts, but also of peaceful and fruitful interactions between Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Jews, Syrians, Arabs and many other societies. What was the impact of Greek and Roman rule and how did the peoples of the region react to these fundamental changes? On the other hand, how did they influence the culture and worldview of their conquerors? We will use historical texts, documents and archaeological evidence to discuss these political, cultural and religious encounters that made the Near East to a key region of Greco-Roman history. All texts will be discussed in translation. No prerequisites, although it would be useful to have some background in Hellenistic and/or Roman history.
Taught by: Julia Wilker
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 398 Honors Thesis
This course is taken in the spring of the senior year by students admitted to the honors thesis program for the Ancient History major. For policies see the Classical Studies department website.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

ANCH 399 Independent Study
This course is taken by students doing independent work with a faculty advisor, such as students approved to work on a senior research paper in pursuit of honors in the major.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

ANCH 499 Independent Study
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

ANCH 527 Topics in the Art of Iran
Topic varies. Spring 2018: The pro-seminar will examine aspects of continuity and rupture in the visual culture(s) of the Iranian world. This is an opportunity for students whose preparations may be centered on other contiguous periods or regions to consider the manner in which Middle Asia and its rich visual cultures contributed to the forging of Late Antique and medieval/ Islamic visual expressions of kingship, territory and religion. The seminar will consider a range of materials from archaeological sites, rock reliefs and wall paintings to textiles, silver vessels, coins and ceramics, with special attention to materials excavated or otherwise held by the Penn Museum.
Taught by: Holod, Kuttner
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 535 Problems in Greek: Archaic and Classical
This seminar is designed to introduce students to the major issues and problems in the early history of Ancient Greece, from approximately 776 BC until the reign of Alexander the Great nearly four hundred and fifty years later. A number of these issues have been the subject of academic investigation for decades: the historicity of Homeric society, the origins of democracy, the reforms of Kleisthenes, the population of Athens, for example. The investigation of many of these problems, however, has received fresh impetus from newer approaches: demographic studies of the Aegean islands, the dating of 5th century inscriptions, the study of Solons poetry have all yielded new insights and transformed our understanding of Greek culture and history. In this seminar we will explore many older questions from newer perspectives, with attention to such recent topics as gender, ethnicity and subaltern studies. The result is a view of Greece that is both more familiar and yet equally more alien.
Taught by: McInerney
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: GRADUATES ONLY

ANCH 545 Spatial Analysis of the Past
Humans continuously move through, interact with, and modify their spaces, leaving a palimpsest of human activity all around us. The ability for digital methods to deal with larger datasets, at higher accuracies, and at multiple scales, lends itself particularly well to the study of diachronic human-space interaction. In this class, we will examine space at a range of scales from landscapes, to urban settings, to archaeological contexts and architecture. We digitally represent space using a variety of 3d and 2d data types, from models of land surfaces and buildings, to multispectral satellite imagery and urban plans. We will first gain experience creating, gathering, and manipulating spatial datasets in preparation for analysis. We will next practice a variety of analytical techniques on these data and examine case studies that have used spatial methods to draw important archaeological and historical conclusions. Tools covered in this class will include geographical information systems (GIS), global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), raster image processing, photogrammetry, and 3d spatial modeling softwares. Finally, we will gain experience with the visualization of our data and results, and the presentation of those results through open online publication.
Taught by: Peter Cobb
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
Notes: Archaeological fieldwork experience and basic digital skills preferred. Undergraduates can register with permission of the instructor.
ANCH 604 Provincial Perspectives
Most of the primary sources available to us reflect the ideology, concepts and realities of Hellenistic and Roman imperial rule through the lenses of ruling power and its elites. There are, however, a number of sources that provide insights into how provincials and subjects saw and depicted themselves, the imperial power and their interaction. Historiographical and auto-ethnographic works, orations, philosophical and religious texts reflect different attitudes towards the ruling imperial powers ranging from open hostility and frustrated acceptance to praise and even identification. In this seminar we will focus on how ethnic, religious, cultural and/or regional identities were developed, maintained, adapted and interpreted within and in reaction to the imperial frameworks of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Texts to be read and discussed include some "canonical" authors such as Polybius and Flavius Josephus as well as some lesser-known works and fragments from authors like Berossus, Manetho, Nicolaus of Damascus, and Poseidonius and will be complemented by documentary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence. Special emphasis will also be laid on modern scholarly approaches, including concepts of identity, hybridization and cultural change and the dynamics of empire in general.
Taught by: Wilker
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 607 Gloss & Commentary
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

ANCH 611 Greek Epigraphy
An introduction to the principles and practices of Greek Epigraphy. Study of selected Greek inscriptions.
Taught by: McInerney
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 616 Ancient Economies
Scholars have long debated the nature of the ancient economy, the terms in which it can best be approached, and the decision-making processes that underpinned economic behavior in antiquity. In particular, controversy has surrounded the extent to which the economies of Greco-Roman antiquity can be modeled using contemporary tools of analysis. In recent scholarship, many of the tenets laid down by Moses Finley in his The Ancient Economy have been re-evaluated, with the result that the field is currently in a state of intellectual ferment. It is the purpose of this course to explore the terms in which contemporary debates over ancient economic systems are formulated, with reference to a variety of societies and periods, from the palace economies of the Mycenaean period to the system of taxation introduced in the early fourth century by the emperor Diocletian and his colleagues in the Tetrarchy.
Taught by: Grey
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

ANCH 999 Independent Study
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit