Syllabus NMC260H1F
Introduction to the Archaeology of the Near East
Tues/Thurs 10-12 am; Room OI 2296

Instructor: Anne Porter
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Office hours: Email:

Course Description
This course surveys the key shifts in human existence that took place in the Near East from the Upper Paleolithic period, about 40 to 50,000 years ago, to the middle of the Early Bronze Age, or mid-third millennium BCE. As well as the archaeological evidence for these shifts, including the move to permanent settlement, processes of plant and animal domestication, the growth of cities and the consolidation of polities, we examine the key theories proposed to explain them.

Course Goals
You will become familiar with some of the main sites and discoveries of the Paleolithic to Early Bronze in the Near East. You will gain an understanding of the main changes that took place in that period at the same time as you learn the rudiments of archaeological process in order to evaluate archaeological results and interpretations.

Assessment – PLEASE SEE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS AT END OF SYLLABUS
Four archaeological exercises to gain understanding of each stage of the process @ 5% each:

1. Explore: you will be given a set of coordinates on Google Earth. Locate all the sites you can in that area. Sept 20
2. Recover: Excavation of a trash can Oct 6
4. Communicate: construct a display for the human-headed bull from Tell Brak Nov 29

Four class papers that relate the archaeological process to interpretation @ 5% each:

1. How does the ability to find sites affect our interpretation of the Paleolithic period? Sept 27
2. Why are so many figurines found in middens at Çatalhöyük? Oct 18
3. What is the role of pottery in either the Late Chalcolithic or reconstructions of the Late Chalcolithic? Nov 10
4. What can we learn from the human-headed bull from Tell Brak? Nov 22

Term Test @ 30% Nov 17

Research Paper @ 30% Dec 6
NOV 7TH IS LAST DAY TO DROP CLASS

Failure to complete all components of the assessment may result in a failing grade.

Failure to properly reference any written work or to acknowledge source material is considered plagiarism and will result in a failing grade.

Readings

Some readings are given as a source of information, but some will apply the techniques or theories we are discussing to a particular subject. Approached critically these sources are also ways of learning how archaeologists do things and why. For this reason you will be expected to do three things with the readings: extract information, analyze the structure and implications of the piece, and break down the argument. Most readings are available online at JSTOR, academia.edu or researchgate.net. Please consult google scholar. Otherwise they will be posted in Blackboard. Please pay attention to the directions in the weekly schedule.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism consists of passing off someone else’s work as your own. This may be done in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to: wholesale copying of another person’s writing; getting someone else to write your work for you; quoting someone’s words directly within your own writing but failing to place the quote in quotation marks and/or failing to provide a reference; failing to provide a reference for someone else’s words that you paraphrase; failing to acknowledge information or ideas that have come from someone else. Plagiarism is a serious offence and will be reported. It will be then treated according to school policies and may result in expulsion. Please see the appropriate web page for the school’s plagiarism policy.

Attendance

It is very difficult to pass this class unless you attend class regularly. There are three reasons for this: one, I will be modeling for you in class the kind of work you are supposed to do for assignments and exams; two, readings do not replace class content; and three, class discussions, because they are the practice of analysis, are as important as any other part of the course. Exam questions are taken directly from class materials and discussions.

Classroom Policies

No phones or any other digital media are permitted. Class may not be recorded unless by prior arrangement with instructor. Computers may be used to take notes only. Wikipedia is not considered an acceptable source under any situation (so don’t bother consulting it in class). If students persist in inappropriate use of electronic media, they will be asked to leave the class. Behavior that distracts other students will not be permitted. Students are expected to discuss all topics openly and civilly.
Weekly Schedule

Week 1: What is archaeology?

Sept 13\textsuperscript{th}: What is it and how do we do it?
Sept 15\textsuperscript{th}: The periods, regions and cultures of the Near East

Week 2: Human-environment interaction in the Paleolithic of the Near East

Sept 20\textsuperscript{th}: Stone tools and rock shelters – recognizing activity in the landscape
Sept 22\textsuperscript{nd}: Foragers and collectors - understanding land-use strategies.

\textit{Key sites:} Hayonim, Kebara, Qafzeh


Week 3: Mobility, Sedentarization and Survival – From Epipaleolithic to Neolithic lifeways

Sept 27\textsuperscript{th}: From collectors to farmers and pastoralists in the Near East and Egypt
Sept 29\textsuperscript{th}: The Natufians.

\textit{Key sites:} Abu Hureyra, Ain Mallaha, Nahal Oren


Week 4: Ontology and Epistemology in the Neolithic: Part I

Oct 4\textsuperscript{th}: Human/Animal relations: images, bones
Oct 6\textsuperscript{th}: Human/Object relations: statues, figurines, tools

\textit{Key sites:} Kfar HaHoresh, Gobekli Tepe, Çatalhöyük, Ain Ghazal


Week 5: Ontology and Epistemology in the Neolithic: Part II

Oct 11th: human relations with the other worlds: the dead…and the divine?

Oct 13th: human relations with each other: social organization, feasting and ritual.

Key sites: Nevali Çori, Gobekli Tepe, Jerf al Ahmar, WF16-Wadi Faynan


Week 6: Materialism or Symbolism? Economy and Ritual in the Chalcolithic

Oct 18th: The Chalcolithic in the Southern Levant

Oct 20th: The Neolithic-Chalcolithic in Egypt

Key sites: Nahal Mishmar and Ein Gedi, Peqi’in, Nabta Playa


Week 7: Inequality Rules? Or is it the Gods? Origins of the first polity

Oct 25th: The Chalcolithic in Mesopotamia and Susiana

Oct 27th: The Chalcolithic in Northern Syria and Anatolia

Key sites: Uruk, Susa; Tell Brak, Arslantepe.


Week 8: Metallurgy or Mobility? The so-called Uruk expansion

Nov 1\textsuperscript{st}: Colonies

Nov 3\textsuperscript{rd}: Enclaves and Entrepots

\textit{Key sites:} Habuba Kabira, Jebel Aruda, Hassek Hoyuk.

\textit{Readings:} Akkermans, P. M., & Schwartz, G. M. (2003). \textit{The archaeology of Syria: from complex hunter-gatherers to early urban societies (c. 16,000-300 BC).} Chapter 6.

Week 9: Chicken or the Egg? City and state in Mesopotamia at the beginning of the Bronze Age

Nov 8\textsuperscript{th}: Fall Break

Nov 10\textsuperscript{th}: Sumer and the city-state; Kish

\textit{Key sites:} Ur, Lagash, Khafajeh and Kish


Week 10: Kinship and Class: mutually exclusive or integrated dynamics in secondary urbanism?

Nov 15\textsuperscript{th}: The architectural elements of the Syrian City.

Nov 17\textsuperscript{th}: TERM TEST

\textit{Key sites:} Tell Chuera, Tell Brak

NO READINGS

Week 11: Mortuary Monuments and the City

Nov 22\textsuperscript{nd}: Memphis, Saqqara and Giza

Nov 24\textsuperscript{th}: Tell Banat


Week 12: Failure to Launch? Why are there no true cities in the Southern Levant?

Nov 29th:

Dec 1st:

Key sites:


Week 13: Putting it all together

DETAILS OF ASSESSMENT

Four archaeological exercises @ 5% each:

2.5% of the assessment for each of the four archaeological exercises is performance of the exercise, 2.5% is for the written results, which should be no less than 600 words per exercise (with the exception of exercise 1).

Explore: Google Earth. Sept 20. Please hand in a print-out of your Google earth page and with all the sites you located highlighted in some way that leaves the original map visible.

Recover: Excavation of a trash can. Oct 6. Reconstruct the way the trash can was filled (stratigraphy) and the information you gain from it.


Communicate: construct a display for the human-headed bull from Tell Brak. Nov 29. This can be done descriptively or visually.

Four class papers @ 5% each:

Each paper should be ca. 1000-1200 words.

How does the ability to find sites affect our interpretation of the Paleolithic period? Sept 27. In this paper you should think about the kind of sites we have recovered and whether we have a representation of the whole of life in the Paleolithic, or just special activities.

What is the significance of middens at Çatalhöyük? Oct 13.
Here you need to analyze the discussions in the listed publications to select information in answer to the question.

What is the role of pottery in either the Late Chalcolithic or reconstructions of the Late Chalcolithic? Nov 8.
You may choose to analyze either the processes by which archaeologists use pottery in figuring out what went on in the past, OR you may figure out what went on in the past yourself, through pottery. If you choose this latter option, you should show your reasoning, and not just adopt someone else’s approach.

What can we learn from the human-headed bull from Tell Brak? Nov 22.
In this exercise you should think about what you need to know in order to interpret the function/meaning of the object, and how you would go about finding it out.

Research Paper @ 25% Dec 6
This paper should focus on an aspect of the course that has taken your particular interest. It should be 3500 words in length and should take an analytical approach. We will review the steps of preparing and writing a research paper in class, but this paper should be begun no later than Week 7. Topic selections will be due for approval that week.

Term Test @ 35%. Nov 17
The test will take two hours and will consist of short answer questions and identification drawn from the materials covered in class.