

---

**The Art and Archaeology  
of the Ancient Near East:  
Ancient Egypt**

George Mason University  
History and Art History Department  
Richard S. Mason - [rmason@gmu.edu](mailto:rmason@gmu.edu)  
Office: Robinson B 373A - by appointment

Summer 2009, Session C  
Art History 319, Section C02  
Fine Arts Building B 110  
MTuWTh, 9:30-11:45 a.m.

---

**Course Description and Goals**

**Art History 319** focuses on the amazing civilization of ancient Egypt. In this course, we will explore virtually every aspect of that long-enduring civilization. We'll travel from the Great Pyramids, the oldest of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, to the Valley of the Kings, where were once hidden the tombs of the most powerful pharaohs, as well as of the "Boy King," Tutankhamun. We'll visit the village of the workers who decorated - and robbed? - those royal tombs. We'll also study the animal-headed gods and goddesses worshipped by the Egyptians and we'll tour the enormous temples dedicated to those stange divinities. We'll see vivid scenes of daily life depicted in brightly painted reliefs and we'll reflect upon the complex status of women in this traditional society. And we'll witness the dramatic conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great and the tragic death of Cleopatra, the last Macedonian-Greek ruler of Egypt.

In the course of our survey of ancient Egyptian civilization, we'll encounter those mysterious hieroglyphs inscribed on towering obelisks, as well as the three other writing systems used by the ancient Egyptians. We'll read passages in the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," as well as ancient love lyrics to the living. We'll watch over the Roman conquest of Egypt, the advent of Christianity and the disappearance of Egypt's most ancient religion, the transformation of Egypt upon the arrival of Islam, and, finally, the opening up of Egypt to the western world with the arrival of Napoleon's troops in 1798.

We will view the brilliant achievements of the ancient Egyptians in the major arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting. Throughout our exploration of this ancient civilization, we'll learn the fascinating stories of those archaeologists who have brought the buried past to light.

**Our goal throughout is an educationally challenging, intellectually stimulating, and rewarding experience.**

*Prerequisite: 24 hours*

ARTH 319 is approved for the General Education's Global Understanding Requirement and also for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences' Non-Western Culture Requirement.

**Required Texts**

Robins, Gay. *The Art of Ancient Egypt*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008 Revised Edition. ISBN 978-0-674-03065-7 New \$ 27.95 - Used \$ 20.95

Shaw, Ian. *Ancient Egypt: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN 978-0-19-285419-3 New \$ 11.95 - Used \$ 8.95

---



---

**Week 3**

9. **Monday, July 20 The New Kingdom: The Early Eighteenth Dynasty**  
 Shaw, *Egypt*, Chapter 7, "Death: Mummification, Dismemberment,  
 and the Cult of Osiris," pp. 113-125  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 8: "A New Momentum: The New Kingdom (I):  
 Ahmose to Amenhotep III," pp. 122-137
10. **Tuesday, July 21 Akhenaten**  
 Shaw, *Egypt*, Chapter 8, "Religion: Egyptian Gods and Temples,"  
 pp. 126-136  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 9:  
 "The Great Heresy: The New Kingdom (II):  
 The Amarna Period and its Aftermath,"  
 pp. 148-156 - up to: *Non-royal tombs*
11. **Wednesday, July 22 Tutankhamun**  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 9, pp. 158-165
12. **Thursday, July 23 Test 3**  
**Ramses the Great**  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 10:  
 "The Glories of Empire: The New Kingdom (III),"  
 pp. 166-181 - up to: *Non-royal monuments*
- 

**Week 4**

13. **Monday, July 27 Museum Assignment Due**  
**The Third Intermediate Period**  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 10, pp. 181-192  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 11: "Fragmentation and New Directions:  
 The Third Intermediate Period,"  
 pp. 194-200 - up to: *Non-royal monuments*
14. **Tuesday, July 28 The Late Period**  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 12:  
 "Looking to the Past: The Late Period (I),"  
 pp. 210-218- up to: *The elite*
15. **Wednesday, July 29 Alexander the Great and Ptolemaic Egypt**  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 13:  
 "The Final Flowering: The Late Period (II)  
 and Ptolemaic Period," pp. 230-245 - up to: *Burials*.
16. **Thursday, July 30 The End of Ancient Egyptian Civilization**  
 Robins, *Art*, Chapter 14: "Epilogue," pp. 252-255
- 

**Week 5**

17. **Monday, August 3 Catch-up and Conclusions**  
**Tuesday, August 4 Reading Day**
- 

**Wednesday, August 5 Final Exam - 10:30 a.m.**

---

---

**Students are required to take all the tests when they are assigned. NO MAKEUPS will be given without an ACCEPTABLE excuse from a doctor or the student's academic dean/director.**

|            |        |    |            |     |            |
|------------|--------|----|------------|-----|------------|
| Thursday,  | July   | 9  | Test 1     | 5%  |            |
| Thursday,  | July   | 16 | Test 2     | 15% |            |
| Thursday,  | July   | 23 | Test 3     | 25% |            |
| Monday,    | July   | 27 | Paper      | 25% |            |
| Wednesday, | August | 5  | Final Exam | 30% | 10:30 a.m. |

|           |          |          |          |          |        |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| A+ 100-99 | A- 93-90 | B 86-83  | C+ 79-77 | C- 72-70 |        |
| A 98-94   | B+ 89-87 | B- 82-80 | C 76-73  | D 69-60  | F 59-0 |

All students are responsible for understanding, conforming to, and upholding the Honor Code. "Cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related materials constitute Honor Code violations. To maintain an academic community according to these standards, students and faculty must report all alleged violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Committee. Any student who has knowledge of, but does not report, an Honor Code violation may be accused of lying under the Honor Code." - George Mason University.

**CHEATING WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE**

Our major goal of this course is to attain an understanding of ancient Egyptian art. We will learn about the archaeological discoveries that have brought to light so much of that art and we will look closely at that art since it reveals so much about the world of the ancient Egyptians, their ideas and beliefs, and their views about their own past, present, and future.

Questions on quizzes or tests may include may include:

1. Slide identifications of works seen in class or shown in the texts.
2. Dating of major periods, historical figures, and works of art.
3. Location of important sites on maps.
4. Definitions of technical and stylistic terms and concepts.
5. Knowledge of ancient Egyptian ideas and beliefs, including identification of gods and goddesses.
6. Identification of historical figures, of those ancient writers who had first-hand knowledge of ancient Egypt, and of those modern explorers and archaeologists who have brought the past to light.
7. Questions on the readings and lectures.

**Throughout this course, you are expected to be considerate of your fellow students. Late arrivals, early departures, and talking in class are distracting to others. Such behavior is not acceptable and may be counted against your grade.**

---

### Doing Well

Please review the syllabus carefully and seek clarification of any assignments or instructions that might seem unclear.

Do not take this course unless you plan to attend class regularly. You will be responsible for all material presented in class, including slides. In a single class, roughly six per cent of the course material is covered. So, missing one class could result in the drop of one letter grade for your final grade in the course.

Coming to class on time means that you have the advantage of any review that is covered at the very beginning of class.

Cross-referencing your class notes with the reading assignments and illustrations in the texts is an excellent way to integrate the material covered in the course. You can do this, for example, by simply adding in the margins to your class notes the page references to illustrations in Robins. Do NOT, however, do this during class. Flipping through the books in an attempt to find one illustration distracts you from taking notes on the material that is being presented; doing so is also distracting to others and, consequently, is not allowed.

If you miss class on the day when a hand-out is distributed, please ask a fellow student for a copy of the hand-out. Graded work will be handed back only once during class; you are responsible for picking up graded work when it is handed back. If you are absent from that class, please request the return of your work.

If there has been an error in grading, clearly note the error on the first page of the quiz/test and return your test to me. DO NOT DELAY. Individual students are responsible for requesting the return of any work submitted for re-evaluation.

If you are not satisfied with your performance, please talk with me as soon as possible so that we can try to figure out the problem. It might simply be a matter of finding a way to study more efficiently in less time. Again, do not delay. Mondays through Thursdays in the early morning before class, I might be found in Robinson B 373A or in the Slide Library, Robinson B 333. It is best to check by e-mail the day before so that I will definitely plan on being there if you want to meet and talk.

Accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities, in accordance with law and university policies. Students requiring accommodations must register with and provide documentation to the University's Disability Resource Center. This must be done well in advance before the first test in case alternate arrangements need to be made.

Please feel free to e-mail me and I will do my best to reply to your messages. You may wish to ask me to clarify a completely ridiculous statement I made in class or you may want to request an appointment for us to meet in order to discuss your performance on a test. You can do that quickly and easily by e-mail.

On e-mail messages to me, please always include under the subject heading: **ARTH 319**. Otherwise, I may not realize which course you're writing about and will not be able to reply. Do not include attachments in e-mail messages. Grades will **not** be sent via e-mail.

---

---

### Museum Assignment

Write a paper, approximately 4 pages in length about the exhibit of Egyptian art at The Walters Art Museum ([www.thewalters.org](http://www.thewalters.org)):

**The Walters Art Museum;** 600 North Charles Street; Baltimore, MD  
"Egyptian Art" - Level 2, Centre Street Wing

Include in your paper a brief critique of the exhibit. Discuss in general the objects in the exhibit. What, for example, are the objects made of? What have you learned from these objects? Do the labels or walltexts inform you about the excavation history of the objects? How informative or instructive is the exhibit? Does the exhibit succeed in conveying its stated themes? How well are the works displayed? Comment briefly on: selection and organization of objects for display, labels and walltexts, lighting, etc.

Select one object (preferably one you like) from the exhibit. Make a catalogue entry, including the following information:

1. Identification - a concise heading identifying the work. Specify the type of work and material. Is it a vase, a sculpture in the round, a relief? If you make use of the museum label or walltext, make clear that you have done so. Use quotation marks as required.

2. Approximate size. You might, for example, record that a statue is "about 5 feet 4 inches in height; approximately lifesize." If you choose a vase, figurine, or some other object, give the height, width, and thickness. Remember: DO NOT TOUCH! You may only be able to estimate the exact size. Be sure to indicate whether the object is complete or not; you may not, for example, "maximum preserved height."

3. Condition of state of preservation - this can be really important. What's real? Is anything missing? Is anything restored? Can you tell by looking? Does the museum label tell you?

4. Description. Accurately and objectively describe the object. What strikes you about the work you've chosen?

5. Illustration. Illustrate the work in a sketch or photograph. Be sure to indicate the scale of the work on a sketch.

6. Discuss the work within the context of Egyptian art. What can you say about the subject and style of the work? What is the evidence for the date of the work? You may compare this one work with related objects in the same exhibit, with works in other exhibits, and/or with works illustrated in Robins or other sources. Your use of any sources must be fully documented.

7. General conclusions. What do you think is the significance of the work you have chosen? What have you learned?

---

### Museum Assignment

You must cite and document any sources that you have used. For references to another individual's statements/interpretations/ideas, or to illustrations, you can concisely and properly refer in your text to a source; for example: Robins, *Art*, p. 196, Fig. 235. Your bibliography should include full documentation regarding publication.

Your paper must be typed double-spaced and stapled - at the top left corner - No plastic binders. On the first page, identify your paper by putting your name, the course (ARTH 319), and the date all in the upper right corner. Proofread for spelling, grammar, syntax, and style. Submit two copies, one of which will be returned to you.

Your paper should be well-organized and clearly written. Pay close attention to style and content in writing your paper. Account is taken of carelessness, incorrect spelling and punctuation, poor use of English, lack of necessary documentation, and failure to follow directions. Your paper should reflect how much you have observed and learned from this entire experience. Feel free to express your own insights, backing up your observations with specific examples and arguments. Use your creative imagination and your abilities in critical thinking.

**A** = Exceptional work. Well-written, well-presented, well-argued. Shows a clear mastery of facts, concepts and interpretations; thorough knowledge of this subject. Insightful and imaginative. Remarkable in all respects.

**B** = Good work, certainly better than average. Good organization. Competent and careful. Obvious evidence of serious effort.

**C** = Average but acceptable quality. Adequate complete of the assignment.

**D** = Thin ice. Passing but unsatisfactory.

**F** = Failure. Unacceptable as college-level work.

#### PLAGIARISM WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THE COURSE

Plagiarism in written work is defined as:

"1. Presenting as one's own the words, the work, or the opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement.

"2. Borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement."

George Mason University, University Catalog [2003-2004].

**All written work is due in hard copy in class on the due date of Monday, July 27.** Papers are to be handed in personally at the beginning of class. Papers not submitted in class at that time will be marked down 5%. E-mail submissions are not acceptable. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per day. Late papers may not be graded before the submission of final grades; in such cases, a grade of IN will be recorded.

Please feel free to discuss your paper with me if you have any questions or problems.

### Other Exhibits of Egyptian Art

You might enjoy the exhibit of some Egyptian art and artifacts at:  
**The National Museum of Natural History** (near the IMAX Theater)

"Origins of Western Culture"

Constitution Avenue at 10<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Washington, DC

**Freer Gallery of Art** (Room 16)

"Charles Lang Freer and Egypt"

Jefferson Drive or Independence Ave. at 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W., Washington, DC

**The Nile**

Moorehead, Alan. *The Blue Nile*.  
New York: Random House, 1972. ISBN 0-394-71449-0

---

---

### Chronology

Ancient Egyptian civilization spanned a very long period of time. How do we attempt to get a handle on such a long history? Today, we recognize three major "Kingdoms," long periods during which all Egypt was ruled by one central government. Those times of "the breakdown of central government" are termed Intermediate Periods.

Very late in their history, the ancient Egyptians devised their own system for dividing up the past. The first individual known to have done so was an Egyptian priest named Manetho. Looking back on Egypt's long history, Manetho grouped together rulers of Egypt into dynasties, that is, families of rulers. Manetho recognized thirty such dynasties, extending from the earliest ruler of Egypt's Two Lands down to the conquest of Egypt by the Macedonian Greek Alexander the Great in 332 BC. Manetho himself lived in the early third century BC - at a time when Egypt was ruled by the Ptolemies, that Macedonian-Greek family descended from, Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals. The Egyptian Manetho wrote his History of Egypt in the Greek language, not in his native Egyptian.

In *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, Gay Robins gives a detailed Chronology on pp. 8-10. Even though the general sequence of ancient Egyptian history is secure, there is not total agreement on precise dates. And there is some disagreement on which dynasties fall under which period, particularly in the case of the Intermediate Periods. Could this have anything to do with our interpretations of what really was "a time of social cohesion and political stability"?

As you do the assigned readings in Robins and as you review your class notes, you can place within a chronological outline that you've constructed important individuals and major works of art.

#### Egyptian History at a Glance (?)

|                 |  |                   |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| 5000 - 2920     | Predynastic Period                                       |                   |
| 2920 - 2650     | Early Dynastic or Archaic Period                         | Dynasties 1 -- 2  |
| 2650 - 2134     | <b>Old Kingdom</b>                                       | Dynasties 3 -- 6  |
|                 | First Intermediate Period                                |                   |
| 2040 - 1640     | <b>Middle Kingdom</b>                                    | Dynasties 11 - 12 |
|                 | Second Intermediate                                      |                   |
| 1550 - 1070     | <b>New Kingdom</b>                                       | Dynasties 18 - 20 |
|                 | Third Intermediate                                       |                   |
| 712 - 332       | <b>Late Period</b>                                       | Dynasties 25 - 30 |
| 332             | Alexander the Great conquers Egypt and founds Alexandria |                   |
| 304 - 30        | <b>Ptolemaic Dynasty</b> rules Egypt                     |                   |
| 30              | Suicide of Cleopatra (VII) and Roman conquest of Egypt   |                   |
| BCE 30 - 395 CE | <b>Roman Period</b>                                      |                   |
| 395             | Emperor Theodosius bans all pagan religions              |                   |
| 395 - 641       | <b>Coptic Period</b>                                     |                   |
| 641             | Arab conquest of Egypt                                   |                   |
| 1798            | Napoleon invades Egypt                                   |                   |
| 1801            | British defeat the French forces in Egypt                |                   |
| 1822            | Champollion deciphers ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs       |                   |
| 2009            | GMU - ARTH 319/C02 - Ancient Egypt                       |                   |

---