ARCH 1475
Petra: Ancient Wonder, Modern Challenge

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Office Hours: Monday, 2-5 pm or by appointment
Course wiki: http://proteus.brown.edu/ancientandmodernpetra12 [pswrd: petra12]
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It seems no work of Man’s creative hand,
by labour wrought as wavering fancy planned;
But from the rock as if by magic grown,
eternal, silent, beautiful, alone!
… match me such marvel save in Eastern clime,
a rose-red city half as old as time (J. W. Burgon, ‘Petra’, 1845)

Ancient Wonder

Petra, in antiquity, had many claims to fame. It was the first capital of the Nabataean kingdom, a ‘middleman’ nation of traders who facilitated exchange between the Mediterranean world and peoples as far afield as China. Annexed by the Romans in 106 CE, the city was visited by emperors and became home to several early Christian bishoprics. Archaeological remains — of temples, theaters, churches and an astonishing series of rock cut tombs — are testimony to the ancient investment in the site of Petra.

Modern Challenge

Petra today is also, officially since 2007, a ‘New Wonder of the World’. The site possesses a global identity, owing chiefly to its role in movies such as ‘Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade’ and ‘Transformers II: Revenge of the Fallen’. Such fame, in addition to the site’s ‘rose red’ beauty (the produce of a very fragile sandstone environment) today attracts almost a million tourists a year. Such interest is wonderful; it is also destroying the site.

This class will explore the history and archaeology of Petra and debate how best to present and preserve the site. Emphasis will also be laid on discussing (and planning) Brown University’s ongoing fieldwork at this beautiful, but fragile, place.

Prerequisites: None
Course requirements (Choose either Plan A or B)

Plan A
• Short Assignments (2-3 pages each, or equivalent) = 10% each
  #1: Photo montage (one ppt slide): What makes Petra ‘rock’?, due February 8th
  #2: How else could we label our (on-loan) architectural fragments?, due February 22nd
  #3: Make your own version of a Petra papyrus, due March 7
  #4: Craft (and send) a letter in support of archaeological conservation, due Apr

• Paper/Project (15-20 pages each, or equivalent) = 30% each
  #1: Exploration of some facet of this ‘Ancient Wonder’, due March 14
  #2: Exploration of some facet of this ‘Modern Challenge’, due April 18

Plan B
• Short Assignments (2-3 pages each, or equivalent) = 10% each
#1: Photo montage (one ppt slide): What makes Petra ‘rock’?, due February 8th
#2: How else could we label our (on-loan) architectural fragments?, due February 22nd
#3: Computational exercise, due April 11

• Paper/Project (15-20 pages each, or equivalent) = 30% each
  #1: Exploration of some facet of this ‘Ancient Wonder’, due March 14
  #2: Exploration of some facet of this ‘Modern Challenge’, due April 18

Required texts:

Relevant Websites:
Brown University Petra Archaeological Project
http://proteus.brown.edu/bupap/Home
Petra Links
http://petragarden.homestead.com/links.html
Petra: Lost City of Stone
http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/petra/
Petra National Trust
http://petranationaltrust.org/UI/Default.aspx

Course Outline

February 1st
The power of Petra, especially at Brown
*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

Ancient Wonder
February 8
Topography, geology and ‘The Site’
*The Brown University Petra Archaeological Project
Short Assignment #1 due:
Photo montage (one ppt slide): What makes Petra ‘rock’?

February 15
The prehistory of Petra and the ‘rise’ of Nabataea
*Lithic analysis and rocks before Petra

February 22
The Nabataean Kingdom, in and outside Petra
*Trade and trade routes, and GIS
Short Assignment #2 due
How else could we label our (on-loan) architectural fragments?

February 29
The Romans arrive. Discuss!
*Hands-on session with Petra pots

March 7
Byzantine and Islamic Petra
*The World of the Petra Papyri
Short Assignment #3 due
Make your own version of a Petra papyrus

Modern Challenge
March 14
Bedouin Petra and Middle Eastern politics
*Water systems and making the desert bloom
Paper/Project #1 due
Exploration of some facet of this ‘Ancient Wonder’

March 21
Petra as a ‘Wonder of the World’
*Computational Analyses 101 (with Nick Sinott-Armstrong)

Spring Break

April 4
Master plans and heritage preservation
*Archaeological advocacy
Short Assignment #4 due
Craft (and send) a letter in support of archaeological conservation

April 11
Is Petra sustainable?
*Visualization, Mega-J and other databases
Short Assignment: Computational exercise due

April 18
Saving Petra
Paper/Project due
Exploration of some facet of this ‘Modern Challenge’

April 25
Modern Challenge: Saving Petra
Presentations
General Bibliography:

Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (basic periodical on Jordanian archaeology)
Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan (publication of period conferences on Jordan)
This book lists and indexes topically over 2400 works concerning Petra (in all periods) and the Nabataeans. It includes publications from 2000 and earlier.