CITY AND THE FESTIVAL
CULT PRACTICES AND ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Joukowsky Institute of Archaeology and the Ancient World
Brown University Spring 2007

SYLLABUS

A course with Ömür Harmansah (Visiting Assistant Prof. of Near Eastern Art and Archaeology)
Meets on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 11:00-11:50 am (the so-called D-hour)
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Office Hours: Tuesday 10-12 am. (By appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Cities are layered topographies of cultural histories, enchanted places of our social lives, messy landscapes of our everyday performances. Ancient cities were no less complex spaces in their liveliness. What did ancient cities look like and how were they shaped, in architectural form and in the imagination of its citizens? How do social events, festivals, cult practices, public spectacles shape the layout of a city? In the light of contemporary theories of urban space drawn from geography, architecture, cultural studies and anthropology, we will explore what makes a city a city in the first place, and attempt to make sense of the patchy and fragmentary archaeological evidence from the ancient Near East in understanding, reconstructing cities.

The course will pay particular attention to issues of social dramas, spectacles and performances in the urban sphere, of urbanization, formation of urban space, and architectural projects in relation to cult practices and commemorative ceremonies in the Ancient Near East. Investigating ten cities as case studies from early cities of fourth millennium BC Mesopotamia to the medieval Syro-Palestine, we will study the processes of the making of urban and extra-urban landscapes in the socio-religious context of cult festivals, state spectacles, everyday performances. We will therefore discuss the making of cities, negotiated between the representations of urban ideals, politics of space, monumental construction, and the material practices of the society, and explore aspects of the recent scholarly opinion that societies established their relationship with history through their construction and manipulation of architectural spaces.

BOOK AVAILABLE AT BROWN BOOKSTORE

The following books are available for your purchase at the bookstore:

• Amin, Ash and Nigel Thrift; 2002. Cities: reimagining the urban. Polity Press; Malden MA.

PRACTICALITIES

• Meeting schedule (open to change all the time depending on the week- also first two weeks are exceptional): When exploring ten cities, a city per week, we will spend:
  • Mondays with Ömür’s presentation on the historical and geographical context of the city in question, sometimes along with a presentation of relevant texts.
• **Wednesdays** we will look at the archaeology of the city. Group presentations (creative site reports) on particular cities will take place on Wednesdays, followed by a discussion.

• **Fridays** we will dedicate the whole class to an interpretive discussion in the light of the specific spatial / urban / social theory we read that week. We will be reading and discussing particular ancient texts on those days too.

• **Course wiki (webpage):** A wiki is created for this course and we will use this site interactively for discussions, posting of announcements, assignments, preparing group presentations and the like. Every student registered or auditing this course will have access to editing this page. Yes, you can freely edit the site, post your own work, make comments to your colleagues’ and professor’s postings. You will be asked to post some of your written assignments on the wiki. Please familiarize yourself with the wiki, and make sure to check the site regularly, at least before each class meeting. Here is the wiki-site: http://proteus.brown.edu/cityfestival/1152

• **Readings, Reserve material:** The readings on reserve are frequently digital and can be downloaded through OCRA Brown Library’s Online Course Reserves Access webpage is: http://dl.lib.brown.edu/reserves/). The course password is akitu.

  • The course wiki will be probably most useful in locating your weekly readings. Simply go to the Weekly Schedule page of the wiki (http://proteus.brown.edu/cityfestival/1506) and click on the readings: the links will take you either a digital text (article/chapter/book), an OCRA e-reserve item or a book on reserve at the Rock Circulation Desk. Changes in reading assignments will immediately appear on the wiki. **For readings please don’t rely on this printed syllabus, always check the wiki, since there will be occasional updates.**

  • We will not use WebCT or MyCourses for this course. All materials will be posted on the wiki.

  • Our subject specialist (archaeology/art-architectural history) librarians Norine Duncan and Karen Bouchard kindly offered to help students individually with their paper topics or projects that involve library research. I encourage you to get in touch with them if you need help with library resources/research. Email your topics to: ASL@brown.edu (They can be reached at the Art Slide Library, List Art Center, 4th floor, Tel:863-3218).

**Requirements**

• **Participation:** Students are expected to do weekly readings regularly and comprehensively, and contribute to seminar discussions.

• **Small projects and site reports:** In the first half of the semester there will be a series of small assignments on cities and the imagination of urban space (one involving a visualization of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, one on walking in Providence, one on ethnographies of urban space and place). Each student will also have a chance to present (in small groups) a creative archaeological site report of one of the ancient cities we will be exploring.

• **Logbook:** You will be asked to keep a logbook throughout the semester, as an intimate documentation of your ideas, thoughts, projects, visual imagery that this class had provoked in your mind. The logbook will be an accumulated product of the whole semester’s work of note-taking, writing, sketching, drawing, cutting-pasting etc, using any kind of media. It will be your own design, your own work of art. The format is open. It could be a hardbound notebook which you can carry around with you everywhere, or it could be a digital product, a blog, or a wiki.

• **Research project:** In the second half of the semester, students will focus on a research project. Each will choose a research topic in collaboration with the instructor and turn it into a research paper. It is advisable that your project would develop from your city-presentation. In any case it should involve a theoretically informed discussion on Near Eastern cities and architectural space. The final product will involve a 3-4 page draft and an 8-10 page paper (for graduate students, 12-20 pages).

• **Grading** will be based on class participation (25%), class presentations (10%), short assignments (20%), research project (35%).
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1. Introduction

Wed Jan 24: Introduction: scope of the course:
The cities where we grow up. Cities, urban space, its festivities.

Fri Jan 26: Cities and imaginations: what is a city?

Week 2. Theories of the city and urban space: formation of the urban fabric, public sphere.

Mon Jan 29: Urban space: city as image, city as palimpsest.

Wed Jan 31: Approaching ancient cities: classical models of planned cities, “the non-west” and some methodological dilemmas.

Fri Feb 2: Ancient Mesopotamian city: an overview

Week 3. Cities and Desire I: Uruk.

Mon Feb 5: Urbanization, social complexity and the problem of the first city.

Wed Feb 7: Late Uruk Period in Southern Mesopotamia and the Archaeology of Uruk:
the formation of the city as a ceremonial center.
(Assignment I: Visualizing Calvino’s Invisible Cities due).

Fri Feb 9: The urban cult of Inanna: city and the religion.


Mon Feb 12: Rhythms of the city: spaces of the everyday life.

Wed Feb 14: Walking in the city.

Fri Feb 16: Assignment 2: City walk: Providence. Use logbooks. (Ömür’ is at the College Art Association Meetings in New York, Thursday through Saturday).

Week 5. Trading Cities: Ur.

Mon Feb 19. Long weekend: No class.


Fri Feb 23. Mesopotamian urban economies: merchants of Ur.

Week 6. Cities and imagination: Nippur.

Mon Feb 26. Nippur as the supra-regional ceremonial center.

Wed Feb 28. The archaeology of Nippur.

Fri March 2. The cattlepen and the sheepfold: early Mesopotamian religion and the imagination of the sacred city.
(Assignment 2: City walk: Providence due)

Week 7. Cities and spectacle I: Hattusha.

Mon March 5. Hittites and the Late Bronze Age in Anatolia.

Wed March 7. The archaeology of Hattusha.
http://www.hattuscha.de/eng/eng.html


Wed March 14. The archaeology of Karkamish

Fri March 16. Social memory, urban space and cult practice at Karkamish

Week 9. Cities and eyes: Kalhu (Nimrud).

Mon March 19. The Early Iron Age in Assyria: From Middle Tigris to the Upper Tigris.
Construction of a new landscape.

Wed March 21. The archaeology of Kalhu.

Fri March 23. City as social event: urban foundation as festival.
Texts: the Banquet Stele and the Ninurta Temple inscription.

Mar 24-Apr 1 Saturday through Sunday. Spring recess.

Week 10. Cities and landscapes: Ninua (Nineveh).

Mon April 2. Landscapes of Assyria in the Iron Age: the city in a region.
(Assignment 3: City Stories: Ethnography of Urban Space and Place due)

**Wed April 4. The archaeology of Nineveh.**

**Fri April 6. Nineveh’s urban landscape: orchards, “the hanging gardens” and ferocious bulls.**

**Week 11. Cities and festival: Babylon.**

**Mon April 9. The Neo-Babylonian kingdom:**
(Final paper proposals with bibliography due)

**Wed April 11. The archaeology of Babylon.**

**Fri April 13. Babylon and the akitu festival.**

**Week 12. Cities and spectacle II: Persepolis.**

**Mon April 16. The Persian Empire: a heterogenous state and a world assembly at Persepolis**


Wed April 18. The archaeology of Persepolis:
http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/PA/IRAN/PAAI/PAAI_Persepolis.html

Fri April 20. New Year’s Festival at Persepolis and City Dionysia at Athens: urban spectacles compared.
(Final paper drafts due)

Week 13. Cities and conflict: Jerusalem.

Mon April 23. Jerusalem:

Wed April 25. Final discussion.

May 11. Final papers due.