AH3061 10 Things: Text, Object and Historiography

Academic Year: 2009-2010
Semester: 2
Time and location: Mondays 11-1, ATT SB2.07
First meeting: Monday 25 January, 11-1, ATT SB2.07
Module coordinator: Dr Dan Stewart
e-mail: ds120@le.ac.uk
Room: Archaeology & Ancient History 005
Office hours: See note on office door
Your individual appointments (e.g. tutorials, seminars):

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AH3061  **10 Things: Text, Object and Historiography**

**Weighting:** 20 credits

**Coordinator:** Dr Dan Stewart

**Module outline:** The relationships between ancient sources, material culture and contemporary scholarship is an uneasy one. In this module we will explore a range of approaches to dealing with these complex and frequently contradictory relationships. Each week explores a different approach to the study of the past through the pairing of an ancient source with an object or place. Placing emphasis on how the relationship between people and things changes over the long term, and how we present that relationship, this course critically questions the importance of places, artefacts and texts.

**Aims:** The module aims to built on students existing knowledge of the history and archaeology of the ancient world and to provide grounding in:

- The sources available for the study of Roman urbanism
- The varied urban fabric of Roman cities and the changes in urban economic and social life from the time of the Republic to late antiquity
- Research skills and methodologies used to study the relevant evidence and theories

**Intended learning outcomes:** By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between texts and objects in contemporary understandings of the historical record.
- Display an awareness of the various theoretical and historiographical issues surrounding approaches to the past.
- Demonstrate in both written work and group seminars a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of textual and archaeological evidence for the study of the subject.
- Critically evaluate competing theoretical understandings of texts and objects past and the importance of them in their historical and cultural contexts.
- Research a well-defined topic and communicate the results effectively.
- Critically evaluate translated sources and documents, archaeological data, and secondary literature and deploy them effectively in combination as appropriate.

**Method(s) of teaching:** Nine two-hour meetings combining lectures and seminars.

**Method of assessment:**

1. A critical essay analysing recent research on a set theme (max. 3,000 words: 50%)
2. Exam (50%)
## Teaching schedule

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<th>Week 14: M. 25 Jan.</th>
<th>1. Course Introduction</th>
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<td>Week 15: M. 1 Feb.</td>
<td>2. Myth and Archaeology</td>
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<td>Week 16: M. 8 Feb.</td>
<td>3. Monumentality</td>
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<td>Week 17: M. 15 Feb.</td>
<td>4. Historical Topography</td>
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**Assignment of essay topics by Friday February 19**

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<th>Week 18: M. 22 Feb.</th>
<th>5. The Past in the Past</th>
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<td>Week 19: M. 1 Mar.</td>
<td>Reading Week—no teaching in Ancient History</td>
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<td>Week 21: M. 15 Mar.</td>
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<td>Week 22: M. 22 Mar.</td>
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<td>Week 23: M. 3 May</td>
<td>9. Reception Through Time: the Past in the Present</td>
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**Essays due MONDAY 10 May 2009**
Assignments and deadlines

1. Exam (50%)
   The exam will consist of a choice of essay questions based on the material covered in the course.
   Time allowed: two hours.

2. Essay (50%), 3,000 words max. Deadline: **10 May 2010**

**Essay topics:** you are encouraged to develop your own essay topic, but you MUST discuss it with the module coordinator before **Friday 19 February 2010**. You will be responsible for selecting a text or object, whether ancient or contemporary, and research it while building on the approaches confronted in the module. You can chose to focus on one of the following themes, or develop one of your own.

**Essay Themes:**

1. What is the relationship between the physical city and the city written about in ancient sources?
2. In what ways was the past used in the past? How do contemporary approaches differ?
3. Discuss the impact of individual objects on the ‘biographical impulse’.
4. How have approaches to the textual traditions of Greece and Rome affected our understanding of archaeology?
Week 14

Course Introduction

How have people approached ancient history and material culture? Why is the relationship between these things important?

Readings:


Discussion questions:

- Should either text or object have a primary authority?
- Is identifying contradictions the same as being 'critical'?

Week 15

Myth and Archaeology


Object: Death Mask of Agamemnon

In the class, an overview of the relationship between myth and archaeology focusing on Heinrich Schliemann and Homeric epic. We will examine not only the relationship between myth and early archaeological research, but also contemporary mythologizing.

Readings:


Discussion questions:

- In what ways have mythological texts been read as history? How have these readings informed archaeological interpretation?
- Where is the line between myth and history? How and where do scholars draw that line?
- What impact has myth had on our assessments of Schliemann’s career?
Week 16
Monumentality


Object: Augustus’ *Campus Martius*

An examination of urban landscapes and the different understandings gleaned from texts and archaeology. In particular we will be examining notions of monumentality, permanence, and propaganda, and the idea of ‘place’ as ‘object’.

Readings:

Discussion questions:

• In what ways are monuments shaped by individuals?
• Are understandings of monumentality different in literature than in practice?
• Does literature reflect practice, or vice versa?

Week 17
Historical Topography

Text: Pausanias, Book 1 (esp. 1.22.4-28.3).

Object: The Parthenon Frieze

The Parthenon is often held up as the epitome of Classical Greek architectural brilliance, and has a long history at the heart of cultural debates surrounding religion, imperialism, nationalism and identity. Here we will be examining the notion of historical topography through the lens of Pausanias and this most famous of Greek monuments.

Readings:

Discussion questions:

• What is historical topography?
• What are the advantages offered by textual reconstructions of urban topography?
• Do textual reconstructions tell us anything meaningful about cities, or are they simply about their authors?

**Week 18**

**The Past in the Past**

*Text:* Lucan, *Bellum Civile*, 9.964-999. (Also known as *The Pharsalia*)

*Object:* The Pantheon; Troy

This class will use the case studies of Troy and the Pantheon in Rome to examine ideas of the past in the past, and how modern scholars can access ideas or conceptions of the past through time.

*Readings:*


*Discussion questions:*

• How is the past represented physically, and in texts?
• How might we characterise approaches to the past in the past?

**Week 19**

**Reading Week**

**Week 20**

**The Inheritance of Rome**


*Object:* Capitol, Rome; Forum Romanum

Here we examine the perception and reception of the city of Rome over time, by focusing on two different but related aspects of the city’s ‘inheritance’: that of Edward Gibbon and his romantic view of the ‘ruin’, and Italian Fascism’s (ab)use of the past for contemporary political propaganda.

*Readings:*


Discussion questions:

- Do texts and objects present 'fact' that interpretations distort?
- To what extent does the way we view the present impact our understanding of the past? Is there a positivist knowable past?
- What is the place of reception studies in our understanding of the past?

### Week 21  
**Shifting Values of Texts and Objects**

*Text: The Rosetta Stone*  
*Object: The Rosetta Stone*

The class will examine the way perceived values of texts and objects influences their interpretations. Frequently, the way in which an object or text was perceived in the past is far removed from its contemporary perception, and can even have no role in contemporary scholarly discourse.

**Readings:**


**Discussion questions:**

- Should we incorporate changing scholarly emphases into our understandings of the past?
- Does it matter if a text’s or object’s value is higher today than it was in antiquity? Why or why not?

### Week 22  
**The Biographical Impulse**

*Text: Pausanias, 5.10-11 (on Pheidias’ Zeus); Thucydides, 6.27-29, 53-61 (on the desecration of the herms).*  
*Object: Pheidias’ Cup; M&L 79 (Alcibiades’ Property Auction)*

There has long been a tendency within Ancient History to focus on historically-named individuals – to write the history of the political and military elite. In this week we examine the impact of this ‘biographical impulse’ on our understandings and interpretations of the past, and present alternative ways to think about biography.

**Readings:**

Discussion questions:

• Has the focus on known individuals created a lop-sided history
• To what extent are history and archaeology fields of aggregate data?
• Is it possible to redefine what we mean by biography to access other types of historical knowledge?

Week 23 Reception Through Time: the Past in the Present


Object: Laocoön Group

In this final class we draw together many of the predominant themes of the course and examine the reception of the past in the modern world. We use the example of the Vatican Laocoön Group to look at the problems facing both positivist and relativist understandings of the past.

Readings:


Discussion questions:

• Should either text or object have a primary authority?
• Is the past knowable?
The Ten Things:
1. The Death Mask of Agamemnon
2. The Campus Martius
3. The Parthenon Frieze
4. The Pantheon
5. Troy
6. The Forum Romanum
7. The Rosetta Stone
8. Pheidias’ Cup
9. Auction of Alcibiades’ Property
10. Laocoön Group

The Ten Texts:
1. Homer, *Iliad*.
2. Horace, *Carmina*.
3. Pausanias
4. Lucan, *Bellum Civile*
5. Gibbon, E. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. (1897 edition)
6. The Rosetta Stone
7. Thucydides
8. Pliny, *Natural History*
9. Virgil, *Aeneid*
Select Bibliography

The following is a select bibliography for themes covered by the module. Not all topics covered below will necessarily be covered in the course. The thematic headings are very broadly defined, and there is overlap between themes.

General


Hicks, D. and Beaudry, M. C. (eds.) 2006. The Cambridge Companion to Historical Archaeology. Cambridge: CUP.


Historiography


**Material Culture Studies**


**Monumentality & Ruins**


Yon, J.-B. 2001. Evergetism and Urbanism at Palmyra. In Lavan, L. (Ed.) *Recent Research in Late-
Antique Urbanism, 173-181. Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series Number 42.

Reception

Rome
Schliemann

Topography
Nevett, L. 2002. Continuity and Change in Greek Households under Roman Rule: The Role of Women in the Domestic Context. In Ostenfeld, E. N. (Ed.) Greek Romans and


