

Spring 2026
ARTH 4826: Pompeii: Art and Life on the Bay of Naples

Class Meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00-3:20 PM in Curry 204

Instructor: Dr. Neville McFerrin

Contact Information: neville.mcferrin@unt.edu; I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours on weekdays; on weekends and university holidays, responses will be delayed. To ensure a speedier response, include the course number in the subject line.

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 1:00-3:00 PM in ART 310. At this time, I will be in my office, ready to chat about questions, concerns, and ideas. For this time block, there is no need to email in advance. If you cannot drop in at this time, appointments can be scheduled at other times. To schedule an appointment outside of office hours, please email Dr. McFerrin directly at least 24 hours in advance of the desired appointment time.

Course TA: Sara Prescott; in the course, Sara is the primary contact for all questions and issues regarding general classroom procedures and course attendance. To contact Sara, email them directly at SaraPrescott@my.unt.edu. To facilitate communication, please include the course number in the subject line.

Course Description:

With its long history of excavation and its extraordinary state of preservation, the site of Pompeii offers a glimpse into the spaces occupied by civic leaders and shopkeepers, children and slaves, providing the opportunity for modern scholars both to explore a wide range of extant visual and material culture, ranging from mosaics to sculpture to wall painting to ceramics and to confront the perspectives of past peoples who operated both within and beyond the dominant structures that inform the bulk of our textual narratives from the period. Using art as a lens, this course explores the site of Pompeii from multiple vantage points; by providing insight into a portion of the extant remains, focusing topics ranging from street plans, city infrastructure, and civic structures, to domestic spaces, shops, and workshops, it offers students the opportunity to consider the extent to which material and visual culture can help us to reconstruct and reconsider the lives of those who are often silent in longstanding dominant narratives concerning the late first century BCE and early first century CE. By juxtaposing the houses of civic leaders with the public dedications of freedmen, by considering the informal artwork of children alongside the wall paintings produced by professional workshops, we will begin to access the dynamic interactions that constituted daily life in Pompeii, and we will investigate the extent to which the tools we use to access

these concepts can help us to integrate the stories of those who are often overlooked into our thinking about both the past and the present.

Course Objectives:

Through the analysis of material, visual, and textual evidence, students will:

- Explore the range of artistic and creative practices associated with the site of Pompeii
- Identify major constructions, artworks, artifacts, and objects
- Describe styles, periods, and media associated with particular periods within the site's history
- Contextualize artistic creations by time period, function, and location
- Integrate multiple theoretical and methodological approaches into discussion and writing
- Apply terms, theories, and methodologies to the identification and discussion of previously unseen works
- Generate original research projects or artistic works that expand upon the major themes and artworks presented in the course

Course Structure:

This course presents a thematic overview of the visual and material culture of the site of Pompeii, focusing on and problematizing questions of interiority and exteriority to juxtapose works generated for both public and private consumption. It will introduce these explorations through in-person course meetings that blend lecture, discussion, and experiential activities.

All additional readings, assignments, and resources will be uploaded to the course Canvas website. Weekly modules on the course Canvas site will provide links to relevant readings, assignments, and prompts.

Classroom Expectations:

- *Attend.* Much of our time in class will reference, but not replicate, the information provided in assigned readings. Those who do not attend class will not be prepared to succeed in the course.
- *Participate.* Class meetings will often integrate both discussions and in-class demonstrations. These are designed to provide an opportunity to engage actively with ideas and materials that are central to the themes of our course. These opportunities for engagement will, in many cases, directly inform associated assignments.
- *Read.* Assigned readings are the foundation for insights that will propel discussion and inform written work in the course. All readings listed on the syllabus appear in association with the date on which they will be discussed.

For best results, it is useful to read these texts before the start of each class. Thus, readings listed on a Monday on the syllabus should be read before the Monday course meeting; similarly, readings listed for Wednesday should be completed before the Wednesday meeting

- *Look.* When encountering an image or object, take a moment to look at it. Consider the details that are visible, the composition of the image or thing, and the materials used to make it. These are the foundations of our interpretations. After each class, a copy of the slides from that class will be uploaded to Canvas. These provide an opportunity to take another look and serve as a resource for study.
- *Think.*
- *Respect.* While discussion without dissent would be futile, a functional discussion environment is dependent upon mutual respect for differing thoughts and for those who voice them. Students who do not show appropriate respect for their classmates will be asked to leave the room and will be counted absent for the day.

Course Environment:

- So that all voices have the opportunity to be heard, and all of the thoughts of the class can be shared, each of us must respect the ideas presented by others. Although you may have a pertinent point to share, please refrain from interrupting others. And while differing interpretations lead to lively and interesting conversations, when presenting such concepts, all comments must be kept impersonal.
- Please restrict the use of cell phones, computers, and tablets to class related activities. Except in cases of emergencies, those who choose to text during class meetings will not be given credit for the session in which the texting occurs. Similarly, if students choose to use cell phones, computers, or tablets to explore sites that are not related to course activities, no credit will be given for the course meeting during which this distraction occurs. Should you choose to view websites unrelated to course content that contain audio, and should your device be unmuted, you may be asked to leave the classroom space.
- To help those around us focus upon the content of our course meeting, please make all reasonable attempts to be on time for class. If you are late, please do try to keep your entrance as quiet as possible.

Course Requirements:

Required Readings: All required readings for the course can be found as PDFs on our course Canvas page.

Required Equipment: In order to access course materials provided on Canvas students will require regular access to a computer with an Internet connection.

Course Assessments:

Attendance: 5%

Absences will be excused for documented medical reasons, family emergencies, university activities, and religious observances. Should you need to miss class for one of these reasons, please make this clear via email to our course TA, Sara Prescott. As unforeseen difficulties are a fact of life, all students may be absent from **two** class meetings with no questions asked in without penalization. In these cases, there is no need to email.

If you must miss a class, you are responsible for turning in any assignment due that day. In the case of excused absences, assignments are due upon the day you return to class. You are also responsible for the materials covered during any missed days. Such information can be obtained by asking classmates for notes, reviewing posted slides, and studying posted readings. Should you have questions after undertaking these steps, please set up a meeting with Dr. McFerrin.

Participation: 15%

To immerse ourselves in the complexities of Pompeian art, many of our course meetings will depend upon experiencing and interacting with both facsimiles of related artworks and artifacts, and explorations of the kinds of domestic assemblages upon which many of our interpretations of Pompeian space depend. Together with discussions of weekly readings and lectures, this material constitutes the basis of our study. Thus, this is a course that depends upon participation, not only in discussions and lectures, but in in-class demonstrations and assessments.

There are many ways to be an active participant in our course discussions. Active participants may put forth points or raise questions that stimulate discussion. They may provide relevant examples in support of the points raised by others, or point the class towards useful resources. They may tie ideas presented in lectures or readings to other works of art, or to contemporary visual culture. Students may nod, shake their heads, or offer other signs of active listening. Some students may choose to devote their time to note taking, which can lead to active participation should we wish to reference discussions that took place in previous meetings. Any combination of the above listed approaches contributes in valuable ways to our work together. However, activities that are disruptive to others, including belligerent or combative behavior or responses, undermine the spirit of scholarly dialogue. These behaviors, together with those that may actively detract from the ability of other students to learn, will result in a one-point deduction from the final course grade for each violation.

In the case of in-class demonstrations, it is ideal if students join in with our explorations. This can occur by holding and handling objects, by sketching and photographing details, by volunteering to undertake parts of the demonstration when prompted, and by an overall willingness to experiment with this type of learning.

On some days, students will be given short in-class assessments. These assessments, which will average less than 5 minutes of response time, are designed to gauge the extent to which the knowledge presented in lectures, demos, and readings has been retained. While the responses themselves will be considered as part of the course scores related to assignments and assessments, simply turning in these in-class assessments will provide credit towards the course participation score. Except in the cases of excused absences or absences related to ODA accommodations, these assessments cannot be made up at a later date.

Assignments and Assessments: 25%

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to generate short written responses, typically of around 250-300 words, in response to course readings, discussions, and in-class activities. Guidelines for each of these assignments are provided as part of the Canvas module in which they are assigned. Relevant due dates are noted below in the course schedule.

Paper or Project Proposal: 5%

At the end of Week 7, students will propose a theme or topic for their final project. Each student will generate a short proposal of around 250 words identifying the format of their final project, a brief description of their intended project output or research question, and two academic sources or images that will inform this work.

Test 1: 15%

This test, focusing on material from lectures and readings assigned during the first half of the course will be offered in Week 8. To ensure that all students have time to take the test, there will be no discussions, lectures, or assigned readings on

Wednesday, March 4.

Course Paper or Project: 20%

This assignment offers students the opportunity to consider how the ideas encountered in this course can inform and enliven their own practice, whether textual or material. Students whose practice or intended practice focuses upon scholarly writing, particularly those students majoring in history, art history, English, and related disciplines, may choose to craft a traditional scholarly paper. These papers should be approximately 2,500-3,000 words in length, and should present an arguable thesis, clear argumentation, and an appropriate scholarly bibliography. This bibliography should include no fewer than eight scholarly works, at least three of which must be drawn from sources beyond the course materials.

Those students who have a practice focused upon making may choose to generate creative works in any medium. The end goal is a completed work executed at a portfolio-quality standard. Together with this work, students will provide an artist's statement of around 750 words. The aim of the statement is to describe the intersections between the ideas and works encountered in this course and the work that has been created. This statement should include no fewer than four images of

ancient Pompeian art, including appropriate identifications that helped to inform the work created.

This project is due on **Sunday, April 12 by 11:59 PM.**

Test 2: 15%

This test, focusing on material from lectures and readings assigned during the second half of the course will be offered during the finals period. It is due no later than **Monday, May 4 at 11:59 PM.**

Course Policies:

Policy on Late Work:

Students who miss an in-class assessment due to an excused absence have one week to make up this assignment, following their return to class. To schedule a make-up meeting, email Dr. McFerrin. In the email, provide the days and times within this one-week window during which you are available.

For written assignments that are turned in through Canvas, the upload portal will remain active for one week following the initial deadline. During this week, assignments may be turned in, with a .5 point deduction for each day that the work is late. After a week has elapsed, please email Dr. McFerrin to set up an in-person meeting to discuss the issue and the possibility of an alternate due-date.

There is a week--long window within which to take tests. Therefore, except in cases of extraordinary duress, late tests are not accepted.

The deadline for course papers and projects is **Sunday, April 26 at 11:59 PM.** Except in cases of extreme duress, course papers and projects will not be accepted after this date.

No work in the course will be accepted after **May 4 at 11:59 PM.**

Policy on ADA Accommodation:

The College of Visual Arts and Design is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. In keeping with this commitment and in order to facilitate equality of educational access, faculty members in the College will make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with a disability, such as appropriate adjustments to the course environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies when doing so does not fundamentally alter the course. Additional information can be found on the ODA website at <http://disability.unt.edu/>

Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty, after

which we can enter into private discussion to consider a student's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester, to ensure that appropriate steps are taken. Students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for each semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students who have letters of accommodation should schedule an appointment to discuss their individual needs with Dr. McFerrin no later than **Friday, January 30**.

Policy on Student Behavior in the Classroom:

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other student's opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be instructed to leave the instructional space and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional fora, including university and electronic classrooms labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

Policy on Sexual Discrimination, Harassment, and Assault:

UNT is committed to providing an environment free from all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offences. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Emergency Notifications and Procedures:

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency, i.e. severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence. In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for further instructions regarding course continuity.

Course Risk Factor:

According to University Policy, this course is classified as a category one course. Students enrolled in this course will not be exposed to any significant hazards and are not likely to suffer any bodily injury. Students in this class will be informed of any potential health hazards or potential bodily injury connected with the use of any materials and/or processes and will be instructed how to proceed without danger to themselves or others.

Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and violate UNT's Code of Student Conduct. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. Plagiarism, defined by the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, as "the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person of one's own without acknowledgement," is a serious academic offense. Students who fail to attribute ideas appropriately, or who put forward another's work as their own, as in the case of purchasing term papers, will be reported to the appropriate academic authorities. Upon evaluation of the incident, the student may fail the assignment, fail the course, or be expelled from the University. Please consult policy 06.003 for further information.

In those cases in which a citation is missing or incomplete, students will first be invited to correct the issue and to upload a revised version of the assignment, project, assessment, or paper. If the issue is not corrected, and the issue is one of under citation or incomplete citation, points will be deducted. If whole phrases or concepts are copied directly from un-cited sources or if un-cited sources constitute a substantive component of the argument of the work, and this remains uncorrected, a zero will be entered for the assignment, and the issue may be forwarded to the CVAD Dean's Office for further review.

On tests, if the information provided in response to an essay question was not information covered in the course, and if that information is un-cited, no points will be earned for the response. If such issues arise on more than one question, the student will be invited to a meeting with Dr. McFerrin, where an in-person assessment will be conducted. After this, any future tests will be provided to the student only in an in-person format.

Policy on Course AI Use:

In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not permissible. No generative AI of any type may be used in association with any assignment, assessment, test, project, or paper in this course. If students wish to propose a substantive reflection upon generative AI as part of a course paper or project, these students must arrange an in-person meeting with Dr. McFerrin to share an outline of their plans and aims no later than **Wednesday, February 25**.

In all other cases, if it is believed that generative AI may have been used in the completion of any assignment, test, paper, or project, students will first be asked to provide access to all shared documents, files, notes, sketches, and other preparatory materials related to the work in question. After Dr. McFerrin has reviewed these materials, she will invite the student to an in-person meeting to discuss and assess the student's knowledge of key sources, materials, and background information associated with the assignment in question. If students are unable to provide access to the materials that could establish their efforts to prepare the work in question, or if students are unable to discuss reasonably the themes, ideas, and sources related

to the work, a zero will be recorded for the assignment, and the matter may be directed to the CVAD Dean's Office for further review.

Policy on Course Content:

Content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. As the College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, it is not the College's practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who may feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should withdraw at the start of the term and seek another course.

Policy on the Syllabus:

This document serves as an agreement between students, professors, and the community of the course. Students with questions regarding any of the procedures or policies outlined here are strongly encouraged to schedule an appointment to discuss any concerns with Dr. McFerrin no later than **Friday, January 30**. By remaining in the course, students signal their willingness to adhere to the policies and course procedures presented throughout the syllabus.

Course Topics, Schedule and Overview:

The following list of topics, readings, assignments, and deadlines will provide us with the structure needed to consider the many interesting complexities of Greek art. However, the following information is subject to change, given the interests and aptitudes of the class.

Week 1: Ruins, Memory, and the Story of Pompeii

Monday, January 12: Introduction to the Course

Readings: Course Syllabus

Wednesday, January 14: Pompeii's Early Excavations

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Nancy Ramage, "Goods, Graves, and Scholars: 18th-Century Archaeologists in Britain and Italy," p. 653-661

Assignment: About Me, due by Sunday, January 18 at 11:59 PM

Week 2: In Search of Early Pompeii

Monday, January 19: No Class Meeting! Martin Luther King, Jr. Day!

Wednesday, January 21: Pompeii's Early Inhabitants

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Edward Bispham, "The Samnites," p. 179-223

Week 3: Navigating Pompeii

Monday, January 26: Civic Organization and the Structure of Urban Life

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Ray Laurence, "Reshaping Public Space," p. 20-38

Wednesday, January 28: Streets, Movement, and the Circulation of People

Reading: PDF on Canvas, : Eric E. Poehler, "The Circulation of Traffic in Pompeii's *Regio VI*," 53-74

Week 4: Civic Life in Pompeii

Monday, February 2: Temples and Public Devotion

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Maureen Carroll, "Exploring the Sanctuary of Venus and its Sacred Grove: Politics, Cult, and Identity in Roman Pompeii," p. 347-351

Wednesday, February 4: The Forum and the Shape of Public Duty

Reading: PDF on Canvas, John Dobbins, "The Forum and its Dependencies," p. 150-183

Assignment: Streets and Meaning, due by Sunday, February 8 at 11:59 PM

Week 5: Public Patrons and Private Power

Monday, February 9: Eumachia, Guilds, and Public Patronage

Online Lecture: Eumachia, Women, and Public Constructions of Power

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Barbara Kellum, "Buying Power: The Public Priestesses of Pompeii," p. 67- 84

Wednesday, February 11: Games, Spectacles, and Buying Favor

Online Lecture: Isis in Pompeii

Reading: Lauren Hackworth Petersen, "Rebuilding Pompeii: The Popidius Family and the Temple of Isis," p. 17-56

Week 6: Life on the Street, Part I

Monday, February 16: Crowds, Benches, and Street-Side Interactions

Reading: Jeremy Hartnett, "Si quis sic sideret: Streetside Benches and Urban Society in Pompeii," p. 91-119

Wednesday, February 18: Shops, Bars, and Other Stopping-Off Places

Reading: John Clarke, "Look Who's Laughing: Humor in Tavern Painting as an Index of Class and Acculturation," p. 27-48

Week 7: Life on the Street, Part II

Monday, February 23: Commissioning Text: Electoral Graffiti as Design

Readings: PDFs on Canvas, Theo van Leeuwen, "Typographic Meaning," p. 138- 143; Hartmut Stöckl, "Typography: Body and Dress of A Text—A Signing Mode Between Language and Image," p. 205-214

Wednesday, February 25: Pictorial Graffiti: Informal Art in Public Spaces

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Rebecca Benefiel, "Dialogues of Ancient Graffiti in the House of Maius Castricus in Pompeii," p. 59-101

Assignment: Course Paper or Project Proposal, due by Sunday, March 1 at 11:59 PM

Week 8: Interrogating Houses

Monday, March 2: Repopulating Pompeian Houses

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Elaine Gazda, "Portraits and Patrons: The Women of the Villa of the Mysteries in their Social Context," p. 133-150

Wednesday, March 4: **No course meeting! Take Test 1!**

Assignment: Test 1, due by Sunday, March 8 at 11:59 PM.

Spring Break!

Monday, March 9: No class! Spring Break!

Wednesday, March 11: No class! Spring Break!

Week 9: Interpreting Space in Pompeian Houses

Monday, March 16: Naming the Spaces of the Pompeian House

Reading: PDF on Canvas, "Space and Ritual, 100 BC- AD 250," p. 2-29

Wednesday, March 18: Interpretive Assumptions and the Problem of Attempting to Name the Spaces of the Pompeian House

Reading: Penelope Allison, "Understanding Pompeian Household Practices Through Their Material Culture," p. 11-34

In-Class Activity: Working with Domestic Assemblages; Group A: 2:00-2:40; Group B: 2:45-3:20

Week 10: Crafting the Pompeian House

Monday, March 23: Painters at Work

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Miko Flohr, "Artisans and Markets: The Economics of Roman Domestic Decoration," p. 101-125

Wednesday, March 25: The Business of Play: Children in the Pompeian House

Reading: Ray Laurence, "Children and the Urban Environment: Agency in Pompeii," p. 27-42

Assignment: Working with Domestic Assemblages, due by Sunday, March 29 at 11:59 PM

Week 11: Wealth and Tradition in Pompeian Interiors

Monday, March 30: Engaging the Senses in the Pompeian Interior

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Rebecca Molholt, "Roman Labyrinth Mosaics and the Experience of Motion," p. 287-303

Wednesday, April 1: Mosaics and the Articulation of Dynamic Space

In-Class Activity: Experiencing the Alexander Mosaic; Group A: 2:00-2:40; Group B: 2:45-3:20

Week 12: Keeping up with the Popidii: Houses and Competition in Pompeii

Monday, April 6: Friendly Neighborhood Rivals in Region VI

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Neville McFerrin, "Andromeda Unbound: Possession, Perception, and Adornment in the House of the Dioscuri," p. 215-228

Wednesday, April 8: Water, Resources, and Power in the Pompeian House

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Bettina Bergmann, "Staging the Supernatural: Interior Gardens of Pompeian Houses," p. 53- 69

Assignment: Scale, Touch, Power: Interpreting the Effects of the Alexander Mosaic due by Sunday, April 12 at 11:59 PM

Week 13: Ways of Life Across Pompeii

Monday, April 13: Erudite Programs in Small Spaces: The Case of the House of Jason

Reading: PDF on Canvas, The Pregnant Moment: Tragic Wives in the Roman Interior," p. 199-218

Wednesday, April 15: Alternative Living Spaces: Renting Rooms in Pompeii

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Eve D'Ambra, "Real Estate for Profit: Julia Felix's Property and the Forum Frieze," p. 85-108

Week 14: Pompeians at Work

Monday, April 20: The Value of Work in the House of the Vettii

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Francesco de Angelis, "Playful Workers: The Cupid Frieze in the Casa dei Vettii," p. 62-73

Wednesday, April 22: Working from Home? The Workshops of Pompeian Houses

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Miko Flohr, "Working and Living Under One Roof: Workshops in Pompeian Atrium Houses," p. 1-22

Assignment: Course Papers and Projects due by Sunday, April 26 at 11:59 PM.

Week 15: Deaths and Afterlives

Monday, April 27: Graves in Pompeii and Pompeii as Grave

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Andromache Gazi, "Exhibition Ethics—An Overview of Major Issues," p. 1-10

Wednesday, April 29: Crisis, Catastrophe, and Longevity: Life Lessons from Pompeii

Assignment: Test 2 due by Monday, May 4 at 11:59 PM!