**Fall 2021**

**ARTH 4801-001: Art and Power in the Ancient Near East**

**Class Meetings:** Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM in ART 280

**Instructor:** Dr. Neville McFerrin

**Contact Information:** neville.mcferrin@unt.edu and Canvas Inbox. I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours on weekdays. If emailing please include the course number in the subject line.

**Office Hours:** In person office hours will be held at my office ART 206 on Mondays from 1:30-2:30 PM and by appointment; Zoom office hours will be held on Tuesdays from 10:00-11:00 AM and by appointment. All appointments must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.

**Course Description:**

From stele to palace reliefs, from seals to temples, the visual and material culture of the regions of the ancient Near East and Egypt present multiple perspectives on the ways in which power is structured, constructed, and maintained. This course considers works from numerous regions in across the ancient Near East, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, to explore the ways in which the peoples of these regions encountered power on multiple scales. The course considers a variety of media and materials, ranging from constructed cityscapes to personal seals, from stone to metal to clay, confronting them not as isolated art objects, but within their broader spatial, social, cultural, and religious contexts, offering students the opportunity to consider the ways in which power is visualized and materialized across space and time.

**Course Objectives:**

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

- Explore the range of artistic and creative practices associated with kingship and rulers in the ancient Near East
- Identify major sites, artifacts, artworks, and objects
- Describe styles, periods, and media associated with individual rulers, sites, and areas
- Contextualize artistic creations by time period, group, function, and identity intersection
- Integrate multiple theoretical and methodological approaches into discussion and writing
- Apply terms and identifications to the analysis 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 exploration of articulations of political, military, economic, and religious power at multiple sites across the ancient Near East and Egypt. It will present this material through face to face meetings which will blend lecture, discussion, and experiential activities.

All additional readings, assignments, and discussion prompts 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.** As much of our discussion together will reference, but not replicate, the information provided in assigned texts, a lack of attendance will lead to a lack of understanding.
- **Participate.** Class meetings are designed to give you the opportunity to engage actively with ideas and images that are central to the themes of our course. It is through dialogue that new ideas come to light.
- **Read.** Assigned readings are the foundation for insights that will propel discussion and inform written work. All readings listed on the syllabus are intended to be read before the class on which they will be discussed. 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.** After each class, a copy of the slides from that class will be uploaded to Canvas. Take the time to look carefully at each work presented, both in class and in readings. Consider the composition and media of the piece, together with any relevant comparanda that might help to provide insight into the work.
- **Think.**
- **Respect.** While discussion without dissent would be futile, a healthy discussion environment is dependent upon mutual respect for differing opinions. Students who do not show proper respect for their classmates may be asked to leave the room and will be counted absent for the day.

**Course Environment:**

- In order to foster an inclusive learning environment, each of us must respect the thoughts and opinions presented by others. Although you may have a pertinent point, refrain from interrupting. And while disagreements lead to lively and interesting conversations, comments must be kept impersonal.
- Turn off all cell phones. Those who choose to text during sections will not be given credit for the session in which the texting occurs.
- Restrict your use of computers to classroom purposes. Those who choose to use computers for activities that are not related to the day’s coursework will receive no participation credit for the day.
Course Requirements:

Required Texts:

All required readings will be provided as PDFs on our course Canvas site.

Required Equipment:

As responses to the pandemic evolve, it may be necessary for students or the professor to self-isolate. Should this occur, you may need to access the class remotely. To make certain this is possible, students will need the following equipment:

- Regular access to a computer
- A stable internet connection
- Regular access to a webcam
- Regular access to a microphone (Built-in microphones, such as those found in most laptops and desktop computers are fine!)

Assessments:

Discussion Attendance: 5%

Please be on time to class. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for turning in any assignment due that day, although you may turn in assignments for excused absences upon your return to class. Absences will be excused for documented medical reasons, family emergencies, university activities, and for religious observances. If you must be absent, please make sure to turn in any assignments that are due that day and to ask a classmate for notes.

As unforeseen difficulties are a fact of life, all students may take two absences from class, with no questions asked; unless there are previously discussed difficulties, those who are more than 15 minutes late will be counted as absent for the day.

While attendance is expected as outlined above, please contact me if you are ill or unable to attend class due to COVID-19 or COVID-19 exposure so that we can make alternate arrangements for you to attend class remotely, if you are able. It is important to take appropriate steps to ensure your health and the health of our community. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your healthcare provider prior to any campus interactions. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.
Discussion Participation: 10%

Prior to each course meeting, students will have access to a set of assigned readings which, together with the image prompts provided at the end of each course meeting in preparation for the next, will serve as a starting point for our discussions in class. Students should read the assigned texts carefully, making note of any questions or thoughts that arise from them. If questions are posed to accompany the readings, students should be prepared to discuss these as a group.

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 the discussion in a previous course meeting. 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 unresponsiveness or inattentiveness, will result in a 1 point deduction for each violation.

Responses: 15%

Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to generate short written responses of approximately 500 words, or to seek out relevant images, in response to a series of prompts or in response to activities undertaken during class meetings. Guidelines for each of these assignments will be provided as part of the Canvas module in which they are assigned. Relevant due dates are noted below in the course schedule.

Mini-Tests: 10%

These two short tests, offered in class during week 6 and week 12 will consist of a series of images. For each image, students will be asked to supply a term, date, or artist in response to a prompt provided.

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, October 13.

Paper/Project Proposal: 5%

At the end of week 10, students will propose a theme or topic for their final project. They will generate a short proposal (250-300 words) identifying the format of their final project and 2 images or sources, at least one of which is drawn from a source other than the syllabus or lectures, that will inform the project. Students will
then provide either a brief description of their intended project output, or propose a question that they wish to explore through further research.

**Paper/Project Consultations: 5%**

During week 11, each student will sign up for a 10-minute consultation with Dr. McFerrin. During this individual meeting, students will have the opportunity to expand upon their project proposals, and Dr. McFerrin will provide suggestions for further research or idea revision. Students should come to this meeting prepared with questions, concerns, or further ideas to present. Failure to schedule a meeting, or to appear during the chosen meeting time, will lead to a grade of zero for this assignment.

**Test 2: 15%**

This test, focusing on material from lectures and readings assigned during the second half of the course will be offered in week 14. To ensure that all students have time to take the test, there will be no discussions, lectures, or assigned readings on Wednesday, November 24.

**Final Paper/Project: 20%**

This final work, which may take the form of a traditional research paper, a digital recording, an artwork, or a recorded performance, offers students the opportunity to expand upon the ideas presented and discussed in the course. Papers should be approximately 3000 words in length, and should incorporate multiple lines of argumentation and relevant comparanda. A bibliography of no fewer than 6 scholarly works is required, together with a clearly stated, arguable thesis. Students choosing to generate their own works of art in response to those presented in class should provide an artist’s statement of no fewer than 750 words, which describes the intersections between course themes and artworks and their own creation. Together with this statement, they should submit no fewer than 3 works of ancient Greek art that inform their own work.

This project is due no later than Monday, December 6 at 11:59 PM.

**Course Policies:**

**Policy on Late Work:**

For written assignments with a 10-15 point value, late work is accepted via the Canvas portal with a 0.5 point deduction for each day that the assignment is late until half credit has been reached, after which point, assignments will receive no more than half credit. For paper/project consultations, missed consultations will result in a zero for the assignment, unless extreme circumstances require accommodation. Late tests may be accepted at the discretion of the professor. Students must notify Dr. McFerrin to identify the circumstances that prevent them from completing the test within 24 hours of the due date. All late work must be submitted no later than November 19 at 11:59 PM. Except in cases of extreme duress, late final projects will not be accepted.
**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.

**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](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.

**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.
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 me no later than Friday, September 3. Additional information can be found on the ODA website at [http://disability.unt.edu/](http://disability.unt.edu/)

**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.

**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.

**Policy on Recordings:**
Should community conditions change and if remote coursework resumes, any recordings provided are the intellectual property of the university or the instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

**Policy on Face Coverings:**
UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines could change based on community health conditions.

**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. By remaining in the course, students signal their willingness to adhere to the policies presented here.

**Course Topics, Schedule and Overview:**

The following list of topics, readings, and assignment deadlines will provide us with the structure needed to explore our topic. However, the following information is subject to change, given the interests and aptitudes of the class.

**Unit 1: Power, the Gods, and Control**

*Week 1: Terminologies and Perspectives*

**Monday, August 23:** Introduction to the Course

**Wednesday, August 25:** Compared to What? Orientalism, Othering, and Modern Perspectives on the Ancient Near East


Assignment: About Me, Due Friday, August 27 by 11:59 PM

*Week 2: The Power of Images*

**Monday, August 30:** Narrative, Power, and the Uruk Vase


**Wednesday, September 1:** Power and Proximity: Gods and Humans
Readings: PDF on Canvas, Michael B. Hundley, "Here a God, There a God: An Examination of the Divine in Ancient Mesopotamia," p. 68-107

**Week 3: Power, Narrative, and Violence**

**Monday, September 6:** No Class! Labor Day!

**Wednesday, September 8:** Defining Kingship in Ancient Egypt: The Narmer Palette


Assignment: Scale and Interactivity due Friday, September 10 by 11:59 PM

**Week 4: The King Victorious**

**Monday, September 13:** The Pharaoh Smites his Enemies


**Wednesday, September 15:** The Bisitun Monument and Visible Victory


**Week 5: Hunts, Sport, and Kingly Leisure**

**Monday, September 20:** The King on the Hunt


**Wednesday, September 22:** The King in the Garden


Assignment: Sport, Leisure, and Power, due Friday, September 24 by 11:59 PM

**Unit 2: Bodies, Dress, and Power**
Week 6: The Body of the King

Monday, September 27: The Form of Kingship

Wednesday, September 29: In Class Mini-Test! The Face of Kingship

Week 7: Liminal Bodies

Monday, October 4: Hatshepsut and the Dress of Kingship in Egypt

Wednesday, October 6: Akhenaten and the Art of Ambiguity
Readings: PDFs on Canvas, Gay Robins, “The Representation of Sexual Characteristics in Amarna Art,” p. 29-41; Gay Robins, “The ‘Feminization’ of the Male Figure in New Kingdom Two-Dimensional Art,” p. 251-265

Week 8: The Body of the Queen

Monday, October 11: Nefertiti and the Image of the Ruling Queen

Wednesday, October 13: Test 1!
Assignment: Test I due by Friday, October 15 at 11:59 PM.

Week 9: Dress and Power

Monday, October 18: Queen Puabi and Interactive Dress
Readings: PDFs on Canvas: Aubry Baadsgaard, “All the Queen’s Clothes: Identifying Female Royalty at Early Dynastic Ur,” p. 148-155; Amy Gansell, “Identity and
Adornment in the Third Millennium BC Mesopotamian ‘Royal Cemetery’ at Ur,” p. 1-19

**Wednesday, October 20:** Dressing the King at Persepolis

Reading: PDF on Canvas, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, “That My Body is Strong: The Physique and Appearance of Achaemenid Monarchy,” p. 211-241

Assignment: Dress and Power, A Comparative Study, due Friday October 22 at 11:59 PM

**Unit 3: Memory and Power**

*Week 10: Memory and Death*

**Monday, October 25:** The Pyramids


**Wednesday, October 27:** The Tomb of Tutankhamen


Assignment: Paper/Project Proposal due by October 29 at 11:59 PM.

*Week 11: Constructing Memory*

**Monday, November 1:** Pharaonic Connections at Karnak


**Wednesday, November 3:** Collecting Power at Susa


Assignment: Individual Paper/Project Meetings with Dr. McFerrin

*Week 12: Forgetting and Re-imagining*
Monday, November 8: Hatshepshut and Egyptian Iconoclasm


Wednesday, November 10: In Class Mini-Test! Elamites and the Re-Imagination of Neo-Assyrian Victory


Week 13: Rethinking Royal Power at Persepolis

Monday, November 15: Picturing an Inclusive Empire at Persepolis


Wednesday, November 17: Interaction and the Persepolis Fortification Archive

Reading, PDF on Canvas, Margaret Cool Root, “The Legible Image: How Did Seals and Sealing Matter in Persepolis?” p. 87-148

Assignment, Seals and Sealplay due Friday, November 19 at 11:59 PM

Week 14: Administering Empires

Monday, November 22: The Stele of Hammurabi


Wednesday, November 24: Test 2!

Assignment: Test 2 due no later than Monday, November 29 at 11:59 PM.

Week 15: Power Beyond the Persians

Monday, November 29: Naqsh-I-Rustam and Visual Continuities

**Wednesday, December 1: Seeing Beyond Power**

**Final projects due no later than Monday, December 6 at 11:59 PM!**