Spring 2024

ARTH 4849: Stone and the Art of the Ancient Mediterranean

Class Meetings: Wednesdays from 5:00-7:50 PM

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; on weekends and university holidays, responses will be delayed. If emailing, please include the course number in the subject line.

Office Hours: Thursdays from 2:00-4:00 PM in ART 310 and by appointment. All appointments must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.

Course Description: Durable, hard, and drawn from the earth itself, the materiality of stone was itself a key component of its utility to ancient makers across the regions of North Africa, West Asia, Greece, and Rome. From Sardinian menhirs, standing stones that join the space of the ancestors to the space of the gods, to the minute tesserae of complex North African mosaics, stone shaped experiences on large and small scales. This course focuses on stone—its materiality, its affordances, and its variable compositions—as a lens through which to reconsider multiple modes of artistic production, considering the ways in which the manipulability of this material enables humans to confront processes and experiences that otherwise defy comprehension. Key themes include: time and durability, memory and commemoration, and connections between makers and materials.

Course Objectives:

Through the evaluation and discussion of the work of seminal scholars together with analyses of material and visual evidence, seminar participants will:

- Explore and utilize theories related to materiality, new materialisms, memory, affordances, and affect
- Identify and describe styles, periods, and media associated with ancient Mediterranean art, artifacts, and objects
- Contextualize artistic creations by time period, group, function, and identity intersections
- Integrate multiple theoretical and methodological approaches into discussion and writing
- Utilizing experiential and experimental methodologies to re-consider and re-frame traditional analyses of artworks from the ancient Mediterranean region
**Course Structure:** This course meets in person. Before each meeting, seminar participants will read and analyze a set of assigned readings upon which we will build our discussions. In these meetings, a case studies related to the assigned readings will be presented, after which we will devote our time to the consideration of connections between the readings and the case study. During most weeks, these discussions will be facilitated by class workshops and demonstrations that encourage students to re-consider the themes and topics of the week through engaging directly with objects and experiences related to the week’s case studies.

Weekly readings are posted in PDF form on the course Canvas page. Weekly modules on the course Canvas site will provide links to the relevant materials for each course meeting.

**Discussion Expectations:**

- 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 sign-off for the day and will be counted absent.

- 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.

- Keep your focus on the discussion. While minor interruptions are inevitable, prolonged distractions that divert attention away from the topics at hand are disruptive for all participants.

**Course Requirements:**

**Required Readings:** All required readings for the course will be uploaded 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.

**Discussion Attendance: 5%**

Please be on time to class. Those who are more than 20 minutes late will be counted absent for the day. 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.

Absences will be excused for documented medical reasons, family emergencies, university activities, and religious observances. As unforeseen difficulties are a fact of life, all students may take one absence from class with no questions asked and without penalization.

Discussion Participation: 15%
Prior to each course meeting, seminar will have access to a set of assigned readings, which together with the prompts provided at the end of each course meeting, will serve as a starting point for our discussions in class. Please consider the readings, and connections between them, carefully, making note of questions and thoughts that arise from them.

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. 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. Students who engage in such behaviors will be asked to leave the room.

Class Activities: 5%
Ancient Mediterranean art is multi-valenced, multi-sensorial, and experiential. To engage with it more fully, and to consider the ways in which the theories presented in course readings can be productively applied to the analysis of the visual and material culture of this tempo-spatial zone, many class meetings will include workshops and demonstrations that offer opportunities to engage our own senses with the ideas that are the focus of the week. To fully explore the range of ways in which stone is and can be used, several course meetings and experiences will occur outside of our normally scheduled course block. Students should plan to attend at least one of these external meetings.

Three Questions, One Topic, Three Ideas: 20%
During most weeks, seminar participants will produce a response to the weekly readings and activities. After completing the assigned readings for the week, students will generate at least three questions that arise from these readings together with one topic for discussion by the seminar. These questions may range from the factual to the conceptual, they may query everything from terms, major themes, links between readings within the week and across weeks to processes of making; the aim is to engage with the readings in preparation for the week’s discussion. Similarly, the topic set aside for discussion may be one that the seminar participant understands particularly interesting or problematic; it may be a concept
that is key for the author or authors of the week, or a concept that those writers overlook. As is the case with the posed questions, the goal is for seminar participants both to prepare for discussion and to begin to generate a set of ideas that could grow into a final project for the course.

This portion of the assignment is due each Wednesday on which during which regular discussion meetings are held. The assignment should be posted to Canvas before 5:00 PM.

After each seminar meeting, participants will return to their document to highlight no fewer than three ideas, thoughts, or concepts that arose from the readings, discussions, and activities of the week. These ideas may be a response to questions posed; they may be theses to expand upon, or notes about materials and processes to be further explored. The aim of this portion of the assignment is to provide a space to engage with the ideas of the week in a mode that could prompt further engagement.

This portion of the assignment is due each Friday after which a regular discussion has been held. This portion of the assignment should be posted to Canvas before 11:59 PM.

Paper/Project Proposal: 5%
In week 8, seminar participants will propose a theme or topic for their final project. They will provide a title and abstract (250 words) discussing their plans for their work and providing a preliminary bibliography of scholarly works or a preliminary set of reference images that will inform their final output.

Paper/Project Meetings: 5%
During Weeks 9 and 10, Dr. McFerrin will meet individually with each seminar participant to discuss their proposed paper or project. These 20 minute meetings will offer an opportunity to discuss useful resources and methods, as well as allowing individual seminar participants the opportunity to discuss initial ideas and concerns related to the final papers and projects.

Revised Paper/Project Proposal: 10%
During Week 12, seminar participants will produce a revised paper or project proposal that presents revisions of their planned research or creative work. It will include a title and 250 word abstract. Paper writers will provide a bibliography of no fewer than 12 scholarly sources. Those undertaking a creative project will provide a set of no fewer than 6 reference images, properly attributed, of works of art from the ancient Mediterranean that will inform their work, together with at least one process image of the work they will undertake.

Paper/Project Presentation: 10%
In our last course meetings, each seminar participant will prepare and present a 5 minute, “lightning round” style presentation of their final paper or project. This
presentation will frame the position of the project or paper within the scope of the ideas presented in the course together with outlining the major arguments of the paper or processes and progress of the project. After the presentation, the seminar will discuss the project, presenting thoughts to enable the presenter to strengthen the work.

**Final Paper or Project: 25%**
Seminar participants have the option of undertaking either a final project or a final paper, depending on their areas of study and interest. Final papers should be 5000 words in length and can focus upon any topic related to the themes, artworks, sites, and artifacts discussed throughout the course. MFA students may choose to create a final project that will consist of an artwork in any medium. This work should expand upon, explore, or intersect with the themes, artworks, sites and artifacts discussed during the semester. This creative work will be accompanied by an artist’s statement of around 1,250 words that describes intersections between course themes and the creative work produced. Final papers and projects are due no later than Wednesday, May 8 at 11:59 PM.

**Course Policies:**

**Policy on Late Work:** For 3-1-3 responses, late work is accepted via the Canvas portal with a deduction 0.5 points for each day that the assignment is late, until half credit is reached, after which point, assignments will receive no more than half credit. For paper topic meetings, and paper/project presentations, missed meetings will result in a zero for the assignment, unless extreme circumstances require accommodation. In the absence of 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’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

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 offenses. 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 Monday, January 22. Additional information can be found on the ODA website at 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 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 tackle our topic. However, the following information is subject to change, given the interests and aptitudes of the class.

Week 1: Working with Stone

Wednesday, January 17: Why Stone? An Introduction to the Course

Week 2: The Many Guises of Stone

Wednesday, January 24: Optional Online Lecture, 6:00 PM-8:00 PM.


Register at: https://pourdavoud.ucla.edu/event/pourdavoud-lecture-series-neville-mcferrin/
**Saturday, January 27:** Visit to the Kimbell Art Museum; Dr. McFerrin will be in the Cafe at 12:00. Class tour of Kimbell to begin at 1:30. We will meet to start our tour in the courtyard between the two museum buildings.


**Week 3: Images in Stone, Images of Stone: Fossils, Tools, and the Art of Geologic Time**

**Wednesday, January 31:** Stone as Art? Geology, Wonder, and Work


Activity: Fossils and Flint—Questions of Art and Intention

Assignments: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, January 31 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3, Part II: Due Friday, February 2 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 4: Technologies of Stone—Caves, Quarries, and the Work of Human Hands**

**Wednesday, February 7:** Images on, about, and through Stone


Activity: Making a Mark—The Creation of Seals

Assignments: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, February 7 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, February 9 by 11:59 PM.

*Week 5: Commemorative Stone*

**Sunday, February 18:** Visit to the I.O.O.F. Cemetery, Denton. We will meet near the main entrance at Carroll Boulevard at 12:00 to start our tour.

*Week 6: Stone, Time, and Memory*

**Wednesday, February 21:** Monumental Memories


Assignments: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, February 21 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, February 23 by 11:59 PM.

*Week 7: Stone and Place*

**Wednesday, February 28:** Stone, Identity, and Connections

Readings: Ovid, *The Metamorphoses* 1.66-415


Activity: Bring Us an Important Rock

Assignments: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, February 28 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, March 1 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 8: Sacred Stones**

**Wednesday, March 6:** The Gods and their Spaces


Activity: The Power of Alabaster

Assignment: Paper/Project Proposal: Due Friday, March 8 by 11:59 PM.
Spring Break! No course meetings on Wednesday, March 13!

**Week 9: Special Stones**

*Wednesday, March 20: Shimmer, Gleam, sStrength—Access, Affect, and Purpose*


**Activity:** Special Stones and Cosmetic Palettes

**Assignments:** 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, March 20 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, March 22 by 11:59 PM.

Individual meetings with Dr. McFerrin throughout the week.

**Week 10: Stone and Light**

*Wednesday, March 27: Light—Gemstones, Fire, and the Spaces Between*


Assignments: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, March 27 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, March 29 by 11:59 PM.

Individual meetings with Dr. McFerrin throughout the week.

Activity: Gems and Light

**Week 11: Painting With Stone**

**Wednesday, April 3:** The Power of Color—Marble and Imperial Connections


Assignments: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, April 3 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, April 5 by 11:59 PM.

Activity: Stepping on Mosaics

**Week 12: Painting on Stone**

**Wednesday, April 10:** Polychromy and Ancient Statuary


Assignment: Revised Paper or Project Proposal due by Friday, April 12 at 11:59 PM!

**Week 13: Mimetic Stone: Skin and the Human Form**

**Wednesday, April 17:** Stone and the Luminosity of Skin


Athena Hadji, “(Dis)entangled bodies or the (be)holder vs. the spectator: Detached Views of Early Cycladic Figures and Figurines,” *Quaternary International* 405 (2016): 31-41.

Activity: Creating People—Experimental Cycladic Figurines

Assignment: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, April 17 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, April 19 by 11:59 PM.

**Week 14: Mimetic Stone: Skeuomorphs**

**Wednesday, April 24:** Making Stone


Assignment: 3-1-3, Part I: Due Wednesday, April 24 by 5:00 PM. 3-1-3. Part II: Due Friday, April 26 by 11:59 PM.

Week 15: The Future of Stone

Wednesday, May 1: Student Presentations

Final Papers or Projects due by Wednesday, May 8 at 11:59 PM!