

Seminar: Ancient India and Ancient Greece

Professors Thomas Martin and Todd Lewis

Professor Martin: Fenwick 422; Office hours Tu/Thurs 1:30-2:30 PM

Professor Lewis: Smith 425; Office hours: Thurs 3:30-6 PM



Course Description:

An exploration of the historical connections that linked two of the ancient “axial age” civilizations, Greece and India. Beginning with the linguistic connections in prehistory, the seminar will move to consider the history of eastern expansion of Hellenistic culture, and the foundations of Indian civilization. Sessions will be devoted to connections made between Greeks and Indians, especially those forged by the conquests of Alexander the Great. Sessions will be devoted to important comparative themes such as the hero, the sage, sacrifice, and major gods. The

seminar will conclude with a focus on the region called Gandhara (now Pakistan and Afghanistan) where Greeks and Buddhists coexisted, conversed, and converted to create new artistic and religious traditions. The course will culminate in the consideration of Buddhism in this important Greco-Indic contact zone.

This inter-disciplinary seminar will include a class field trip on Saturday April 16 will allow seminar members to view the extraordinary collections of art in New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art) and coins (American Numismatic Society).

Course Goals and Expectations:

The goals of the course are to enhance understanding of both Indian and Hellenic/Hellenistic civilizations, explore the history of socio-cultural interactions, and examine the nature of cultural similarities, especially in religion.

The nature of this seminar requires that all members raise issues for further discussion and clarification. Thus you need to complete all the readings and make a careful preparation before seminar for discussion. We expect you to bring creativity to find connections between the various course themes over the course of the term. Please bring the pertinent books and collective photocopied readings to class.

Attendance is mandatory, participation in discussion expected. Prepared remarks on assigned topics must be completed on the designated due dates. Informed participation is figured into the term’s grading.

Seminar Grading Standards: (Separate guidelines will be given for each.)

10 pts. Map and Timeline Assignment

25 pts. Journal. 5/5/5pts interim submissions; Final submission 10 pts

15 pts. Class participation, including assigned in-class presentations

25 pts. Term Paper, 10-15 pages (Due at then end of the term)

25 pts. Individual Oral Final. (20-30 minute session during the exam period)

100 pts.

Standards of Academic Integrity:

Ultimately all your work for this and any course is collaborative.

Learning is a product of reading materials written by others, viewing images and films, and listening with others. When the work of others is utilized for written or design work, as it must be, it is essential that these sources be clearly acknowledged. The failure to do so – in citing passages from books or articles, including cutting and pasting any text from internet sources – is to break one of the central rules of academic life. The College of the Holy Cross, and we as scholars, take very seriously any occasion of plagiarism. This can be defined quite simply: the presentation of another's work (ideas or words) as one's own. Be extremely careful in your research so that you do not inadvertently copy information without crediting the source. You must use proper citation form listed on the paper assignment guidelines.



Course Books

Arnold-Biucchi, Carmen. *Alexander's Coins and Alexander's Image*. Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museum, 2007

Arrian. *The Campaigns of Alexander* (Penguin edition)

Kurt Behrendt, *The Art of Gandhara*. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007.

Johannes Bronkhorst, *Buddhist Teaching in India*. Boston: Wisdom, 2009.

Thomas R Martin, *Ancient Greece*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press 2000)

Patrick Olivelle, trans. *The Life of Buddha by Ashvaghosa*. NY: NYU Press, 2008.

Thomas Rhys-Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda*. Forgotten Books, 2007

Readings on Moodle/[MCR]/ [Note: additional readings may be posted over the course of the term.]



Seminar Schedule and Readings

I. METHODOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Week 1. Course Overview; Origins and Sources

1/27 Problems and Possibilities Of Comparative History
Indo-European connections: language, trade, culture
“Europe” and “Asia” as Imagined Categories

Required Readings:

Fortson IV, Benjamin W. *Indo-European Language and Culture. An Introduction*. 2nd ed. (2010), pp. 1-52. [MCR]

Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, “By Land and By Sea: [Indus Valley] Trade with the Near East” [MCR]

Thomas McEvelley, “Diffusion Channels in the Pre-Alexandrian Period” [MCR]

Week 2. An Overview of Greek History (Origins-500 CE) /TM

2/3 Geography of Hellenism; Religions of Ancient Greece

Required Readings:

Martin, Thomas R. *Ancient Greece* 2nd ed. (2000), pp. 36-99

Herodotus. *Histories* (Penguin edition) 3.38, 3.89-106, 4.40, 4.44, 7.65, 7.70, 70.86, 7.187, 8.113. [MCR]

Gould, John. "On making sense of Greek religion." In P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir, editors. *Greek Religion and Society* (1985), pp. 1-33. [MCR]

Zaidman, Louise Bruitt and Pantel, Pauline Schmitt. Trans. Paul Cartledge. *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (1989), pp. 27-45. [MCR]

Lionel Casson, excerpts from *Travel in the Ancient World*. [MCR]

Week 3. An Overview of Indic History (Origins-500 CE) /TL

2/10 Indus Valley and Extra-regional Connections;
Vedic Religion; Upanishad Thought

Required Readings:

Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, *The Ancient South Asian World*, 41-76 [MCR]

Selections from Vedic Hymns [MCR]

The *Katha Upanishad* [MCR]

II. ANCIENT CULTURAL COMPARISONS

"All things are subject to change, all things flow; tomorrow we will not be what we were yesterday or we are today." ~ Ovid

"View this fleeting world as: a star at dawn, a bubble in the stream., a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, a flickering lamp, a phantom in a dream." ~ Shakyamuni, the Buddha

Week 4: Sages and their Teachings I: Pythagoras/TM

2/17

Required Readings:

Life of Pythagoras: versions by Iamblichus, Porphyry, Photius, and Diogenes Laertius (<http://www.completepythagoras.net/mainframeset.html>) Philostratus. *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Harvard Univ. Press, Loeb Classical Library edition) Books 2 and 3.

Weeks 5: Sages and their Teachings II: the Buddha /TL

2/24

Required Readings:

Patrick Olivelle, trans *The Life of Buddha by Ashvaghosa*. NY: NYU Press, 2008.

Johannes Bronkhorst, *Buddhist Teaching in India*, 1-60.

Selections from the *Samnyasa Upanishads* [MCR]

"Skepticisms of Ancient India" [MCR]

Week 6: Comparisons in Religious Beliefs and Practices ✕

3/3

Seminar Members Construct Indo-European Comparisons

I. SKY GODS: ZEUS & INDRA

Readings:

Indra Hymns, *Rig Veda*

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

"Hymn to Zeus" in *Agamemnon*

II. DIONYSUS & SOMA

Readings:

Soma Hymns, *Rig Veda*

Dionysus, Euripides, *Bacchae*

III. THE RITUAL SACRIFICE

Readings:

Agni hymns, *Rig Veda*

Zaidman, Louise Bruitt and Pantel,

Pauline Schmitt. Trans. Paul

Cartledge. *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (1989), pp. 27-45 ("Rituals").

Hesiod, *Theogony* lines 545-557;

Works and Days lines 45-105

IV. DOCTRINES OF REINCARNATION

Readings:

Katha Upanishad

Plato, *Republic* Book 10.608d-621d

[immortality of soul; myth of Er]

Plato, *Phaedo* 106b-115a, *Phaedrus* -250c [immortality of soul]

3/10: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

III. CONQUERORS and their LEGACIES



Week 7. History of Alexander; Legacy in 3/17 North India /TM

Required Readings:

Martin, Thomas R. *Ancient Greece* 2nd ed. (2000), pp. 187-202

Arrian. *The Campaigns of Alexander* Books 4-6 (Penguin edition) and *Indica* (Harvard Univ. Press, Loeb Classical Library edition)
The Greek Alexander Romance. Trans. Richard Stoneman (1991 and later reprints), pp. 127-135, 180-185 (fictional narrative of Alexander's expedition in India and Alexander's letter to Aristotle on India).
Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, sections 57-66 (Alexander in India and his dialogue with Indian philosophers).
Strabo. *Geography* (Harvard Univ. Press, Loeb Classical Library edition) Book 15.1.1-73 (India as described by Greeks from Alexander's expedition, including the encounter with "naked sophists").

Recommended:

Narain, A. K. "The Greeks of Bactria and India." *Cambridge Ancient History*. 3rd ed. Vol. 8 (1989), pp. 388-421.

Week 8. Chandragupta Maurya & Ashoka: Conquest, Conversion /TL 3/24 Ashoka in the Asian Imagination

Required Readings:

Edicts of Ashoka [MCR];

Excerpts from the *Ashoka Avadana*

IV. GRECO-INDIAN CONVERGENCE: BUDDHISM IN GANDHARA

Week 9. Ancient Buddhism: Origins, Diaspora; Yonas /TL 3/31 Sources for Buddhist tradition in Gandhara

Required Readings:

Johannes Bronkhorst, *Buddhist Teaching in India*, 61-114

Week 10. Art, Architecture, and Religion in Gandhara

4/7 Guest Scholar: Mika Natif, Visual Arts Department, Holy Cross

Required Readings:

Kurt Behrendt, *The Art of Gandhara*. NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007.
Mark Allon and Richard Solomon, "New Evidence for Mahayana in Early Gandhara" [MCR]

**Week 11.1 Encounter: Greek King Menander, Nagasena the Monk
4/14 Seminar Examines Cases from *The Questions of King Milinda***

Required Readings:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/milinda.htm> (excerpts TBD)



Greek soldier at Bharut Stupa, c. 50 BCE

Week 11.2 Field Trip to New York:

Sat 4/16

Metropolitan Museum and American Numismatic Society

Required Readings:

Arnold-Biucchi, Carmen. *Alexander's Coins and Alexander's Image* (2006).

4/21: NO CLASS

Week 12. Greek Skeptics and Buddhist Deconstructionists

4/28 Pyrrhonian Tradition and Buddhist Madhyamaka Philosophy

Required Readings:

Diogenes Laertius. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Harvard Univ. Press, Loeb Classical Library edition) Book 9 sections ("Life of Pyrrho") 61-108.

Thorsrud, Harald. *Ancient Skepticism* (2009), ("Pyrrho and Timon: the origin of Pyrrhonian Skepticism") pp. 17-35.

Johannes Bronkhorst, *Buddhist Teaching in India*, 115-200.

Week 13. Students Present their Term Papers

5/5

EXAM PERIOD TIME: Individual Oral final