

“Creating Inclusivity with Material Culture in Civilization and History Survey Courses”

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SCS 2019: Centering the Margins: creating inclusive syllabi (workshop)

Why material culture?

In the past

- Gives voices to people, groups, regions not well-represented or present in extant textual sources
- Presents some peoples and groups on their own terms rather than through the perspective of others
- Represents experiences, activities, events, moments unfiltered by textual sources

In the present

- Analyzing material culture encourages different types of analysis, ways of seeing, learning
- Multi-modal, multimedia, tangible, and hands-on or high-impact classroom experiences, assignments heighten engagement and reengagement, appeal to learners with diverse needs/preferences/interests
- Connects past and present via issues of discovery, recovery, collection, management, ethics, sustainability, etc (i.e. who owns the past?)

Some examples, approaches

- *Carthage*: studying through the lens of literary accounts of the Punic Wars, Roman material culture from same period vs. Punic Wars + material culture of Carthage, the Punic world (inscriptions, archaeology)
- *Bioarchaeology*: Human skeletal remains can shed light on disease, age, diet, migration, daily life, injuries, age, etc. Animal skeletal remains can tell us about the treatment of animals (pets, livestock), butchering and eating practices, domestication patterns, migration, etc.
- *Archaeological ethics, sustainability, cultural heritage*: how are artifacts, skeletal remains, statues, etc. recovered? What impact does the retrieval of ancient artifacts, their display, their trade have on local stakeholders? What role does archaeological tourism play in cultural heritage preservation, changes in local communities, their identities, their economies? What role does tourism, preference for particular periods or identities linked to particular moments in the past have on cityscapes, what is studied, excavated?
- *Student Driven Topics*: can you build in time for students to generate topics, questions, themes that they want to discuss but which are not included in the syllabus as written? I set aside blocks of time (or entire days) where we discuss topics (or I answer questions) that students come up with the week before. For questions that I can't answer, we workshop how to find the answer (where to start, how to evaluate sources, etc)
- *Assessment*: integrate assignments which allow students to use or apply their knowledge in different ways. For example, my Roman Archaeology students read a biography of an ancient emperor and design a monument for that emperor, based on the biography, artistic and social trends in imperial presentation, and with references and

elements inspired by other monuments, media (which we've studied). Responses are designs of monuments with accompanying labels, explanations, references to parallels or trends, etc, with students applying knowledge in a new way.

Overarching points

- **Integrate material culture throughout**, rather than saving for gaps or special topics (i.e. women, freedmen, domestic life, the Roman provinces); it doesn't have to be the primary focus, but can inform your structure, guiding themes, major points [but don't be afraid to let material culture drive the entire day, or fill in relevant gaps!]
 - Consider including images on your syllabus, particularly those which illustrate a range of peoples and perspectives in order to establish
- **Rethink syllabus design**; is there a way to shift away from text-driven or politics-centric organization to a broader topic, theme, or shift? Will your class work if you organize each week's topics according to a larger question, or according to a social role? Etc.
- **Go beyond the canon: read/look widely** to find out what's out there, how to integrate different material culture beyond the art and monuments from standard textbooks. It's ok to start with "Companion to" books, or podcasts, etc to get your bearings. But don't be afraid to explore a bit, e.g.:
 - Want to talk more about Carthage and the Punic World but don't know where to start? Josephine Crawley Quinn's work will bring you up to speed, but also seek out podcasts, videos, etc--see sources below
 - Want to discuss "common citizens" in the Roman empire? See Sarah Bond's *Trade and Taboo: Disreputable Professions in the Roman Mediterranean* (2016) or Robert Knapp's *Invisible Romans* (2014)
- Use material culture to **recenter groups and places, but also modern stakeholders**
- **Material culture and texts are two (overlapping but) different groups of tools** we use to analyze the past--one isn't better than the other
- **Integrate material culture into hands-on assignments, discussions, debates**: let students interact with the past in a range of meaningful, creative, and/or multi-modal ways. (*NB*: not all of these need be assessed or graded)
 - Consider universal design for learning principles (<https://commons.georgetown.edu/teaching/design/universal-design/>; targeting the what/how/why: <https://goo.gl/images/eGPemK>)

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NB: Links to my own assignments take you to my website, where I will post the relevant assignments in Jan/Feb 2019 after revising for my spring classes! If you want them earlier/older versions, please email me rlleblan@uncg.edu or dm on twitter @archleblanc

Some Resources & Material Culture Assignment Ideas

*places to start

Databases (project, collections, images), Tools, Resources, & Exhibits

- *Epigraphy*
 - [Curse Tablets of Roman Britain](#)
 - [Ashmolean Latin Inscriptions Project](#)
 - [Parthian Sources Online](#)
 - [Associations in the Greco-Roman World](#)
 - [Attic Inscriptions Online](#)
- *Coins*
 - General ancient: [Numismatics.org](#) (includes Greek, Roman, Phoenician, Byzantine, Islamic + modern)
 - Greek: [Online Greek Coinage](#)
 - Hellenistic: [Seleucid Coins Online](#); [Ptolemaic Coins Online](#)
 - Roman: [Coinage of the Roman Republic Online](#); [Online Coins of the Roman Empire](#); [Roman Provincial Coinage](#)
- *Ancient women*
 - [Online Companion to the Worlds of Ancient Women](#) (under “Worlds,” you’ll find both material and text, and commentary on tombstones, busts, eg. the page on [Regina](#), a freedwoman from Britain and wife of a Palmyrene man)
 - [WIRE: Women in the Roman East Project](#)
- *Papyri & Manuscripts*
 - [Duke Papyrus Archive](#)
 - [Trismegistos](#)
- *Misc*
 - [Judaism and Rome](#): re-thinking Judaism’s encounter with the Roman Empire (text and material culture)
 - [Sketchfab](#) (3D models of monuments, objects, and landscapes)
 - [Diversity in the Desert: Daily Life in Greek and Roman Egypt](#) (via the Papyrus Collection of the University of Michigan)
 - The [Catacomb Society](#) has many resources related to the catacombs in Rome, including the Jewish catacombs
 - [The Art of Making in Antiquity: stoneworking in the Roman World](#)
 - [Anonymous Swiss Collector: Antiquities Theft, Art Crime, and the Complexities of Cultural Objects \(Donna Yates\)](#) (many resources considering ethics, antiquities theft)
 - [Museum in a Box](#): 3D printed objects with an audio component

- Or, scan and/or 3D print your own objects via examples from Sketchfab, or scans of institutional collections (see example approach from UVA [here](#))

Site-Specific Online Projects

- [Pompeii Bibliography and Mapping Project](#)
- [Stanford's Digital Forma Urbis Romae Project](#)
- [Ostia-Antica.org](#)
- [Ancient Graffiti Project](#) (Herculaneum and Pompeii)
- Future: [Palmyra Portrait Project](#)

Assignments & Other Tools

- *Misc*
 - [Identify Imperial Portraits](#): assignment by Sebastian Heath, allows students to use 3D sculptures and coins to study identification of imperial portraits
 - The team at [From Stone to Screen](#) have developed a number of excellent teaching modules (including powerpoints, worksheets, lesson plans, and notes for the instructor) on imperial imagery, epigraphy, and coinage
 - Report (blog post, essay, podcast, etc) on an archaeological artifact or object type (online, or in a nearby collection); see [example assignment](#) by Katherine Blouin on her website, Everyday Orientalism or a class exhibit or map using online tools like Omeka (see example of [mapping + database assignment](#) on ancient revolts, and [student online object exhibit](#), both created by Robyn Le Blanc's students at UNCG).
 - Creative assignment: use an artifact or group of objects as the basis for a report or creative assignment recontextualizing that object in the past
 - Trash!: Robyn Le Blanc's [module on consumption and trash](#), and how we read and interpret material culture to understand the past; inspired by and includes exploration of [Below the Surface: the Archaeological Finds of the North/Southline \(Amsterdam\)](#) (not ancient, but still useful)
- *Ostia*
 - Have students explore ancient Ostia via [Ostia-Antica.org](#); you can let them explore, and deal with topics, questions, themes as they arise, or assign a guided tour focused on religious spaces, streets, houses, etc.
- *Pompeii*
 - Eric Poehler has a number of great assignments for exploring Pompeii via [Pompeii Bibliography and Mapping Project](#) which can be adapted in different ways; these include [studies of the urban topography of Pompeii](#), and assignments on the [funerary monuments of the city](#), and [excavated objects](#).
- *In-Class Workshops*
 - Compile evidence from a particular topic drawn from both material culture and texts for student discussion; students can discuss how each material type embodies, explores different perspectives and/or focuses on different aspects. [Some examples from Robyn Le Blanc](#):

- i. *Cleopatra* and/or *Zenobia*: compare/contrast evidence for reign, character, fate in textual tradition & material culture
 - ii. *The Destruction of Pompeii*: compare textual sources (+ manuscript tradition) and archaeological sources to discuss date of destruction of Pompeii
 - iii. Depictions of the peoples of the Persian Empire from Persepolis (good images [here](#) via Livius.org)
- *Around Campus & Nearby*
 - Many campuses and communities include buildings influenced by classical architecture. Get out of the classroom and do a walking tour of these buildings together as a class, or have students visit them on their own. For a semester-long walking tour assignment of classical-influenced campus architecture, see Robyn Le Blanc's [spring 2018 assignment](#).
 - Ask students to visit nearby monuments or museums to practice looking at and experiencing art. This doesn't have to be an ancient collection!
 - Take the class on a visit to a local ancient art or special collections library; it's worth checking to see if they have special programs or do special themed visits for university groups.
- *Race, Ethnicity, Immigration & Marginality*
 - Rebecca Kennedy's blog, [Classics at the Intersections](#), includes many good resources, including [syllabi and teaching modules](#), and a [bibliography](#) on race and ethnicity in the ancient world
- *Ethics, Sustainability, Cultural Heritage*
 - Kevin Gannon's [white paper or digital exhibit assignment](#) on a damaged or endangered ancient archaeological site
 - Integrate a module on cultural heritage, ethics, and sustainability, and have students write position papers, or engage in a debate (or even an [Ethics Bowl](#)) covering real-life topics (see sample anthropological Ethics Bowl cases via the Society for American Archaeology [here](#))
- *Latin*
 - Daily warm-ups using Latin inscriptions; but don't forget the material component (i.e. both an object and a text). I've successfully used examples from:
 - i. Harvey, B.K. 2004. *Roman Lives: Ancient Roman Life as Illustrated by Latin Inscriptions (Corrected Edition)*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN: 978-1585107698
 - ii. Harnett, Matthew. 2013. *By Roman Hands: inscriptions and graffiti for students of Latin (second edition)*. Indianapolis: Focus Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-58510-402-4
 - Longer projects:
 - i. Ann R. Raia, Anne Leen, and Barbara F. McManus' "[Roman Funerary Inscriptions Project](#)," a semester-long project for Latin students to study funerary monuments of ancient Roman women, and compose a translation and commentary of the inscription and monument + variations

- on this project/approach for those without a Latin background by [Anne Leen](#) and one by [Maria Marsilio and Ann Raia](#)
- ii. Have students create a monument (with an inscription) for an ancient (or modern) figure.

YouTube, Podcasts, & Twitter:

- *YouTube/Videos*
 - Darius Arya @ American Institute for Roman Culture
 - [Digging History series 1](#): overview of material culture and how it's used to study the past (esp episodes #1-6)
 - [Ostia Antica: Rome's Mirror](#): conserving the past, daily life, religions of the Roman world, death and burial
 - [Ancient Rome Live: Daily Life](#): includes aqueducts, baths, insulae, cloaca maxima
 - 'Meet the Romans' with Mary Beard via the BBC (full episodes on YouTube)
 - UNESCO videos on specific sites: [Carthage](#), [Timgad](#), [Dougga/Thugga](#)
- *Podcasts*
 - BBC Radio "In Our Time", esp. episodes on the [Phoenicians](#), [Persepolis](#), [Roman Slavery](#), [the destruction of Carthage](#)
- *Twitter (regular posts on material culture)*
 - Zooarchaeology & bioarchaeology
 - [@FlintDibble](#) (Flint Dibble)
 - [@DrKillgrove](#) (Kristina Killgrove) + [website](#)
 - General
 - [@SarahEBond](#) (Sarah E. Bond) + [website](#)
 - [@kataplexis](#) (Rebecca F. Kennedy) + [website](#)
 - [@roqueclassicist](#) (David Meadows) + [website](#)
 - [@opietasanimi](#) (Hannah Čulík-Baird) + [website](#)