



RES CLASSICAE

THE UMBC ANCIENT STUDIES DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Melissa Bailey Kutner

Executive Editor: David Rosenbloom

FROM THE CHAIR

David Rosenbloom

It is a pleasure to welcome Dr. Randolph Ford to the department as Assistant Professor of Ancient Studies. Dr. Ford received his B.A. (2000) and M.A. (2009) in Scandinavian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his Ph.D. from New York University's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World in 2016. His dissertation, *Ethnographic Identities and the Politics of Empire in Late Roman and Early Medieval Chinese Historiography*, was awarded the Dean's Outstanding Dissertation in the Humanities Award for 2016-2017 and a revised version of it was published in 2020 by Cambridge University Press as *Rome, China, and the Barbarians: Ethnographic Traditions and the Transformation of Empires*. Dr. Ford taught at Notre Dame, SUNY Albany, and Skidmore College before coming to UMBC. In this issue of *Res Classicae* he explores how the rhetoric of opposition between imperial identities and "barbarians" lurking on the border oversimplify the realities of frontier societies both in antiquity and modernity.



Dr. Randolph Ford

The department is delighted to announce the birth of a new member



Lionel Kutner

of the Ancient Studies family, Dr. Melissa and Paul Kutner's second child, Lionel, who was born on January 6, 2024. We extend our warmest congratulations to his happy parents. As is obvious, ten-month old Lionel just loves the swing!

The Ancient Studies faculty congratulates its 2023-2024 Honors and Awards recipients: Mare Chavez (Outstanding Senior), Robert Barry (Sherwin Family Award), Michael Fischer (Robert and Jane Shedd Award), Ethan Stubbs (William and Martha Christopher Award), and Katie Bjerkaas (Diane Zdenek Award). We thank the donors who have generously funded these awards and remember those whose lives the awards commemorate.

The department continues to invest resources in experimental archaeology—the investigation of the material conditions of ancient societies through methodical attempts to reproduce them. Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis and her colleague in the Music Department, Dr. Lindsay Johnson, were recipients of a Hrabowski Innovation Fund Grant to develop a new course, ARCH 365, "Experimental Archaeology of the Global Ancient and Medieval Eras." Dr. Jones-Lewis writes engagingly in this issue about the joys and challenges involved in the course's attempt to teach students about work in pre-industrial societies by doing it rather than by reading about it. Her account of how

the class was able to transform parts of the UMBC campus into sites for the production of the means of human subsistence and

flourishing will leave you wanting more. This course was featured in the July 24, 2024 issue of *UMBC Top Stories of the Week* (<https://umbc.edu/stories/experimental-archeology/>).

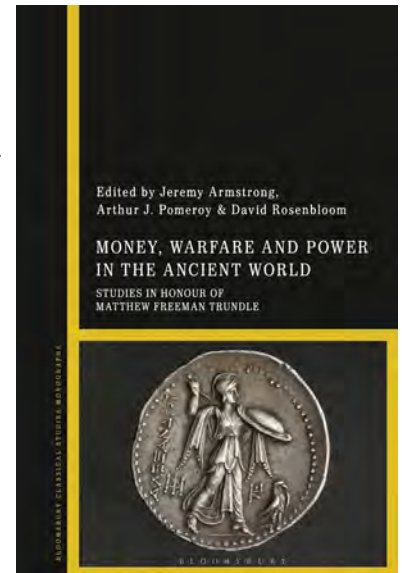
Dr. Michael Lane continues his fascinating accounts of excavations at Aghia Marina Pyrgos (AMP) in this issue, detailing the activities and finds of the summer 2024 season. The excavation has grown into a fully international enterprise, including not only UMBC students, but students and staff from Virginia, Tennessee, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and Greece.

Last but not least, this issue features contributions by current Ancient Studies major Gracin O'Connor and Ancient Studies alumnus and Fulbright Fellowship winner David Bullman. Gracin details how her travels in Greece in March 2024 proved to be transformational. David writes about the rich and relatively neglected archaeological remains he visited in Northern Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria during his Fulbright year.

In addition to their teaching and wide-ranging service, Ancient Studies faculty members published a number of articles, chapters, and entries in academic year 2023-2024. Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis published on Pliny the Elder, Nikander of Kolophon, and Soranos of Ephesos in H. Marx, K. Upson-Saia, J. Secord eds., *Medicine, Health, and Healing in Greece and Rome (500 BCE–500 CE): A Sourcebook*. University of California Press, 2023. Dr. Melissa Kutner co-authored an article, "High-Resolution Spatial Analysis of Archaeobotanical Remains from a Kitchen Context in Imperial Late Antique (ca. a.d. 600) Dhiban, Jordan," *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 49.1 (2023) 42-58 and authored "Revealed and Concealed: Carrying and the *Sinus* in Ancient Rome," *American Journal of Philology*, 144.3 (2023) 379-414. She also has two book chapters in the process of publication. Dr. Michael Lane published his site report, "The Mycenaean Northeast Kopais Project: A Report from Ayia Marina Pyrgos," *Hesperia: Journal of the American School of Classical Studies*, 92.4 (2023) 587-643.

In January 2024, *Money, Warfare and Power in the Ancient World* was published in London by Bloomsbury Press. I co-edited this volume with my New Zealand colleagues Prof. Art Pomeroy and Assoc. Prof. Jeremy Armstrong to honor the memory of our beloved colleague and friend Prof. Matthew Trundle. In March 2024 I visited New Zealand for two weeks as the inaugural Trundle Fellow, giving public lectures, seminars, and courses at the University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington. I was invited to participate in an International Conference at the University of Florida in April 2024 on the timely topic of "Democracy in Peril," and gave a paper on right-wing populist rhetoric in classical Athens.

Finally, I would like to express our gratitude on behalf of the students and faculty in the department for your generous donations and to wish all of you a healthy and happy 2025.



EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Molly Jones-Lewis



UMBC EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Want to see our projects and students explaining their research? Follow us on Instagram!

Many of you have vivid memories of class exercises where you learned about the ancient world using reproductions and crafts as well as texts. A few of you even used them to create your own research projects. This methodology has a name—experimental archaeology—and it's a way of addressing questions about the past that traditional archaeological excavation or examination of artifacts may not be able to answer. Experimental archaeology has a lively presence in programs in the United Kingdom, but there are few places in the United States where you can take a class dedicated to the skills and research processes that form the foundation of this discipline.

UMBC just became one of those few! Thanks to a generous award from the Hrabowski Innovation Fund Grant we were able to obtain the supplies and materials such a program requires. Our first summer class was a great success, even though the six-week format was a tight squeeze for the sort of learning that involves spinning thread, foraging, and other fiddly processes that use very different skillsets from reading and writing.

Our main theme for this summer was “What can we learn from *doing* that we can’t learn from *reading* alone?” We situated our questions within the “history from the bottom up” movement. This is a way of thinking about the past that focuses on the contributions made by working people and those who don’t share their discoveries through writing. We kept a broad focus on the global world before the industrial revolution. Many of the skills and methods we investigated were in active use for thousands of years before mechanization changed so many things about the way people live their lives and make the objects they use every day.

There were unusual challenges too, though. We needed outdoor space to grow our crops, harvest clay (poorly), and teach ourselves how to gather wild edible plants. We also needed to build fires and convince the university that we wouldn’t burn the campus down. When you combine that with logistical problems—such as moving a warp weighted loom around without messing up the threads and learning in which wooded areas we could store ongoing projects—it’s clear that our class was tackling a dizzying variety of practical challenges that other courses just don’t face.

But we did it! We found out that facilities staff have all sorts of knowledge about construction, gardening, and even beekeeping, and that they are ready and eager to share this living-labor knowledge with us. We claimed the little forest between the PAHB and the library, including its beehive, for our class to use as a foraging and building site. The library pond gave us reeds for wicker, baskets, and writing materials, and we made preserves from fruit in the forest. Our polyculture field of corn, beans, and squash wasn’t ready before the class ended, but this fall semester we harvested the crops we planted in June.

This class was taught in collaboration with the music department’s Collegium program, a field of musicology concerned with reconstructing premodern music, dance, and performing arts using replica instruments. Dr. Lindsay Johnson and I got to use so many skills we never thought would show up in our teaching, and the student projects were amazing.

One student made her own garum (fermented fish sauce) and took measurements of how far the pungent (truly eye-watering) smell could travel on the wind and linger in fabrics. Another made rushlights, a common lighting technology used by poor people in medieval Europe, and studied how native Maryland plants might have performed in the rushlights made by early modern colonizers in the area of UMBC. Sarah Itzel, an ANCS major, recreated vinegar-based laborers’ drinks from different times and places ranging from Rome to 18th-century Maryland and conducted experiments on how well they performed in the hot sun (we definitely needed them while working outside in a Baltimore July!). Another student mixed her own tempera paints with ochre pigments to recreate medieval paint textures for which we lack specific mixture proportions. An art major researched visual storytelling in medieval embroidery and created a memorial of our class in wool. And a student used her family’s recipes brought to Maryland from Egypt to compound and compare medieval cold-care remedies with her family’s, using the process to map how immigration impacts the way people use imported and local ingredients to maintain a sense of identity. Our students told us in our after-class feedback forms that although the course had felt too short, they gained a whole new set of skills that they feel will give them new ways to continue their work in their chosen fields. They found the process of trial, error, failure, and success to be a welcome break from the “pass or fail” dynamics in a traditional class. Having permission to struggle at new skills, try things just to see what happens, and learn with their hands, eyes, noses, ears, and emotions gave them a safe space to think differently about what research can look like. They left with an appreciation for the everyday creativity and wisdom of working people as well as a better relationship with our outdoor world. “Touch grass” can be both a productive way to learn *and* a needed oasis for a generation struggling with mental health issues.

This test run of our Experimental Archaeology class was impactful and successful, and this means that to build a better program, we need to invest in the tools our future students will need. The Ancient Studies Department is in the process of



Dr. Jones-Lewis (ANCS) and Dr. Lindsay Johnson (MUSC) Prepare for Their First Cass by Harvesting Invasive Reeds at the Library Pond.

buying replicas for department use. We will also have items such as spindles, wool, reeds, quills, musical instruments, and wax tablets that student researchers can check out of a replica library. We are making our outdoor classroom space more permanent so that next time, our teaching infrastructure will be ready for us when it's time to learn.

Students at UMBC will now have some tools in their hands to help them become more creative researchers, and our program will offer more ways to learn about the past than many other programs in the United States. We are very excited about this new set of opportunities at UMBC, and we hope that we are at the start of something that is both very old and very new. And the way in which our students view the nameless people who built the ancient world with their hands and their ingenuity



will never be the same.

Just a Few of the Class Projects: Food Preservation, Fire Crafts, Archery, Weaving, Beekeeping, Spinning, Writing, and Embroidery

EXPLORING THE BORDERS OF ANCIENT EMPIRES

Randolph Ford

Greetings to the Ancient Studies community! My name is Randolph Ford, and I am a new member of the Ancient Studies department here at UMBC; I am also an affiliate faculty member of the Asian Studies Program. My research has focused on late-Roman history and historiography as well as comparative approaches to the study of Greco-Roman antiquity and ancient China. In particular, I have studied the construction of political, cultural, and ethnic boundaries in the ancient world. One does not have to look far to find the significance of borders and boundaries in current events. Global and domestic news stories often focus on the barriers, both physical and ideological, used to divide different societies. In the ancient world too, boundaries of various kinds could be used not only to separate but also to define communities. Yet apparent similarities between antiquity and modern societies are often deceptive. For example, the late Roman experience of large, armed groups of so-called “barbarians” entering the empire in the tens of thousands has in recent years been repeatedly invoked in Europe and North America in support of policies seeking to exclude refugees and asylum seekers from wealthier countries. Generally ignored in such historical analogies is the fact that highly vulnerable individuals and families seeking safety and security in countries like the United States hardly bear resemblance to the large military contingents that made up a significant part of the Vandal, Goth, and Frankish groups that took over parts of the western Roman Empire. This is just one example of the ways in which the frontiers and boundaries of antiquity are appealed to in modern times for political purposes.

Despite our frequent application of the word “frontier” to ancient contexts, it is interesting to note that the Romans did not have a word that corresponds exactly to our modern concept(s), which is first attested in its current sense in the 16th-17th centuries. The term the Romans used that is most often translated with the word “frontier” is *limes* (pl. *limites*), which originally carries the meaning of “way” or “path,” though it could also mean “boundary” or “limit.” One of the commonly used Greek terms used in the Roman imperial period, *horion* ὁρίον, is closer to the English term “border,” though it lacks the sense of movement and dynamism implied in the word “frontier.”

As often as we think of frontiers as lines of conflict—demarcating lines separating the Roman and the barbarian worlds, as the 2nd-century CE orator Aelius Aristides would have it—frontiers in antiquity were zones of contact and cultural exchange as well as sites of political confrontation. Despite this reality, we see in many of our ancient textual sources a tendency to draw clear lines of division between the imperial “us” and the (as yet?) unconquered “them.” There is also a modern tendency to take this kind of binary division between the Greco-Roman world and the lands and peoples on and beyond its peripheries at face value. One thing that modern societies clearly do share with ancient empires is a tendency to simplify social complexity by resorting to simple binary divisions.



*Funerary Monument of Thracian Auxiliary Cavalryman
Longinus Sdapeze from Camuludum, Britain*

Yet in exploring these rhetorical dichotomies, one often finds that the contexts to which they were applied were far more complicated—and interesting: populations on either side of a political barrier at times came to resemble one another more closely than either resembled the communities of their respective hinterlands. For example, it has been suggested that Roman populations along the Rhine river in the 4th century bore a greater resemblance, in their material culture at least, to the Germanic-speaking tribal groups across the river than they did to the Romans of the interior Gallic provinces. Moreover, a large component of “Roman” armies was made up of auxiliary, non-citizen troops who continued to use non-Latin names and identify with their original tribal or ethnic labels. In short, frontier societies tend to defy the simple kinds of categorization that suit imperial ideology; and their careful study also helps us in modern scholarship to avoid taking ancient rhetorical divisions between “civilized” and “barbarian” at face value.

The phenomenon is of course not limited to Greco-Roman world. An illustrative example of this kind of artificial binary may be found at the opposite end of Eurasia, where the modern reception and re-imagining of the past is also part of the story. Disney movies have taken the legend of the heroine Mulan and situated it within a starkly divided world: the pacific and civilized empire of China faced with the predatory and violent nomads of the steppe. (The extent to which Central Asian societies are demonized and caricatured in such modern narratives seems to have made little impression on western audiences. One wonders about the choice in the 2016-film *Great Wall*, set in the 11th century, to simply replace the very human nomadic societies north of the Great Wall with alien monsters.) Yet the historical context in which the poem actually came into being was hardly so simple (For further discussion, see the essay by James Millward: <https://www.asianstudies.org/more-hun-than-han-reading-the-tabghach-ballad-of-mulan-in-2020/>). *Mulan* 木蘭辭, the *Ballad of Mulan*, was composed in northern China during the period of the so-called Northern Dynasties, a series of regimes whose ruling elites had nomadic origins, spoke Inner Asian languages (Mongolic or Turkic), and who had maintained connections with and cultural affinities to nomadic societies to the north. These connections to steppe tradition are evident in the poem itself: Mulan’s father is not initially called upon to do military service by her “emperor” (Chinese *huangdi* 皇帝, “august god-king,” or *tianzi* 天子, “Son of Heaven”; see Scott Pearce’s translation in *Northern Wei (386-534): A New Form of Empire in East Asia*, Oxford University Press, 2023: 122), though that same term is used to denote the ruler elsewhere in the poem. Rather, the call to military service comes from her *kehan*



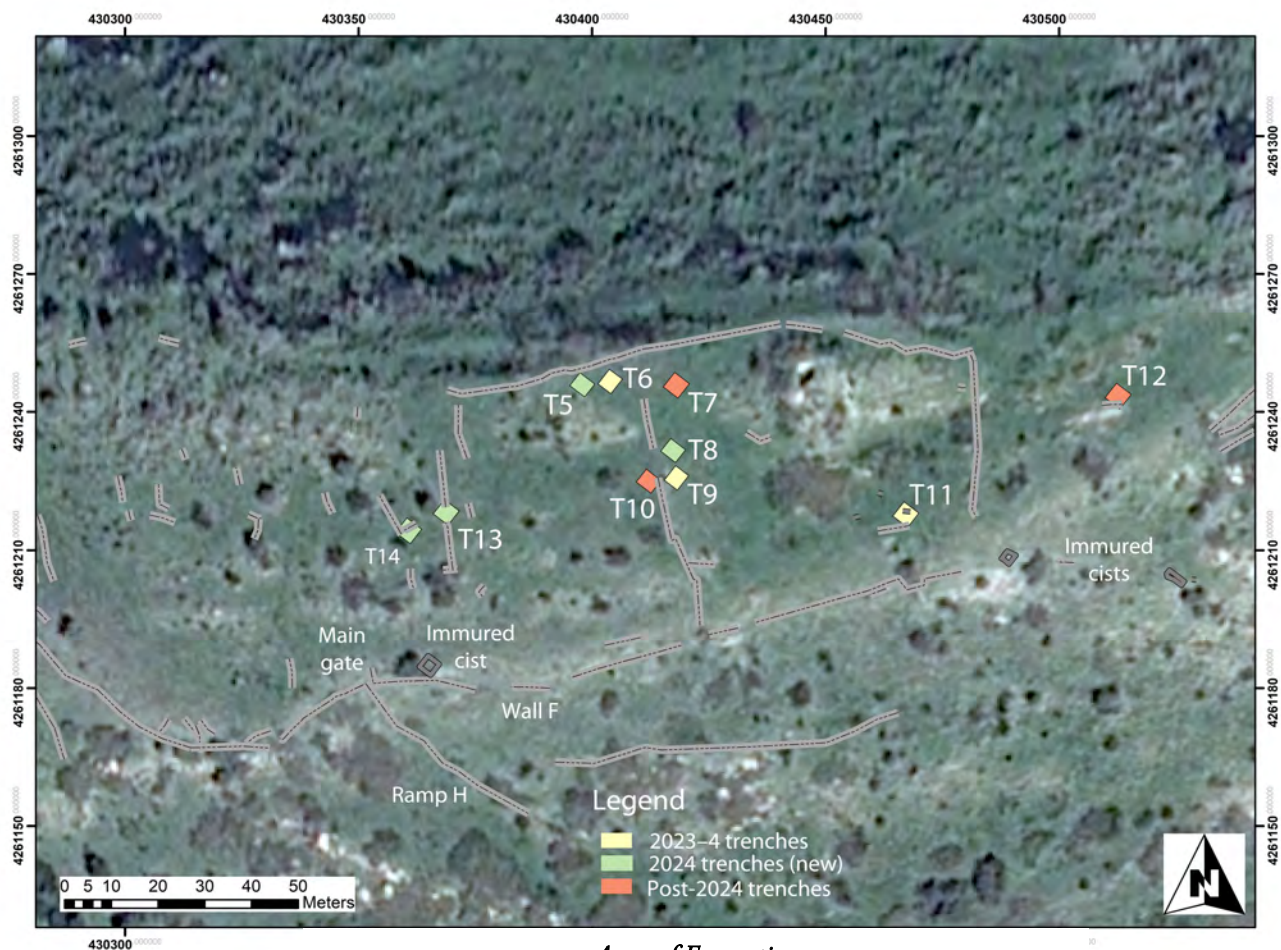
*Promotional Image from the 1998
Disney Film.*

可汗, the Qaghan or Khan, the title claimed by the supreme ruler of the steppe. While Mulan and the empire to which she belonged were indeed fighting steppe nomads, in this case the Rouran 柔然 Empire based north of the Gobi Desert, her own society was ruled by a dynasty that, while claiming the right to rule over China as legitimate emperors, had not relinquished their Inner Asian notions of political legitimacy and titulature. Both Mulan *and* the enemies of her community fought in the service of their respective Qaghans—even if hers also claimed to rule as a legitimate Huangdi at the same time. Like many of the ideological boundaries that are built to define human groups one way or another, the clear divisions are elusive when one carefully examines the textual and archeological evidence.

A course I will be offering this spring addresses many of these themes from a comparative perspective: Frontiers of Ancient China and Rome (ANCS 350-02). The course will discuss how, in the process of their formation and expansion, the empires of Rome and China came into contact with diverse societies along their borders, some of whom were able to be persuaded, or forced, to accept Roman or Chinese rule. Others, however—the so-called “barbarians”—resisted the forces of imperial expansion, conquest, and assimilation. The course will concentrate on the imperial frontiers along which peace and war were in constant vacillation, but we will also explore these zones as areas of frequent economic and cultural exchange along which political, social, and ethnic identities could be negotiated, transformed, and even created.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK IN GREECE, SUMMER 2024

Michael Lane



For the second year with my renewed permit, I led a team of trench supervisors and undergraduate and graduate students from the United States and Europe in archaeological excavations at the Bronze Age settlement site of Aghia Marina Pyrgos in the Kopaic Basin of central mainland Greece, a site we refer to familiarly as “AMP.” The staff hailed from the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, while the students came not only from UMBC but also from the

Universities of Virginia and Tennessee in the US, the University of Manchester and Oxford in the UK, the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands, University of Heidelberg in Germany, and University of Athens in Greece. The aim of the four-year program is to arrive a better understanding of the relationship of the Bronze Age settlement at AMP with its wider agricultural and pastoral landscape.

My earlier fieldwork in the region focused on the drainage of the bay in the Kopaic lake around AMP and successive phases of flood-protection and irrigation for cultivation and pasture from around the later Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1800 BCE) to the end of the Palace Period of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BCE). I now want to learn broadly how the settlement changed in size and purpose over time: before the drainage and irrigation, during the period of their service, and after they were abandoned following the fire that destroyed the nearby fortress of Gla, which stored some of the products of the land in the last century of the Palace Period. More narrowly, I would like to find out if irrigated fields provided for the subsistence of the community at AMP until or even after foodstuffs were concentrated in Gla, whether AMP ever played an administrative role with respect to amassment of goods at Gla, and whether AMP was the site of special manufactures in the Palace Period, as Gla appears to have been.

To investigate AMP in its successive settlement phases, the team and I have laid out and begun excavating trenches that sample in four distinct areas. One near the summit comprises Late Bronze Age buildings whose foundations are in a thick fill of mud from the lakebed. Another is located where the ruins of Middle Bronze Age settlement have been discovered, parts of which were turned into an infants' cemetery in their final stages. A third is where a Middle Bronze Age cemetery for adults was exposed by medieval construction around the foundations of the watchtower (*pyrghos*) that gives the site its surname. There we expect also to discover any habitation remains over which the cemetery may have been laid. Finally, we are sampling an area on the west slope, where terrace walls and coarse domestic pottery appear on the surface, which may yield insights not just into this part of the site but also possibly provide a contrast with the apparently more elegant assemblages near the summit.

Last year left us with a few enigmas to make sense of: Geometric Period drinking cups (*skyphoi*) on the remains of the Late Bronze Age ruins, a Middle Bronze Age burial at the base of which was a secondary burial (ossuary) amid Early Bronze Age potsherds, and possibly a Late Bronze Age drain for precipitation runoff. This year left us better able to interpret these, but it also whispered of some further mysteries. UMBC undergraduate Robert Barry, double-majoring in Ancient Studies and Visual Arts, and Bendik Bergendal, a graduate student at Bergen University in Norway, discovered more Early or Middle Geometric Period *skyphoi*, as well as coarse-ware containers, lined up against what appears to be the ruins of a fortification wall on the summit. This wall seems to have been built in the few decades after the Palace Period, which ended when AMP, like Gla, suffered a catastrophic fire. All the *skyphoi* so far discovered appear to have been stacked upside down amid relatively flimsy stone edifices built against the ruined fortifications. Hence, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that AMP was the site of ceremonial drinking some 300 years after the abandonment of the Late Bronze Age settlement. Considering this, it is worth noting that the northeastern bay of the Kopaic Basin was identified locally in ancient times as the "Plain of Athamas" (Pausanias 9.24.1) named for the exiled Boeotian king and father of Phrixos and Helle, who famously escaped their wicked stepmother on a gold-fleeced ram (cf. Apollodorus I.9.1–2). It is exciting to think that there may be traces of a related hero shrine at AMP.

Archaeologists Damian Koropecyk, UMBC Global Studies (2016), and Kyle Jazwa, a professor at the University of Maastricht, were able to give better definition to one of the large cist graves in the Middle Bronze Age settlement, as well as to show definitively that it was built into deposits of Early Bronze Age material. They discovered another secondary burial. In this instance the selected bones, including parts of the skull, were stacked almost "Jolly Roger"-like in a shallow pit beneath a pavement at the eastern end of the grave, which itself seems to have been covered by a low earthen mound (truncated by medieval activity). On the fragments of a vessel in this ossuary was something appearing to be burnt resin. While this residue has not yet been chemically analyzed, an intriguing possibility is that it represents incense gum. Plants that produce traditional incenses, such as mastic, terebinth, and Hercules' all-heal, grow in the hills around AMP (see RC, Fall 2022). Furthermore, the previously uncovered primary burial may be deposited in the



Terracotta Figurine of "Naked Goddess" Type

consolidated remains of an Early Bronze Age building. We have found no trace of the Early Bronze Age elsewhere on the site; remains of this period appear to be concentrated on the summit near the medieval tower. Given our discovery here of more and more fine, burnished, monochrome (*Urfirnis*) potsherds dating to the middle of this era, it is conceivable that an Early Bronze Age ceremonial building once existed on the summit, which later became the focus of the cemetery. Thus, AMP may be bracketed chronologically with two celebratory monuments.

Archaeologists Rowan May (Sheffield, UK) and Rachel Channell (West Virginia by way of Boulder) continued work on the complicated construction of the hypothetical runoff drain. If this is indeed a drain—our working hypothesis—then it seems possible that, though it was built to solve one problem (erosion threatening the site), it inadvertently caused another (subsidence of a nearby terrace wall). Hence, it had to be filled in eventually with dense lake sediments, complicating our stratigraphy. In all events, beneath it, as expected, were the uppermost levels of the infant cemetery. Some of the graves or ossuaries here had been partially destroyed by perhaps the greatest enigma of all at the site, the razing of the immediate successor of the Middle Bronze Age settlement, which was overlaid with lake-mud fill (mentioned above), so that the Late Bronze Age buildings could be erected. From this destruction level came a unique and delightful find, a painted terracotta figurine conforming to the “Naked Goddess” type, probably originally enthroned, judging from its bent legs and apparent chair posts broken away from its back. Such figurines are variously identified with the Levantine goddesses Asherah, Astarte, or Qedeshet. Ours has a pinched, almost bird-like face, just as many Cypriot types do. Hence, it may represent a proto-Aphrodite, widely recognized as a Cypriot variant of Astarte/Ishtar. Which avatar of Aphrodite it would represent in the context of a cemetery remains unclear.

We also continue to learn more about the relationship between the settlement and its setting, especially the Late Bronze Age component. It is increasingly clear that the Palace Period buildings held not just fine decorated drinking vessels and probably inlaid furniture—the wooden frameworks incinerated but the ivory surviving—but also the basins and storage jars for dyes derived from *Murex* (*Hexaplex*) and *Spondylus* mollusks. Samples of sediment have been floated and sieved, yielding wood charcoal and carbonized seeds, which will be further analyzed over the winter to determine what sort of plants, wild or domesticate, they represent. The plan for the summer of 2025 includes further excavation in the designated areas and an additional trench perpendicular to and adjoining the medieval tower’s base to learn more about its construction and the Late Helladic material in the fill buttressing it, as well as to reveal whatever Early Bronze Age construction it may now hide.

For more information about UMBC’s ongoing archaeological fieldwork in Greece, including annual reports, see <https://kocecola.umbc.edu>. Robert Barry’s 2024 experience at AMP was profiled in the August 28, 2024 issue of *UMBC Top Stories of the Week* see (<https://umbc.edu/stories/robert-barry-in-greece-research-assistant-archaeological-field-school>).

Approximate Chronology of the Bronze (Helladic) Age in Mainland Greece	
Early Helladic	3200–2000 BCE
Middle Helladic	2000–1700 BCE
Late Helladic	1700–1100 BCE



*Gracin with One of the Many
Lovely Cats of Greece*

FROM TEXTBOOK TO TABLETS

Gracin O'Connor

My journey in Ancient Studies began with Ancient Greek. My first class at the University of Maryland Baltimore County was GREK 101. It was a challenging, confusing course. We were a class of ten students, all fumbling over the same grammatical principles and verb tenses. I grew to love it and became excited about the language.

But when you choose to major in Ancient Studies, be prepared to answer this question: “Okay, but what do you do with that? What jobs are available?” Every person who asks about my major always follows up with that question. I would often explain academia—a Ph.D., the works—first, to stop their doubts, but also to address my own. But I still wasn’t sure. What would come after my four years?

After my Spring Break trip to Greece with the Ancient Studies Department in March of 2024, I finally knew. We spent eight days walking through and experiencing the sites and artifacts I had only read about in textbooks. It was all material we talked about in the classroom, but it didn’t feel real until I actually saw it for myself.

On the first day of our trip, we visited the Acropolis Museum in Athens. This museum is a monument in itself, and it had been on my bucket list for years. I most wanted to see the Caryatids—five female statues serving as pillars supporting the roof over the south porch of the Erechtheion—with an empty spot where the sixth sister, taken by Lord Elgin and now in the British Museum, should be. I had read articles and seen pictures, and they always resonated with me. I expected to spend the entire museum visit staring at the empty spot. And while that moment was amazing, I found something else in that museum trip that left a bigger impact on me.

When you first walk into Level One, there's a display filled with votives to Asklepios—small statues representing body parts one would offer to the god in hopes of healing. It was there that Dr. Jones-Lewis, my Ancient Greek professor, had my classmates and me translate these dedications. Votive inscriptions often begin with the name of the divinity who is the recipient of the votive in the dative case. "To Asklepios" was the first word of the inscriptions we read in Acropolis Museum. Something about translating these stone carvings lit a spark in my desire to learn, a desire I had been seriously questioning.



*The Caryatids in the Acropolis Museum, with Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis
Standing in the Place of the Missing Caryatid*

Throughout the rest of the trip I clung to Dr. Jones-Lewis in every museum we visited. She had me sit in front of stone tablets jam-packed with words, unlike anything I had seen in my textbooks. They were ancient receipts, mundane in context, but they were exhilarating. With Dr. Jones-Lewis' guidance I stumbled through and translated bits and pieces until I reached the satisfying conclusion of knowing what people from so long ago were trying to express, even if it was just receipts.

The Spring 2024 trip to Greece was fun—from sticking our feet in the Mediterranean to petting stray cats everywhere we went. But most importantly, this trip gave me a new response to the question everyone asks: "What are you going to do with an Ancient Studies degree?"

I am going to translate lost thoughts. And I can.

ANCIENT SIGHTSEEING IN THE BALKANS

David Bullman



*The "Mensa Ponderaria" (Measuring Table)
from Stobi*

When I found out that I had been chosen as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in North Macedonia for the 2023-2024 academic year, I was hopeful that I would get to do some traveling and sightseeing. Fortunately, I was able to do quite a bit of both, but I had no idea of the number and quality of ancient sites that I would have the chance to visit both in North Macedonia and in neighboring countries. I ended up having the opportunity to visit the sites of Scupi and Heraclea Lyncestis in North Macedonia, Serdica in Bulgaria, Alba Julia (Apulum in the Roman era) in Romania, the Roman Forum and associated ruins in Thessaloniki, Greece, and a couple of museums in Skopje. With that list, it might seem as if I wasn't getting much Fulbright work done, but there was time for all of it!

All of these sites were interesting in their own way, but there are some highlights of each worth pointing out. At Alba Julia, the most impressive visuals are provided by the 18th-century citadel, but there is a great museum and an active group of re-enactors who give tours in full Roman

legionnaire equipment. They are very proud of having been the home of Legio XIII Gemini well after their involvement in that business at the Rubicon, and the museum focuses quite a bit on the legion and artifacts related to it.

Serdica was originally a Celtic settlement that became a *municipium* during the reign of Trajan. The ruins are mostly under the modern city of Sofia, but they have excavated and left exposed a good portion of the center of the town to show the remains of some houses, a bath complex, and some commercial buildings. There are nice examples of clay-pipe plumbing and mosaics in the enclosed portion of the excavation. A portion of the amphitheater is also exposed in the lobby of a large hotel; but it appeared to be permanently closed when we visited.

Back in North Macedonia, the Archaeological Museum of the Republic of North Macedonia in Skopje featured displays of artifacts from the Paleolithic through the Ottoman Period. Of particular interest was a very nice measuring table (*mensa ponderaria*) that was discovered in the excavation of Stobi, not far to the east of Skopje. The museum also has a good selection of statuary and epigraphic monuments from various sites in North Macedonia and Kosovo. The most impressive part of the collection was actually a temporary exhibit of Thracian silver. This consisted mostly of coins and jewelry, but there were also two exceptional rhytons. The craftsmanship and preservation of these was really remarkable.

Perhaps my favorite visit was to the site of Scupi, or *Colonia Flavia Scupinorum*. This site ultimately gave rise to the city of Skopje and is impressive, if under-conserved. On the day I visited, a small team of volunteers was working on removing some material from the area of the bath complex. Since I was the only visitor, I got a personal tour of the site from the team leader, who works at the Museum of the City of Skopje. We walked around the entire site and discussed the current state of the site and problems associated with trying to extend the excavation and keep the vegetation at bay.

While there is plenty more to talk about, I hope this brief overview was enough to convince you either to apply for a Fulbright grant or to add the Balkans to your list of places to visit ancient sites.



The Cardo Maximus (Main Thoroughfare) at Scupi

WINTER 2025 COURSE SCHEDULE

Course	Title	Room/Mode	Day(s)/Time	Instructor
ANCS 150	Word Roots from Latin and Greek	Online		Dr. Avichai Kapach
ANCS 201	The Ancient Greeks	Online		Dr. Juan Dopico
ANCS 210/RLST 210	Classical Mythology	Online		Prof. Tim Phin
ANCS 330/HIST 330	Ancient Science and Technology		T/W/Th 5:30-8:40 pm PAHB 107	Prof. Esther Read
ANCS 365	Magic and Witchcraft in the Ancient Mediterranean	Hybrid	M/W 1:00-4:15 pm PAHB 234	Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis

SPRING 2025 COURSE SCHEDULE

Course	Title	Room/Mode	Day(s)/Time	Instructor
GREK 102	Elementary Greek II	PAHB 441	MTWTh 10:00-10:50	Dr. Michael Lane
GREK 371	Homer: <i>Odyssey</i>	Online Synchronous	T/Th 4:00-5:15	Dr. David Rosenbloom
LATN 102-01	Elementary Latin II	PAHB 441	MTWTh 9:00-9:50	Prof. Tim Phin
LATN 102-02	Elementary Latin II	PAHB 441	MTWTh 11:00-11:50	Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis

LATN 331	Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid	PAHB 441	T/Th 1:00-2:15	Prof. Tim Phin
ANCS 150	Word Roots from Latin and Greek	Hybrid Sherman 003	W 4:00-5:15	Dr. Juan Dopico
ANCS 202	The Roman World	Public Policy 105	M/W 4:00-5:15	Dr. Avichai Kapach
ANCS 220/JDST 201/ RLST 202	Judaism in the Time of Jesus & Hillel	Online Synchronous	M/W 1:00-2:15	Dr. Karen Bryson
ANCS 350-01	Topics in Ancient Studies: Barbarians and the Fall of the Roman Empire	PAHB 441	M/W 1:00-2:15	Dr. Randolph Ford
ANCS 350-02	Topics in Ancient Studies: Frontiers in Imperial China and the Roman Empire	PAHB 441	M/W 2:30-3:45	Dr. Randolph Ford
ANCS 375	Ancient Medicine	Sondheim 202	T/Th 1:00-2:15	Dr. Molly Jones-Lewis
ANCS 455/HIST 455	The Roman Republic	Fine Arts 011	T/Th 11:30-12:45	Prof. Tim Phin
ARCH 201	Roman Archaeology & Art	Sherman 150	T/Th 10:00-11:15	Dr. Melissa Kutner
ARCH 340	Cities of the Past	PAHB 441	T/Th 2:30-3:45	Dr. Melissa Kutner
ARCH 350-02	Topics in Archaeology: Museum Studies	PAHB 441	T/Th 7:10-8:25	Prof. Esther Read

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