

Humanities Seminars Program

Technological Wonders of Classical Antiquity

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Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. – noon

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OPTIONAL READINGS

A set of several optional readings (referred to below) will be uploaded on the password protected link “course materials” on the HSP website in early May: (learn.hsp.arizona.edu).

AUGUST 3: ANCIENT GREEK TECHNOLOGY: APPRENTICESHIP AND MASTERY

We will survey the types of evidence left from ancient craftspeople about their technological apprenticeship, choices, advances, and cross-craft interaction. Ancient technical treatises (including one for the Parthenon) are now lost to us, so we are left with comments from poets, philosophers, and orators who looked to industry for financial benefits, but none of them would want their son to be a Pheidias (the overseer of the Parthenon).

Optional Readings: Hasaki 2013; Lapatin 2014

AUGUST 10: SKILLS AND SECRETS OF ANCIENT POTTERS

Greek ceramics were used by everyone in their homes, sanctuaries, and cemeteries. The Greek potters chose their raw materials carefully, honed their skills of design, and mastered the kiln firing to produce aesthetically pleasing and technologically advanced ceramics. For their superior quality Greek ceramics were both admired at home and exported widely in the Mediterranean.

Optional Readings: Hasaki 2012; Sparkes 1992

AUGUST 17: MONOLITHIC MIRACLES

Quarries of white marble were busy places in ancient Greece. Quarrymen and sculptors looked for best blocks of stone to produce impressive sculptures, usually carved out of one block (monolithic). From the colossal nude males of the Archaic period, to the stunning nude females of the Hellenistic times, sculptors learned how to challenge material limitations and cultural norms.

Optional Readings: Palagia 2006; Russell 2013

AUG 24: PARTHENON: A PARADIGM OF PERFECTION

The Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis was built between 447-432 BCE. Hundreds of workers coordinated their skills to achieve a result that was a miracle of both architectural and sculptural design. Through building accounts we get a glimpse of the sublime and the mundane in such an undertaking. Construction expertise and managerial skills led to what was at the time the largest temple project in mainland Greece.

Optional Readings: Acton 2014; Korres 1995