

Syllabus
Excavating at the Birthplace of Zeus
Spring 2021

Mondays 10:00-12:00 pm
Virtual Presentation

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Since 2004 the University of Arizona has been excavating at the sanctuary of Zeus on Mt. Lykaion, known in the ancient literature as the “Birthplace of Zeus.” High in the Arcadian mountains of Greece, it has yielded remarkable discoveries over the last 15 years. It is now known that human activity at the ash altar began in the Neolithic period in the fourth millennium B.C. and continued into the Hellenistic period around 200 B.C. There was also an important Mycenaean shrine established at the southern peak of the mountain, c. 1500 BC. In the lower meadow is a Sanctuary of Pan and many administrative and athletic structures. This course presents the latest exciting discoveries from Mt. Lykaion within the larger context of other types of sanctuaries in the Greek world.

The Sanctuary of Zeus at Mt. Lykaion was known by ancient authors as the site of a famous religious and athletic festival to Zeus and one that may have influenced the creation of its more famous neighbor, the Sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia with which it shares many aspects. There is rich mythology that surrounds the location of the Sanctuary of Zeus that has to do with the beginnings of the Greek world.

Living and working on the mountain-top includes relationships with many local villagers, citizens of the area and politicians of the region and the country. Our excavation has been exemplary in its social and political dealings with the local populations including close relationships with the Cultural Society of Lykaion Zeus in Ano Karyes, Arcadia as well as with Mayors and Governors and with the President of the Hellenic Republic.

One of the original objectives of our project was to create a large-scale cultural heritage park to unify and protect the natural environment as well as the four ancient cities and nine ancient sanctuaries that surround the Sanctuary of Zeus at Mt. Lykaion on all sides. The Parrhasian Heritage Park of the Peloponnesos, as proposed, is an area of ca. 670 square kilometers including aspects of western Arcadia, northern Messenia and southern Elis in the heart of the Peloponnesos. It includes beautiful mountains and rivers, flora and fauna, villages and fields. We are very close to an official designation from the Greek state.

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Course Outline and Readings:

March 15th: Introduction to Mt. Lykaion and the UA excavation campaign

- Background information about Mt. Lykaion, location, previous excavations, current UA campaign.
- Overview of results from 2004-2010 excavations and current campaign, 2016-2021
- Upper sanctuary, altar and temenos
- Lower sanctuary: athletic and administrative complex
- Ancient literary references to site, including references to human sacrifice.

Suggested Readings:

Urbanus, J. "A View from the Birthplace of Zeus," *Archaeology Magazine*, January-February 2018, pp. 44-49.

Romano, D.G. and M.E. Voyatzis, "Excavating at the Birthplace of Zeus," *Expedition*, vol. 52, 2010, pp. 9-21.

<http://lykaionexcavation.org>

March 22th: The Sanctuary of Zeus in the context of the larger Greek world

- Prehistoric remains at the altar of Zeus (Neolithic, Early Helladic and Middle Helladic pottery) and what they might mean - Birthplace of Zeus?
- Mycenaean Greece and evidence for ritual and religion (compare Mycenae, Pylos, and other sites)
- Collapse of Mycenaean civilization, period of transition, and evidence for Early Iron Age religion and continuity of cult
- Upper and lower levels of the sanctuary and how long site was in use.
- The rise of Greek sanctuaries generally and the different types: urban, extra-urban, panhellenic (i.e., Olympia, Delphi, etc.)

Suggested Readings:

Romano D. G. and M. E. Voyatzis, "Mt. Lykaion Excavation and Survey Project, Part 1, The Upper Sanctuary: Preliminary Report 2004-2010", *Hesperia*, 2014, pp. 569-652.

Romano D. G. and M. E. Voyatzis, "Mt. Lykaion Excavation and Survey Project, Part 2, The Lower Sanctuary, Preliminary Report 2004-2010", *Hesperia*, 2015, pp. 207-276.

Romano, D. G. "Mt. Lykaion as the Arcadian Birthplace of Zeus," *in Nature – Myth – Religion in Ancient Greece*, ed., Tanja Susanne Sheer, Stuttgart, 2019, pp. 219-237.

March 29th. Results of Scientific Tests and Significance

- Many scientific tests done at Mt. Lykaion: C14 on bones, petrography and chemical analyses on pottery, micromorphology, faunal analyses, paleobotanical analyses. More recently, also isotope analysis, DNA, etc.
- Brief summary of results of all the tests and what they can tell us about activity at the site, its use, and development over time.
- Earliest evidence from Olympia (Elis) and Mt. Lykaion (Arcadia) and what it may mean
- Ash altars and what they may signify
- Evidence for ancient athletics at both sites and in the Greek world generally
- How to explain similarities between Olympia and Mt. Lykaion? Why does Olympia arguably become the most famous sanctuary in the Greek world?

Suggested Readings:

Starkovich, B., G. Hodgins, M. E. Voyatzis, and D. G. Romano, "Dating Gods: Radiocarbon dates from the sanctuary of Zeus on Mount Lykaion (Arcadia, Greece)," 21st International Radiocarbon conference, Paris, July 2013, *Radiocarbon*, 501-513.

G. Kordatzaki, E. Kiriati, N. Müller, M. Voyatzis, D. Romano, S. Petrakis, J. Forsen, G. Nordquist, E. Rodriguez-Alvarez, S. Linn, "A Diachronic Investigation of 'Local' Pottery Production and Supply at the Sanctuary of Zeus, Mt. Lykaion, Arcadia, Peloponnese," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 7 (2016), 526-529.

S. M. Mentzer, D. G. Romano and M. E. Voyatzis, "Micromorphological contributions to the study of ritual behavior at the ash altar to Zeus on Mt. Lykaion, Greece" in *Archaeological Anthropological Science Journal*, Heidelberg, 2014.

Eder, B., "The World of Telemachos: Western Greece 1200-700 BC," in *Ancient Greece: From the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*, Deger-Jalkotzy, S. and I. Lemos (eds.), 2006, 549-580.

Burkert, W. (tr. Peter Bing). 1983. "Lykaia and Lykaion." In *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*, Berkeley, pp. 84-93. (Original German publication: Berlin, 1972.)

April 5th: Parrhasian Heritage Park and Future Work

- Putting it all together: based on excavated results, ancient texts, and scientific tests, what is the significance of Mt. Lykaion within Arcadia and within the larger Greek world? How it can help us better understand ancient Greek culture, religion and ritual from Prehistory through the Hellenistic period.
- Parrhasian Heritage Park: background, description, and achievements to date (Arcadia, Messenia, Elis) and the Parrhasian Heritage Foundation.
- 2021 season at Mt. Lykaion and future directions

Suggested Readings:

Cook, A.B. 1914. *Zeus*, vol.1, Cambridge, pp. 63-88.

<http://parrhasianheritagepark.org>

D.G. Romano and M.E. Voyatzis, eds., *The Parrhasian Heritage Park of the Peloponnesos*, Philadelphia, 2010.

D. G. Romano and M. E. Voyatzis, "Preserving Ancient Arcadian Heritage: Proposal for an Archaeological Park," in *Paysage et religion. Melanges offerts a Madeleine Jost*, eds., Carlier P. et Lerouge-Cohen C., Paris 2010, pp. 41-54.