

northwestern university
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

Quarter/Year	Course Number	Day/Time	Instructor
Winter 2018	ART-HIST 319 / HUM 370-4	TR 9:30-10:50	Gunter

Course Title

Constructing Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World



How did individuals define themselves in the ancient Mediterranean world, and how did they express their affiliation with multiple and diverse ethnic, religious, and other collective social identities? This course explores evidence for self- and group-fashioning in Greece, Rome, and their neighbors in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. We examine a wide range of textual and material sources, including works of art, archaeological contexts such as burials and religious institutions, biographies, autobiographies, and legal documents. We consider culturally significant modes of self-representation and commemoration, such as portraits and funerary monuments, along with the collecting and transfer of objects that represented accumulated social entanglements, such as heirlooms. What do we know of the construction of gender identities? What dynamic roles did dress, hairstyle, body decoration or ornament, and personal possessions play in establishing and expressing individual and collective identities?

This course will draw extensively on museum resources in the Chicago area. It engages in particular with the concurrent Block Museum exhibition titled “Paint the Eyes Softer: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt,” which emphasizes material expressions of individual and collective identities within the global, multicultural world of the Roman Empire.

Required Textbooks

Readings will be provided.

Assessments

Participation in discussion of readings, leading discussion, 4 short assessments of readings, and a research paper on an object.
