



GRAECO-ROMAN ALEXANDRIA

CLS 185-02/ARCH 188-02

Fall 2010

Monica Berti
Lecturer
321 Eaton Hall
x72441

Office hours (Eaton 331):
Mon. & Thurs. 3-4 pm
Tues. 6-7 pm
email: monica.berti@tufts.edu

SYLLABUS

The second city of the Roman Empire was not Athens, nor was it located in Italy. Founded by Alexander the Great, a century after the golden age of Athens and thousands of years after the beginning of Egyptian civilization, Alexandria evolved into a major economic, cultural and intellectual center that shaped the course of world history. This course will examine physical features, history, and above all the historical impact of Alexandria as arguably the greatest cosmopolitan center in the ancient world.

The course will cover topics such as:

- Alexandria as a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic city and its influence in the history of Judaism, Christianity and the Islamic World: The city was not only a center of Greek culture in Egypt, but also the seat of the largest Jewish community in the world, whose importance persuaded the Ptolemies to translate the Hebrew Bible resulting in the so called Septuagint, which would remain the reference Greek translation of the Old Testament until modern times. The coexistence of many different peoples in the city of Alexandria was not easy, but had a formidable effect on cross-cultural challenges. The mixture of Greek thought, Pharaonic cults, and Eastern religions produced a

fertile terrain for the rise of Christianity, which experienced particular development in Alexandria. Moreover, the extraordinary activities and scientific innovations of the Alexandrian library produced an enduring model of interdisciplinarity for the organization of modern academic institutions.

- The particular features of the geographical site, known already in the Homeric epics centuries before the city was founded.
- The great monuments and cultural institutions of the city:
 - the Library of Alexandria and the so-called Museum, the first and most famous international scholarly center of the classical world, where they promoted a wide range of studies and gathered a huge collection of books in many different languages, such as Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Nabataean, Arabic, Indian, and Egyptian;
 - the Tomb of Alexander, which served as a symbol for a Graeco-Egyptian culture but disappeared in the 3rd century AD and whose memory became the focus of great veneration and strong attacks by Christian and Islamic Alexandria, until modern archaeological explorations;
 - the Pharos – the great lighthouse that represented the visible proof of the economic and political power of Alexandria in the Mediterranean Sea.

The aim of the course is to show how Graeco-Roman Alexandria can be considered a mirror of contemporary international relations and global challenges in culture, religion, politics, and economics.

BLACKBOARD

The course syllabus, class handouts, assignments, office hours, and other announcements will be regularly posted and updated on the “Graeco-Roman Alexandria” Blackboard site.

* The syllabus is subject to change: Please, check it on line every week on the Blackboard site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

- 1) Assigned weekly readings.
- 2) Preparation for attendance and participation in seminar discussions.
- 3) Weekly journaling exercises of roughly two pages double-spaced that engage with two or more of the readings critically. Please email your paper directly to the instructor. Journals are due by 10PM on the Monday before class.
- 4) Two powerpoint presentations of 20 minutes.
- 5) Midterm examination (Tuesday, November 9).
- 6) Final examination.

Attendance, preparation, and participation 20%
Weekly journaling exercises 20%
Powerpoint presentations 20%
Midterm examination 20%
Final examination 20%

Total 100%

TEXTBOOK AND READINGS

Textbook:

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006) (Students should have a copy of this paper textbook, available at the University Bookstore)

Other Readings:

Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt 300 BC - AD 700*, Yale University Press (New Haven and London 2007) (copies of readings from this book will be given to the students during classes)

Edward Alexander Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library, Glory of the Hellenic World. Its Rise, Antiquities, and Destructions*, Elsevier Press (Amsterdam and New York 1952) (copies of readings from this book will be given to the students during classes)

* Other texts and ancient sources (in English translation) will be given to the students during classes and posted on the course Blackboard site.

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

1. *Why Alexandria? Introduction to the course*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. xiii-xvii

2. *Flour and Sand: Alexander the Great and the Foundation of Alexandria*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 1-16

Homer, *Odyssey* 4.351-586

Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 26

Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander* 3.1-2

3. *The Body and the Tomb of Alexander*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 17-34
Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 17.116-118; 18.26-29
Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander* 7.23-30

4. *Travelling to Alexandria with Strabo*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 24-29
Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 17.52
Strabo, *Geography* 17.1.6-10
Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 6.1.3
Ammianus Marcellinus 22.16.7-14

5. *The Ptolemies: Greek Pharaohs*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 35-45, 75-92, 140-155
Herodotus 2.153; 3.26-30
Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History* 1.20-22
Strabo, *Geography* 17.1.30-32
Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 12-21

6. *The Library of Aristotle*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 46-59
Strabo, *Geography* 13.1.54
Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 7-8
Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 1.3a

7. *The Foundation of the Library and the Shrine of the Muses at Alexandria*

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

Edward Alexander Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library, Glory of the Hellenic World. Its Rise, Antiquities, and Destructions*, Elsevier Press (Amsterdam and New York 1952), pp. 83-105
Herwig Maehler, 'Alexandria, the Mouseion, and cultural identity', in Anthony Hirst & Michael Silk (eds.), *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, Ashgate (Aldershot and Burlington 2004), pp. 1-14
The Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates 9-11; 29-32
Suda, s.v. Demetrios (D 429)

8. *The Island of Pharos: The Lighthouse of Alexandria*

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 89-92

Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt 300 BC - AD 700*, Yale University Press (New Haven and London 2007), pp. 41-45

9. How Many Libraries in Alexandria?

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5

Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt 300 BC - AD 700*, Yale University Press (New Haven and London 2007), pp. 53-55, 195-203

Jane Rowlandson, *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt. A Sourcebook*, Cambridge University Press (Cambridge and New York 1998), pp. 155-174

10. Cataloging Knowledge: Callimachus and the Material Assembled in the Library of Alexandria

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7

Edward Alexander Parsons, *The Alexandrian Library, Glory of the Hellenic World. Its Rise, Antiquities, and Destructions*, Elsevier Press (Amsterdam and New York 1952), pp. 204-218

Francis J. Witty, 'The Pinakes of Callimachus', in *Library Quarterly* 28:1/4 (1958), pp. 132-136

Francis J. Witty, 'The Other Pinakes of Callimachus', in *Library Quarterly* 43:3 (1973), pp. 237-244

11. Tisch Library Instruction Session 1: Introduction to a Modern Library

(Lecture by Chris Strauber - The Tisch Library)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12 (TISCH LIBRARY, ERC, ROOM 223)

This class will be held at the Tisch Library to introduce students to functions and technologies of a modern library, in order to compare it with the ancient library at Alexandria (for a "research guide" on this session see [Research Guide - Classics 185](#))

[David Kaser, 'The American Academic Library Building, 1870-1890', in *The Journal of Library History* 21:1 \(1974-1987\), Libraries, Books, & Culture I \(Winter, 1986\), pp. 60-71](#)

12. Managing and Organizing Knowledge - From Alexandria to the Digital Age

(Lecture by Alison Babeu - Perseus Digital Library)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14

[Lisbet Rausing, 'Toward a New Alexandria', in *The New Republic* \(March 12, 2010\)](#)

13. The Alexandrian Library and Homeric Philology

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19

John Tzetzes, *Prolegomena to Aristophanes* pr. 2

[The Homer Multitext Project](#)

14. Ancient Scholars and the Alexandrian Library: Aristarchus of Samos, Eratosthenes, and Archimedes

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 93-107, 108-121, 123-139

15. Ancient Scholars and the Alexandrian Library: Euclid and Galen

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 60-74, 224-238

Euclid, *Elements*, book 1 (definitions, postulates, common notions, proposition 1, 5, 47)

Proclus, *A Commentary on the First Book of Euclid's Elements* 20-29; 45-47; 68-81 (ed. G.R. Morrow)

16. The Septuagint

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 69-74
The Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates 301-322

17. Tisch Library Instruction Session 2: The Work of a Modern Librarian

(Lecture by Chris Strauber, Chris Barbour, Alicia Morris, Thom Cox - The Tisch Library)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2 (TISCH LIBRARY, ERC, ROOM 223)

This class will be held at the Tisch Library to show students the work of modern librarians, in order to compare them with ancient librarians of the Alexandrian Library (for a "research guide on this session see [Research Guide - Classics 185 - Librarians](#))

18. Cleopatra

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 156-174

Caesar, *Commentaries on the Civil War* 3.109-112

Lucan, *Pharsalia* 10.491-503

Plutarch, *The Life of Caesar* 49.6

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9 – MIDTERM EXAM

19. Philo of Alexandria and Claudius Ptolemy

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 191-208

[Gregory R. Crane, 'Rethinking the Humanities and Advancing Civilization in a Violent World', in *The Stoa Consortium* \(posted on Nov. 9th, 2010\)](#)

20. Clement of Alexandria and Arius

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 209-223, 256-265

21. Ammonius Sacca and Plotinus

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 239-255
Porphyry, *On the life of Plotinus and the order of his books* 1-6

22. Hypatia

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 261-265, 266-279

[Richard Holmes, 'The Royal Society's lost women scientists', in *The Observer* \(November 21, 2010\)](#)

23. The Arab Conquest of Alexandria

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2

Justin Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria, Birthplace of the Modern World*, Penguin Books (New York and London 2006), pp. 280-287

24. A New Alexandria? Libraries, Classics and the Digital Age

(Lecture by Alison Babeu - Perseus Digital Library)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7

Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics. How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, Portfolio (New York 2006), pp. 151-182 (*The New Alexandrians*)

25. Back to Alexandria: The Myth of Alexandria and its Universal Model

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22 – FINAL EXAM

12:00 pm - 2:00 pm (Eaton 202)