S A V E  A N C I E N T  S T U D I E S  A L L I A N C E
&  D I G I T A L  H A M M U R A B I

S A S A

A R E  T O  P R O U D  P R E S E N T

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W O R L D

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C O N F E R E N C E

A U G U S T  1 5 -
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OPENING THE ANCIENT WORLD: RELIGION, HISTORY, & CULTURE

A FREE, VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

CO-ORGANIZERS
DAVID DANZIG
MEGAN LEWIS
CHRISTIAN CASEY

LIVESTREAMED
SASA’s website (saveancientstudies.org/virtual-conference)
SASA’s YouTube Channel (Save Ancient Studies Alliance)
Digital Hammurabi’s YouTube Channel (Digital Hammurabi)
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LEARN ABOUT ROUNDTABLES HERE!

VISIT OUR WEBPAGE AT SAVEANCIENTSTUDIES.ORG/VIRTUAL-CONFERENCE!
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Visit our webpage at saveancientstudies.org/virtual-conference
CONFERENCE GOALS

I. Present and support excellent scholarship by scholars at the fringes of the academic community and researchers who have not followed the traditional tenure-track career path.

II. Foster discussion and action regarding public outreach and scholarly inclusiveness.

III. Hold a conference freely available to the public.

IV. Begin building a joint community of scholars including both those not on the traditional path and those in the ivory tower.

VISIT OUR WEBPAGE AT SAVEANCIENTSTUDIES.ORG/VIRTUAL-CONFERENCE!
WHO ARE WE BRINGING TOGETHER?

What do we mean when we say we aim to bring together those “at the fringes of the academic community and researchers who have not followed the traditional tenure-track career path.”? To us, this conference serves to bring together scholars who do not have the same opportunities to present their work and engage with scholars as those who went the traditional tenured track might. Some of the groups we sought to reach out to included:

- Completed a PhD and are now professionals in other fields
- Left PhD programs
- Contingent faculty
- Academics from marginalized groups
- Teachers, professors, and staff from all educational institutions
- Cultural resource management professionals

HOW WE PROMOTED INCLUSIVITY

Any scholar of the Ancient Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, broadly defined, was welcomed and encouraged to submit an academic paper proposal in the subject areas of Religion, Culture, or History. In addition, all presenters were strongly encouraged to participate in at least one of the two discussion groups.

In this inclusive context, beyond the scholarly presentations, we will also host special sessions in which we aim to discuss a range of issues pertaining to the precarious situation of Ancient Studies. These discussions will broach the issues of how to develop outreach by Ancient Studies scholars, further inclusiveness, and reimagine scholarship as a lifelong pursuit within a diverse yet inclusive scholarly community.

Additionally, we have two roundtables that open up conference discussions to the public, allowing anyone interested to academically engage with Ancient Studies. Day 1’s conversation is “Diversity in Ancient Studies: Problem Solving Through Outreach.” Day 2’s is “Research Outside the Academy: Building an Inclusive Environment. These Roundtables are intended as forums for those who are interested in proactively developing real solutions to these problems of diversity and inclusivity. We view them as working groups to convene and begin to outline practical steps for solutions that will be taken up via future collaborations to truly Open the Ancient World to all.

VISIT OUR WEBPAGE AT SAVEANCIENTSTUDIES.ORG/VIRTUAL-CONFERENCE!
THE ORGANIZERS

DAVID DANZIG
SASA - Founder & Director
PhD Candidate, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University

MEGAN LEWIS
Digital Hammurabi - Co-Founder & Operator

CHRISTIAN CASEY
SASA Virtual Conference Team Leader
ISAW Postdoctoral Fellow

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

DR. MARK SMITH
Helene Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis at Princeton Theological Seminary

DR. MOUDHY AL-RASHID
Assyriologist and Junior Research Fellow at Wolfson College, University of Oxford

DR. HEBA ABD EL GAWAD
Postdoctoral Researcher for “Egypt’s Dispersed Heritage: Views from Egypt”, Institute of Archaeology, University College of London

SABER A. PARIAN
Engineer, Researcher of Elamite and the Behistun Inscription

VISIT OUR WEBPAGE AT SAVEANCIENTSTUDIES.ORG/VIRTUAL-CONFERENCE
SESSIONS

The Ancient World Today
Amber Zambelli
Dr. Anna Goldfield
Stacy Davidson
Dr. Anne Austin
Dr. Heidi Jauhiainen

Then and Now
Dr. Georgina Longley
Dr. Ariadne Schulz
Carly Silver

Ancient Identity (I and II)
Dr. Rachael Goldman
Dr. Roberto Gozzoli
Emily McElroy
Alison Manley
Ron Clark

Literature (I and II)
Dr. Maria Luisa Bernardini
Bryan Kinzbrunner
Matthijs Kronemeijer
Elliot Stern
Jackson Reinhardt
Dr. David Miano
Dr. Henry Dosedla

SCHEDULE - DAY 1
AUGUST 15, 2021

10:15am - 10:30am EDT  Introductions - David Danzig and Megan Lewis

10:30 am - 11:15am EDT  Keynote I - Dr. Moudhy al-Rashid | Making and Remaking Ancient History
#OAWKeynoteAlRashid

11:15am - 12:45pm EDT  Ancient Identity I
#OAWSessionAncientIdentityI
Dr. Rachael Goldman | Reading the Ruins and Ancient Jewish Memory: An Investigation into Monuments and Inscriptions
Dr. Roberto Gozzoli | Egyptian Hieroglyphs as God’s Language in the Kingdom of Kush. Part II: Was Piankhy hieroglyphic literate?
Emily McElroy | Disabled, Disinherited, and Decisive Daughter: An Assessment of Labda in the Corinth Founding Myth

12:45pm - 2:15pm EDT  Then and Now
#OAWSessionAntiquityThenNow
Dr. Georgina Longley | Polybius’ Modern Blueprint
Dr. Ariadne Schulz | Politics and Plague: Disease, Democracy, and Athens
Carly Silver | Meet the Vanguard of the Ancient World

2:15pm - 3:00pm EDT  Keynote 2 - Dr. Heba Abd el-Gawad | “To repatriate or not to repatriate? That should not be the question!”: Centering Social Justice in the Current “Decolonising the past” Turn
#OAWKeynoteAbdElGawad

3:00pm - 4:30pm EDT  Literature I
#OAWSessionAncientLiteratureI
Dr. Maria Luisa Bernardini | Euripides’ Antiope: About the Rising of Intellectual Between Tradition and New Politico – Cultural Instances
Bryan Kinzbrunner | Evolution of Chariots from war vehicles to symbols of the Divine – A Proposal for how the Phrase Ma’aseh Merkabah Became the Description of Jewish Mysticism?
Jackson Reinhardt | “Outskirts of Paradise”: Depictions of Hades in Early Syriac Literature

4:30pm - 5:30pm EDT  Round Table - Diversity in Ancient Studies: Problem Solving Through Outreach
#OAWRoundtableDiversityinAncientStudies

5:30pm - 6:00pm EDT  Special session from Australia
#OAWExtraSession
Dr. Joseph Chung | The Old Religious Traditions Used in the New
OPENING THE ANCIENT WORLD VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AUGUST 15-16, 2021

WHERE IS THE CONFERENCE STREAMED?

- SASA’s website (saveancientstudies.org/virtual-conference)
- SASA’s YouTube Channel (Save Ancient Studies Alliance)
- Digital Hammurabi’s YouTube Channel (Digital Hammurabi)
  - SASA’s Facebook (@SaveAncientStudies)
  - SASA’s Twitch (@SaveAncientStudies)

WHAT ARE THE HASHTAGS?

Share your thoughts about each conference event on Twitter with these hashtags and follow the discussion live on SASA’s Twitter feed! For general thoughts on the conference, use the hashtag #OAWconference!

ADDITIONAL INFO

WHAT’S THE ART COMPETITION?

The art competition is an opportunity for anyone out there to send SASA a design related to any ancient world culture or geographical region for a chance to get the artwork featured on merchandise in the Bazaar, SASA’s store!

WHERE IS THE CONFERENCE STREAMED?

- SASA’s website (saveancientstudies.org/virtual-conference)
- SASA’s YouTube Channel (Save Ancient Studies Alliance)
- Digital Hammurabi’s YouTube Channel (Digital Hammurabi)
  - SASA’s Facebook (@SaveAncientStudies)
  - SASA’s Twitch (@SaveAncientStudies)

CAN’T MAKE IT? DON’T WORRY!

Unless otherwise requested, the entire conference will remain on YouTube! That means you can see what you missed or go back and review a presentation at any time!

SCHEDULE - DAY 2

AUGUST 16, 2021

10:15am - 11:00am EDT
Keynote 3 - Saber Parian | The Elamite Version of the Behistun Inscription: New Perspectives and Insights
#OAWKeynoteParian

11:00am - 12:30pm EDT
The Ancient World Today
#OAWSessionAncientWorldToday
Dr. Heidi Jauhiainen | The State of Encoded Hieroglyphic texts
Stacy Davidson and Dr. Anne Austin | The Egyptology State of the Field Project: A Data-driven Assessment of American Egyptology
Amber Zambelli and Dr. Anna Goldfield | Human Stories: Lessons Learned from Podcasting the Past

12:30pm - 2:00pm EDT
Ancient Identity II
#OAWSessionAncientIdentity2
Dr. Henry Dosedla | “Black Gold of Antiquity” – The Triumphant Advance of Graphite Pottery in the Mediterranean
Alison Manley | Lapis Lazuli Cylinder Seals of Ur: Third Millennium BC Burial Trends
Ron Clark | Your Warriors Will Become Women: The Feminization of Exiles, Captives, and Survivors in Ancient Jehud

2:00pm - 3:30pm EDT
Literature II
#OAWSessionAncientLiterature2
Dr. David Miano | Who Wrote the Tel Dan Inscription?
Matthijs Kronemeijer | The Hole In the Narrative: Philosophical Convention and Divine Mercy in Mark 1–3
Elliot Stern | One People, One Language, and a Tower to the Heavens: Exploring the story of the Tower of Babel as a Cultural Legacy

3:30pm - 4:30pm EDT
Round Table - Research Outside the Academy: Building an Inclusive Environment
#OAWRoundtableResearchOutsideAcademy

4:30pm - 5:00pm EDT
All About the Art Competition
#OAWArtCompetition

5:00pm - 5:45pm EDT
Keynote 4 - Dr. Mark Smith | The Hebrew Bible Against, and or in the Ancient Near East? The Problems with Claims about Cultural Conjunction
#OAWKeynoteSmith

5:45pm - 6:45pm EDT
Social hour for SASA and for Digital Hammurabi
#OAWSocialHour

VISIT OUR WEBPAGE AT SAVEANCIENTSTUDIES.ORG/VIRTUAL-CONFERENCE
1 Round Table One: Diversity in Ancient Studies: Problem Solving Through Outreach

Lack of diversity in Ancient Studies fields is a well acknowledged problem. Many fields within Ancient Studies developed through colonialist endeavors and allowed limited access to only particular social groups via elitist schools. Over the past several decades strides have been made to begin to transform the attitudes and practices surrounding the notion of who “belongs” in studying the deep past. SASA and Digital Hammurabi envision a New Ancient Studies in which all are not only welcome, but also actively incorporated into the study of the deep past of all places and cultures.

STILL WANT TO SIGN UP?

Sign up here for Round Table One!
Sign up here for Round Table Two!

Please note that the discussions will be livestreamed on our platforms. If you do not want to participate or do not want to be included in the broadcast then you can still follow the discussion!

2 Round Table Two: Research Outside the Academy: Building an Inclusive Environment

The fields of Ancient Studies consist of a wonderful, tight-knit community of scholars. Though they are spread out across the world, scholars see each other regularly at conferences and symposia held by the various learned societies and departments. However, this ivory tower has strict boundaries, imposed by the limited number of academic positions available and by the attitude that to be a “scholar” one must be directly part of an academic institution. Though we work to expand Ancient Studies fields, this model for the self-definition of the “community of scholars” and the attendant attitude of exclusivity must change. Ancient Studies can only truly grow beyond its current bounds when there is a home within this community for scholars who earn their livings in other occupations. SASA and Digital Hammurabi envision a New Ancient Studies in which all are not only welcome, but also actively incorporated into the study of the deep past of all places and cultures.

ROUND TABLE OUTLINES

DAY ONE
Introduction - David Danzig
The Queer Classicist - Yentl Love
Archaeological Virtual Reality Online Database - Jeremy Brooks
Amerlia the Archaeologist - Amelia Dall

DAY TWO
Moderator
Executive Director of the Society for Classical Studies - Dr. Helen Cullyer
Introduction - David Danzig
Working Classicists - George Connor
Religion for Breakfast - Andrew Henry
World History Encyclopedia - Jan van der Crabben
The subject of Jewish patronage and slave inscriptions has long attested to the Jewish presence and their ability to continue and change their responsibilities as citizens and worshippers in the Roman Empire. Recent studies on color and polychromacity have also aided our understanding of how Romans, Jews and other peoples evolved over time of how they interpret Roman culture for themselves. For example the names Sabbatius and Paschasius are examples of names given to Hebrew slaves, but what they call themselves is reflective of what they chose to identify themselves as, thereby ridding themselves of a Jewish memory. Memory, in this respect was held only through the decorative symbols, evocative of the temple, including menorot, animals, rolled up scrolls, ivy leaves, and even a wax tablet. In my discussion, respect was held only through the decorative symbols, evocative of the temple, including the redemption and afterlife, specifically in regard to the change in Jewish memory evoked in these inscriptions, I consider a change in the meaning of the lettering on these inscriptions to that of Roman art to suggest a “Jewish vocabulary.” I will compare the paleographic painted and can be traced to the mosaics in synagogues in the Galilee, polychromacity, it is possible to discern that many inscriptions were painted and can be traced to the mosaics in synagogues in the Galilee, suggesting a “Jewish vocabulary.” I will compare the paleographic nature of the lettering on these inscriptions to that of Roman art to demonstrate how Jewish artisans embraced the language of their captors and assimilated into Roman society. By connecting the Jewish memory evoked in these inscriptions, I consider a change in the redemptive and afterlife, specifically in regard to the change in profession. This demonstrates that the Jews in the Diaspora created a visual presence quite different from that of the Jews in Palestine.

My conclusions are as follows: With recent studies on polychromacity, it is possible to discern that many inscriptions were painted and can be traced to the mosaics in synagogues in the Galilee, suggesting a “Jewish vocabulary.” I will compare the paleographic nature of the lettering on these inscriptions to that of Roman art to demonstrate how Jewish artisans embraced the language of their captors and assimilated into Roman society. By connecting the Jewish memory evoked in these inscriptions, I consider a change in the redemptive and afterlife, specifically in regard to the change in profession. This demonstrates that the Jews in the Diaspora created a visual presence quite different from that of the Jews in Palestine.
This paper seeks to demonstrate how ‘Opening up the Ancient World’, we can open up our own. My primary focus will be on the methods and approaches of Greek historian, Polybius. My doctoral research showed how the scope and range of the Greek term, politeia, furnished Polybius with a sophisticated model for the analysis, not only of Rome, but also the other peoples with which he deals in his work. Polybius’ sixth book, which contains his account of the Roman politeia, does not only describe the political workings of the Roman government, which he classes as a ‘mixed-politeia’, composed of three different political elements: kingship, aristocracy, and democracy. Polybius also includes a theory of historical causation, Roman military organisation, religious customs, economic attitudes, public and private displays and practices, popular stories. In short, this is a rich model through which a society and its people’s behaviour can be analysed.

These many different areas build up the whole picture. It is a model highly relevant for our own times. I am not the first to make this argument. Polybius was an important inspiration for International Relations’ theorist, Hans Morgenthau, in his work, Politics Among Nations. What I shall be arguing is that Polybius’ holistic approach to the analysis of peoples can offer us a better understanding of our own society and others. It is very easy to look at a single aspect of a nation in isolation and praise or criticise it. But what does this system or practice tell us about the society as whole? What is the relationship between the people and the ruling element? Polybius offers us a sophisticated tool for taking a broader approach to exploring and asking questions about the world around us.

Politics and Plague: Disease, Democracy, and Athens | Dr. Ariadne Schulz

Pericles was one of the tens of thousands carried off by the plague of Athens. In his absence the city and those who succeeded him were ill equipped to carry on the Peloponnesian War. Given the opportunity to cease hostilities, Cleon squandered it and he and other populists allowed Athenian democracy to crumble. Thucydides, the chief recorder of the plague of Athens is primarily concerned with the cultural, religious, and political decay faced by Athens and had a cynical view on democracy itself. It is this historical inflection wherein Socrates was executed and when the metoikoi (immigrants) experienced increasing restrictions on their civil rights. Ethnic fears rose and laws were enacted curtailing metoikoi rights in response.

The parallel to the modern political landscape is inescapable with the near simultaneous rise of worldwide fascism and xenophobia alongside the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the xenophobia practiced in recent history and in Athens predates their respective epidemics. Both Britain and the USA enacted immigration and residency restrictions well prior to the pandemic. Pericles did enact law restricting metics’ access to citizenship during the plague of Athens, but there had been and continued to be an othering and fear of non-Athenians within Athens before, during, and after the plague. The apparent origin of the plague supposedly in Ethiopia and its first emergence in Piraeus only compounded already present fears regarding non-Athenians.

Other epidemics and outbreaks including the English sweating sickness, black plague, smallpox, syphilis, ebola, and influenza have had lasting political and economic effect. Are these effects contingent upon the contemporary atmosphere or are they specific to the disease itself? This research will be a literature review of historical and archaeological sources exploring the relationship between disease and politics through the Covid-19 pandemic and the plague of Athens.

Meet the Vanguard of the Ancient World | Carly Silver

The cult leader, a scammer of the first—and worst—degree ---is alive and well, most recently with NXIVM. But the ancient world had its own Keith Raniere—Alexander of Abonoteichus—showing the timelessness of manipulative psychology employed by male cults of personality. Alexander of Abonoteichus did everything from breaking into a Turkish temple of Apollo to plant baby snakes in the sanctuary to spewing false prophecy with snake-oil sales techniques.

Tales of Alexander come to us via satirist Lucian, but he and his snake puppet, Glycon, are amply attested in archaeological evidence. He also targeted rich donors to bring in cash to fund his lifestyle, much as Raniere deliberately reached out to wealthy, vulnerable women like heiress Clare Bronfman. Lucian shrugs off Alexander’s conquests as mere seductions, but Raniere is a brutal tyrant who branded and raped the women under his control. Would Lucian have treated Alexander so mildly in the modern world? Alexander sent notes offering to intercede with Apollo on people’s behalves during a pestilence. People inscribed his prayers to Apollo on their doorposts; ironically, the writer Lucian quips, he noticed that people who did this got sicker more often than people who did not.

Similarly, Raniere preyed on women’s weaknesses by intimating these people were not themselves good enough and building off of a world that undermines women’s confidence. He offered self-help classes that would seemingly cure these women’s inadequacies, much like Alexander with his petitioners’ anxieties. Alexander feeding on people’s need for local divine manifestation and security in ancient tradition in an increasingly global society (second century CE). But Alexander is portrayed as a non-believer, someone who preyed on others’ weaknesses, techniques that still survive and thrive in modern MLMs and cults.
In this paper, I examine the depictions of Hades/Sheol in the earliest Christian Syriac literature, with particular emphasis on three influential sources from the 3rd and 4th-centuries CE: The Odes of Solomon (~3rd-cent. CE), The Acts of Thomas (~3rd-cent. CE), as well as both the poetical and prose writings of Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306 – 373). There is a dearth of material on Hades, and eschatology more generally, in English-language Syriac academic discourse. Frequently, discussions on the posthumous state are examined through the prism of Christ’s descensus ad infernos— his preaching of the Gospel to the Old Testament Saints and their deliverance into the Heaven. Over the past several decades, there have been several monographs and dissertations which study Christ’s descent in Ephrem, The Odes, and other early and medieval Syriac literature.

Yet, there is little explicit surveying on the role of this place beyond the obscure theological event. Thus, this paper attempts to go beyond the descent and provide analysis and elaboration on Hades' location, inhabitants, function, and greater cosmological-eschatological significance. I contend that these works, even though they are arising from the same cultural-theological milieu, demonstrate a remarkable diversity in their conceptualization. This pictorial polyvalence points to these sources performing an active, imaginative, and poetic engagement with a common theological notion (e.g. the afterlife) for which there seemed to be no emerging or existing consensus within the broader Church which might condition their claims and constructions.

These sources are foundational for Syriac Orthodoxy, as they are still informing the vibrant liturgy, theology, and hymnody of this tradition. Additionally, the very idea of hell, as a historical and contemporary belief, is undergoing a scholarly problematization from a variety of theological commitments and contexts, a discursive trend this paper hopes to participate in.
In order to use digital methods for researching texts, the texts have to be machine-readable. For large modern languages, such as English, there are openly available digital corpora of texts. These corpora can be big and built from natively digital texts such as Wikipedia. A smaller corpus is sufficient for many purposes and there are several corpora built specifically for historical research. Assyriology, for example, has freely downloadable corpora of machine-readable texts, such as the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus, but the lack of similar corpora hinders the digital study of ancient Egyptian texts.

There is a tradition in Egyptology of using encoding to represent hieroglyphic texts so that the information on the signs themselves and their places in regard to each other is maintained. Various types of encoding have been used when publishing texts in books but those encoded texts are not openly available. Encoded texts could also be produced by OCRing hieroglyphic or hieratic texts, but currently this approach would require a lot of annotated texts in the same handwriting for training the method.

My dissertation dealt with feasts at Deir el-Medina as attested in the non-literary texts from the workmen’s village. After defending it, I studied Computer Science and worked in Digital Humanities projects not related to Ancient Egypt. Since the beginning of year 2021, I have been working on a project of my own to produce machine-readable hieroglyphic texts. In this paper, I will present the various methods used for encoding hieroglyphic texts from Manuel de Codage to Unicode signs. I will also suggest workflows for producing more machine-readable texts using the latest Unicode encoding.
The Dirt’s approach in presenting stories from the ancient past is to humanize the humanities, and to emphasize that archaeological assemblages are records of lived experiences. We highlight stories in which listeners can see themselves to demonstrate that the countless ways in which people have lived in the past mean that there is no single “correct” way to inhabit the world as a human being. In an effort to push back against academic gatekeeping and expand perceptions of the discipline, we bring in guests from a broad range of anthropological foci to demonstrate the many ways that one can “do” anthropology. Most importantly, in terms of our own philosophy, while we often take a lighthearted approach to the presentation of these stories, we draw attention to the real human joys and tragedies we glimpse through academic study, as well as the attitudes and biases brought to topics by past and present researchers.

The Egyptology State of the Field project (www.egyptologystats.org) was established in 2020 to address this lack of data. The first stage of the project collected both survey and interview data from U.S. citizens as well as those who were trained or work in the United States. Our analysis of the data will identify and address: (1) the demographics of the field of Egyptology and the inequities faced by underrepresented populations; (2) roadblocks for graduate students and early career scholars on the Egyptological job market; and (3) experiences with accessibility, professional development, and completion/retention for graduate students and early career scholars. The data collected will provide crucial information to potential and current Egyptology students, Egyptology programs, job seekers, and those currently in Egyptology and Egyptology-adjacent professions.

The Dirt Podcast is a weekly downloadable audio series that brings the ancient past to an audience of listeners all over the world and from all walks of life. For three years, the show has taken a big-tent approach to archaeology and anthropology; however, no small part of it is dedicated to topics that fall within the traditional purview of the Classical world and Ancient Near East. In this paper, we share our successful model of presenting archaeology, anthropology, and ancient history to the public. We outline our philosophy for education and public outreach in archaeology, and suggest directions for the continued work of bringing the past to life for an audience outside of academia.

**SESSION FIVE: ANCIENT IDENTITY II**

12:30 PM - 2:00 PM EDT

**“Black Gold of Antiquity” - The Triumphant Advance of Graphite Pottery in the Mediterranean | Dr. Henry Dosedla**

Some ancient trade routes linking Central Europe with the Mediterranean already started in the course of the Neolithic period, as in the case of maritime shells used for decoration, but were later also frequented by other trading articles including graphite. Though a number of these trading routes and exchange systems can be reconstructed, information is still lacking concerning their conditions and social context. This paper will focus on graphite, which is an important commodity that was sourced during the Neolithic period principally from some rare deposits in the Danubian region. Graphite was employed in the manufacture of black ceramics, such as the graphite painted pottery of the Bulgarian “Mound Culture”, which circulated also in Aegean Thrace.
As a minister, adjunct Bible instructor, and an intimate partner violence advocate working with survivors, the intersection of masculinity, misogyny, and language create climates where males are taught to fear females and femininity. Through language young males are taught behaviors that are acceptable and unacceptable usually by degrading women or those considered “feminine.” This has become especially true through many modern authors and speakers concerning Christian masculinity, feminism, and the #MeToo movement. However, embracing the identification of Yahweh and Jesus with the captives, exiles, and humiliated of society provides, in my teaching, opportunities to challenge a “toxic masculinity” that is cultural and driven through fear, misogyny, and the oppression of females in our society.

SESSION SIX: LITERATURE II
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM EDT

VI Who Wrote the Tel Dan Inscription? | Dr. David Miano
Although it is generally accepted that the Tel Dan (or “House of David”) Inscription was composed by a king of Aram-Damascus, the evidence does not demand such a conclusion. There is no evidence to show that, in the ninth century BCE, Dan was under the jurisdiction of any kingdom other than Israel. Moreover, use of the Aramaic language in royal inscriptions at this time was not restricted to Arameans. Israel’s vassal status to Assyria, which used Aramaic in correspondence, and the city’s proximity to Aram may account for the dialect of the inscription. Its contents point to Jehu son of Nimshi as the author.

VII The Hole in the Narrative; the Gospel of Mark (2:4) between Jewish Prophecy and Greek Philosophy | Matthijs Kronemeijer
In his 2014 study Philosophy Between the Lines, the political theorist Arthur Melzer chronicles the history of esoteric philosophical writing, an ancient dissimulation technique largely forgotten until its rediscovery by Leo Strauss. At present, the validity of this insight and of Strauss’s overall approach is only accepted by a small group of scholars, whose interpretations of Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle are routinely ignored or dismissed by classicists. As a result, wide disagreements have developed and continue to exist on the interpretation of these foundational classics of the Western tradition.
Another badly understood classic is the gospel of Mark. It is generally considered the oldest biblical gospel and has been the object of intense research from a large variety of angles, historical as well as anthropological and performance-oriented. Still, there is virtually no agreement on the structural coherence of the gospel or on the date and place of its provenance; the genre is widely assumed to be a bios, a hero’s life. In my research I combine an innovative literary analysis of the gospel of Mark with Straussian political theory in an effort to unite the strengths of classical philology, philosophy and biblical interpretation.

My paper demonstrates the presence of original concentric structures in Mark, including one centered around the proclamation of divine mercy in Mark 2:1–12. I also present examples of Mark’s esoteric narrative strategies, the mere presence of which casts strong doubts on the assumption that Mark is a bios. My research confirms the use of esoteric techniques in Christian literature alongside more traditional Jewish modes of storytelling, and shows the oldest Christian gospel to be grounded in ancient political philosophy much more deeply than is generally recognized. This is an insight with potentially far-reaching consequences inside and outside of academia, for example in the Christian church.

In this paper, I will explore the use of the iconic symbols and themes—language, dispersion, city-building, cultural uniformity, and the tower itself—as manifest in a range of literary and philosophical tracts, artistic productions, and fictional reconstructions. First, I will briefly endeavor to show how the ambiguous and open-ended quality of the text in the Biblical story creates the interpretive space for expansive and variegated interpretation. This indeterminate and enigmatic aspect of the text has allowed the story to be received as a tale bound together by images and motifs rather than by a discrete and definitive narrative story. To demonstrate, and to understand how the symbols of the Tower of Babel have been appropriated and reflected by the story’s cultural inheritors, I will survey and analyze a range of works from the Rabbis of the Talmud, traditional Jewish commentators of Don Isaac Abravanel and Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, political and social philosophers including Michael Oakshott, literary critics and theorists Jacque Derrida, George Steiner, and Jose Luis Borges, and the artists Pieter Bruegel and MC Escher, among others. The goal of the analysis is to understand how the story’s images are deployed, and specifically how the meaning conveyed, in word and image, depends on a shared cultural inheritance in which the significance of the story’s symbols is presupposed.

I will conclude with thoughts on the import of the weakened state of Biblical literacy on generating meaning through cultural inheritance today.
ABOUT SASA

SASA was founded in reaction to the devaluation of the study of the ancient world in universities and high schools. A group of graduate students and early career scholars came together to expand exposure and access to the ancient world and re-envision how the ancient world is studied. Our founding Director, David Danzig, sought out those who shared this frustration and the commitment to make change. Together, we began to reach out and develop our strategic vision for SASA, and over the spring and summer of 2020 we took our first steps to engaging the public with our passion for the ancient world and Ancient Studies.

We are working on introducing new and varied programming, extending our reach among students, and attracting individuals committed to contribute their time and energy to further our effort.

ABOUT DIGITAL HAMMURABI

Digital Hammurabi is a public outreach/digital humanities project/creative brain-child of Assyriologist Megan Lewis. Megan is ably assisted by a number of friends and colleagues.

Our aim is to provide reliable, accurate information about the Ancient Near East (that’s modern Iraq and the surrounding area!) in an entertaining and engaging fashion. If it’s anything to do with ancient languages, history, or culture, then you are in the right place and we hope you enjoy what we do!
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