**ARCH 1635 The Great Heresy: Egypt in the Amarna Age**

Rhode Island Hall room 108

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1-2:20pm

Instructor: Laurel Bestock

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3pm and by appointment.

**Course Description:**

This class provides a critical examination of Egypt during the Amarna Period, roughly 1350-1334 BC. This short era was one of great transformation, most notably the introduction by the king Akhenaten of a new religion that focused solely on the light from the disc of the sun. In order to properly worship this god Akhenaten not only closed old temples of Egypt, he built an entirely new city to house temples, palaces, an urban center and tombs. This city – known now as Amarna – was abandoned shortly after Akhenaten’s death, and never extensively reoccupied. Because of this it is the most accessible and extensively documented ancient urban site in Egypt, meaning that its archaeological importance is greater even than the key role it plays in illuminating this particular period. In addition to constructing a new city, Akhenaten marked his theological ideas by promoting a new and very different style of art. Artistic production was high during this short period and the number of sculptures, paintings and reliefs we have help us to understand both changes and continuities in Egyptian culture at this time. In addition to archaeological and artistic sources, we have large numbers of extant texts from the Amarna period. These document not only the religious “revolution” of Akhenaten but also the workings of international diplomacy at a time when great powers were increasingly coming to rule the Eastern Mediterranean world.

This course will take an integrated look at this diverse set of evidence. We will delve into both the physical and ideological settings of the time, and will examine some of the most interesting and enigmatic characters from Egyptian history, including not only Akhenaten himself but his wife Nefertiti and his probable son, Tutankhamun. At the end of the course we will turn to the reaction against the Amarna period, which was almost entirely forgotten from shortly after its occurrence until its rediscovery in the 19th century.

While some background in Egyptology is useful for this course, there are no prerequisites. The instructor is happy to provide suggestions for additional reading to students who require basic grounding in Egyptian history and culture.

**Course Objectives:**

Often considered to be the first monotheistic religion, Akhenaten’s “revolution” has led to great interest since it was rediscovered. Much of this interest, scholarly and popular, has been biased because of the emotional and religious backgrounds of those who have studied Amarna. Because this secondary literature is so varied and problematic, and because the primary source material is so extensive, studying Amarna offers the student the perfect opportunity to hone critical thinking skills. As such, students in this class will not only come to understand one of the most interesting periods of Egyptian history and culture, they will develop their ability to evaluate evidence and secondary literature. Mastery of the material will be demonstrated in two exams; development of critical thinking and evaluation of evidence will be demonstrated in a research paper on a topic of choice.

**Course format:**

This class will be primarily lecture-based, with some classes devoted to discussion of assigned readings. During both lectures and designated discussion days students are always encouraged to ask questions and present their own ideas and interpretations. Regular attendance and engagement in class form the course participation element of your grade.

**Assessment:**

Exams: 25% each (2)

Paper: 40% (of which, 5% is for the paper topic and bibliography and 35% for the final paper)

Course participation: 10%

**Exams:**

There will be two exams for this course, one at the middle of the term and one on the last scheduled course day. The second exam is not cumulative, but deals only with the second half of the class. Each exam will last 80 minutes and will consist of a combination of short answers and one long essay. The exams are mostly closed-book; you may not access the internet or any electronic devices during the exam and may not bring books with you. You may prepare one double-sided letter-sized piece of paper with notes and bring that with you to refer to in taking the exam. If you require special accommodation for exams, please get in touch with the instructor at least ten days prior to the midterm.

First Exam: March 8

Second Exam: April 28

**Paper:**

One substantial research paper for this course will allow students to explore in depth a topic of interest to them. Topics and preliminary bibliographies must be handed in for approval three weeks prior to the paper due date. You must use original sources in your research, including translations of texts and archaeological reports as appropriate, as well as secondary sources. While you are encouraged to identify topics in part based on the general readings for the course, you must go substantially beyond these general works in amassing a bibliography. At the time the preliminary bibliography is due, you should have identified at least five sources directly relevant to your topic. The paper itself should cite at least eight sources. No more than two of these should be general works, and you may not cite internet sources unless they have been explicitly discussed with and cleared by the professor. You are *strongly* encouraged to speak to the professor about potential topics before developing your proposal and bibliography; identifying focused research topics is one of the most difficult tasks facing the student of the ancient world and I am more than happy to help you narrow your interests into a feasible, question-oriented topic. Your paper should be approximately 2500-3000 words long and must include proper citations. Failure to cite properly will result in a full grade deduction. Papers will be graded on quality of research, strength of argument, organization and writing style.

**Course policies:**

Late work will not be accepted without prior arrangement; no extensions will be given without a Dean’s note. The paper topic with bibliography and the final paper are due at 11:59pm on the dates specified, uploaded to Canvas. If you have a valid reason to anticipate missing an exam (such as an athletic conflict), you may schedule a different day subject to the availability of a proctor. You must make this request at least one week in advance, and further is appreciated. If you have SAS accommodation please submit documentation at the beginning of the semester rather than close to the time of the first exam. The University has strict policies on plagiarism and cheating, with which you are expected to be familiar and to comply.

Grades on assignments and exams are given on a 100-point scale. The conversion of points to grades is as follows:

90+ = A

80-89.9 = B

70-79.9 = C

69.9 and below = NC

There will not be a curve unless the mean grade is below 75.

No extra credit assignments will be given.

Asking questions either in class or by email that could be answered by reading this syllabus or the Writing Guide will result in a lower participation grade. This is not true during shopping period, however, when I expect us to discuss the syllabus.

Your course participation grade has a default value of the average of your grades on your assessed assignments, meaning that in ordinary circumstances your participation grade will neither raise nor lower your grade. Exceptions will be made for exceptional participation. If you are always present and regularly heard in class, or if you come to office hours to discuss course material, for instance, your participation grade might be 100%. If you regularly get up in the middle of class, which is disruptive, or fail to respect others during discussions, your participation grade might be a 0.

**Course Related Work Expectations:**

Over 14 weeks, students are expected to spend a total of approximately 180 hours working on this course. They will spend 3 hours per week in class (42 hours). Course reading, and taking notes on that reading, is expected to take 6 hours per week (84 hours). The research and writing of the paper are expected to take 35 hours. Preparation for the exams is expected to require approximately 10 hours per exam (20 hours).

**Title IX:**

I am a responsible individual, as defined by the University. This means that I cannot serve as a confidential resource if you disclose to me information about gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual assault. I am required, upon learning of such incidents, to report to the Title IX office. This *does not mean* that any information told to me will necessarily result in an investigation, only that I myself must pass on information given to me.

**Books**

**Required**

1. Hornung *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light* – available at the bookstore

2. Kemp, *Amarna: City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti* – not available, it seems, and so I will scan it!

3. Dodson, *Amarna Sunset* – available online

**Suggested**

Silverman, Wegner and Wegner *Akhenaten and Tutankhamun: Revolution and Restoration* (Silverman et al. in the syllabus)

This is a very basic overview with excellent illustrations. It is assigned it in its entirety early in the semester as background, and you are encouraged to return to it frequently for introductions to topics we will treat in more depth. The weekly readings after the first two weeks will be more detailed and technical; it will help you put them in context to have read Silverman et al. first.

Murnane *Texts from the Amarna Period* (Murnane in the syllabus)

This book is available as an ebook through BruKnow, but it can be clunky to read online. Since it is available free I have not ordered it from the bookstore, but it is an invaluable resource and you might want to get it yourself if your interest in the topic is deep.

Additional readings will be either available through BruKnow or posted to Canvas. No pdfs will be posted of things available through BruKnow – it helps the library to know which resources are used, and so every download is helpful.

To be aware of:

There is more written on the Amarna Period than any other time period in Egypt. A bibliography compiled by Geoffrey Martin some 30 years ago lists over 2000 titles (*A Bibliography of the Amarna Period and its Aftermath*, London, 1991). Most of the readings assigned below are more recent and, through footnotes, can provide access to more that has been published in the last decades.

**Web resources**

By and large the internet as relates to Amarna is a cesspit of conspiracy theories and you should be wary of it. But the Amarna project website is a goldmine of information and bibliography. The regularly published public-facing newsletter “Horizon” on the field activities of the team is the best way to keep abreast of what is going on at the site, where they have continued to do work even during the pandemic.

**Week 1: Introduction**

**January 27**

Readings:

Silverman et al., 1-92 and 185-188

Kemp 17-46

**Week 2: Setting the stage: Early 18th Dynasty Egypt**

**February 1 and 3**

Readings:

Bryan “The 18th Dynasty Before the Amarna Period” in Shaw *Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 218-60

Kemp *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* Chapter 6, 247-301

**Week 3: Amenhotep III: changing relations between king, divinity and the sun**

**February 8 and 10**

Readings:

Bryan, 260-71 (included in the pdf of that chapter from last week’s readings)

Silverman et al., 93-184

Murnane, pages 1-28

Cline, Eric “Overview of Amenhotep III and His Reign” in *Amenhotep III, Perspectives on his Reign*, 1-26

O’Connor “The City and the World: Worldview and Built Forms in the Reign of Amenhotep III” in *Amenhotep III, Perspectives on his Reign*, 125-172.

**Week 4: Amenhotep IV: coregency(?) and Theban beginnings**

**February 15 and 17**

Readings:

Baines “The Dawn of the Amarna Age” in *Amenhotep III, Perspectives on His Reign*, 271-312

Murnane 6, 10, 22, 26, 28

Redford *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*, 57-136.

Johnson, W. Raymond. 1996. “Amenhotep III and Amarna: some new considerations,” *JEA* 82:65-82.

Allen, James, William Murnane, and Jacobus van Dijk. 1994. “Further Evidence for the Coregency of Amenhotep III and IV.” *Amarna Letters* 3: 26-31.

Dodson in KMT, Summer 2014, 19-35.

**Week 5: Theology of Atenism and its Historiography**

**(long weekend) February 24**

This week we will have a discussion about the Great Hymn to the Aten in class

Readings:

Murnane 58-B.4

Hornung *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*, 1-146

Eaton-Krauss “Akhenaten versus Akhenaten”, *BiOr* 47 (1990), 541-59.

Montserrat “Protestants, psychoanalysts and Fascists” in *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient Egypt*, 95-113.

Gunn, Battiscombe; 1923. ‘Notes on the Aten and His Names’, *JEA* 9: 168-176

Redford *Akhenaten: Heretic Pharaoh*, 157-184

Allen, “The Natural Philosphy of Akhenaten” in *Religion and Philosphy in Ancient Egypt*, 89-102.

**Week 6: The principles of Amarna Art**

**March 1 and 3**

Readings:

Freed et al., Pharaohs of the sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamun. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 38-197.

Aldred *Akhenaten, King of Egypt*, 273-312.

Braverman et al., “Akhenaten and the Strange Physiques of Egypt’s 18th Dynasty” in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 2009 (150.8), 556-560

Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, 170-94

Robins, “the Representation of Sexual Characteristics in Amarna Art” *JSSEA* 1993, 29-41

Kosloff, “The Malqata/El-**Amarna** Blues: Favourite Colours of Kings and Gods” in *Chief of Seers*, 178-92

Reeves *Akhenaten, Egypt’s False Prophet*, 37-84

**Week 7: MIDTERM EXAM – March 8**

**Women in the Amarna Period** **– March 10**

Readings:

Robins *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 21-55

Reeves “The Royal Family” in Freed et al., 81-96

Sampson, J. *Amarna, City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Nefertiti as Pharaoh,* 1-144

Reeves “New Light on Kiya from Texts in the British Museum” in *JEA* 1988, 91-101

Robins “*hmt nsw wrt* Meritaton” in *GM* 1981, 75-81

Murnane, 45

*Royal Women of Amarna: Images of Beauty from Ancient Egypt*, 6-41

**Week 8: Geography and city layout 1: Boundary Stelae and Temples at Amarna**

**March 15 and 17**

Readings:

Murnane, 37, 38 (p. 73-86)

Murnane and Van Siclen *The Boundary Stelae of Akhenaten*, 1-10, 111-82

Mallinson, “The sacred landscape” in Freed et al., 72–9.

Kemp Chapters 2 and 3

**Week 9: Geography and City Layout 2: Palaces at Amarna**

**March 22 and 24**

**PAPER TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE March 22**

Readings:

Kemp Chapter 4

O’Connor “Beloved of Maat, the Horizon of Re” in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, 263-300

Spence, K., 1999. “The North Palace at Amarna”. Egyptian Archaeology 15, 14–16.

Kemp “The Window of Appearance at el-Amarna and the basic structure of this city” in *JEA* 1976, 81-99.

Kemp, B.J., 2000. Bricks and metaphor. Cambridge Archaeological Journal 10, 335–46.

**Spring Break**

**Week 10: Geography and City Layout 3: Domestic space and non-royal constructions at Amarna**

**April 5 and 7**

Readings:

Kemp Chapter 5

Troy, Lana. “Resource Management and Ideological Manifestation. The Towns and Cities of Ancient Egypt.” In *The Development of Urbanism from a Global Perspective*. 107-132

Arnold, Felix. "A Study of Egyptian Domestic Buildings." *VA* 5 (1989): 75-93.

Spence, K., 2004. “The three-dimensional form of the Amarna house”. Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 90, 123–52

Stevens, A., 2003. “The material evidence for domestic religion at Amarna and preliminary remarks on its interpretation”. Journal of Egyptian Archaeology 89, 143–68.

Ikram “Domestic Shrines and the Cult of the Royal Family at Amarna” *JEA* 1989, 89-101

**Week 11: Military, diplomacy, and foreigners in the Amarna Period**

**April 12 and 14**

Readings:

Moran *Amarna Letters*, Introduction xiii-xxxix, and selections posted to Canvas

Dodson *Amarna Sunset* 1-60

Cohen and Westbrook, eds. *Amarna Diplomacy*, 1-53; 71-140.

Darnell and Manassa *Tutankhamun’s Armies* Chapter 5, 137-186

**Week 12: Funerary religion during the Amarna Period**

**April 19 and 21**

Readings:

Stevens, Anna, “Death and the city: the cemeteries of Amarna in their urban context,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 28 (1), 103-126.

Selections from Martin *The Royal Tomb at el-Amarna*

Kemp Chapter 7

Murnane 46, 58, 70

Selections from publications of private tombs as posted to Canvas

(Owen, G. and B. Kemp, 1994. Craftsmen's work patterns in unfinished tombs at Amarna. Cambridge Archaeological Journal 4, 121–9.)

**Week 13:Post-Amarna: proscription and echoes**

**April 26**

Readings:

Murnane, 91-96, 99

Meltzer, “Herodotus on Akhenaten?” in *DE* 1989, 51-56.

Allen “The Amarna Succession” in *Causing His Name to Live*, 9-20

Dodson *Amarna Sunset,* 61-138

**Dodson** “Kings' Valley Tomb 55 and the Fates of the Amarna Kings” Amarna Letters 3 (San Francisco, 1994): 92-103.

Redford *Akhenaten: Heretic King*, 204-235

Hawass et al "Ancestry and Pathology in King Tutankhamun's Family" *JAMA*. 2010; 303(7):638-647

**April 28: SECOND EXAM**

**Final paper due:**

**May 10**