

ARCH 1475 Petra: Ancient Wonder, Modern Challenge

Professor Sue Alcock

Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World

101 Rhode Island Hall; 863-3710; Susan_Alcock@brown.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 3-5 pm and by appointment

Emanuela Bocancea [Emanuela_Bocancea@brown.edu], Teaching Assistant

TA Hours: TBD and by appointment

*It seems no work of Man's creative hand,
by labour wrought as wavering fancy planned;
But from the rock as if by magic grown,
eternal, silent, beautiful, alone!...*

*... match me such marvel save in Eastern clime,
a rose-red city half as old as time (J. W. Burgon, 'Petra', 1845)*

Ancient Wonder

Petra, in antiquity, had many claims to fame. It was the first capital of the Nabataean kingdom, a 'middleman' nation of traders who facilitated exchange between the Mediterranean world and peoples as far afield as China. Annexed by the Romans in 106 CE, the city was visited by emperors and became home to several early Christian bishoprics. Archaeological remains — of temples, theaters, churches and an astonishing series of rock cut tombs — are testimony to ancient activities and attention in the urban center of Petra; recent work by the Brown University Petra Archaeological Project has documented equally important investments in its countryside.

Modern Challenge

In 2007, Petra was voted one of the New7Wonders of the World. The site boasts an impressive global celebrity factor, owing chiefly to its cameo role in movies such as 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade' and 'Transformers II: Revenge of the Fallen'. Such fame, in addition to the site's 'rose red' beauty (the produce of a very fragile sandstone environment) today attracts almost a million tourists a year. Such interest is wonderful. It is also destroying the site.

This class will explore the history and archaeology of Petra and debate how best to present and preserve the site and its hinterland. Emphasis will especially be laid on discussing, developing and disseminating Brown University fieldwork, past and present, at this beautiful, but fragile, place. Relevant comparisons — to other sites, problems or places — will periodically be drawn. No prerequisites.

Course requirements:

- Due each week, unless otherwise noted on the syllabus, a short paper or exercise (2-4 pages or effort equivalent) = in aggregate, 30%
- For class each week, unless otherwise noted on the syllabus, there will be a short quiz (either in class or online) on the material assigned for the week = 20%
- Twice in the course of a term (scheduling TBD), students will deliver a *pecha kucha* ('chit chat'), a presentation style in which 20 slides are shown for 20 seconds each = 20% (highest grade taken of the two)
- Final paper or project (due December 2): Compare some aspect of Petra, ancient or modern, to some other site, event, place or XXX. OR come up with some other topic and run it by Professor Alcock (8-10 pages or effort equivalent) = 30%

Required texts:

Christian Augé and Jean-Marie Dentzer, *Petra: Lost City of the Ancient World* (2000) (also published as *Petra: Rose Red City* [2000])

Douglas C. Comer, *Tourism and Archaeological Heritage Management at Petra: Driver to Development or Destruction?* (2012)

Marguerite van Geldermalsen, *Married to a Bedouin* (2006)

Archaeology's Dirty Little Secrets (Coursera MOOC, selected segments)

[PetraLiveCam](#)

'Starter' Useful Websites (there are many more):

[Brown University Petra Archaeological Project](#)

[Petra Links](#)

[Petra National Trust](#)

Course Outline**September 4**

The power of Petra

*Especially at Brown

*Ancient Wonder***September 11**

Who, What, Where and When

*Comparison: The Archaeology of Disasters

Class material (potential quiz material!)

Read:

Augé and Dentzer, *Petra Lost City*, Chapter 1-3

Joukowsky, *Petra Great Temple*, Volume 1, Ch. 1

Learn the area ([maps](#) to study)

For exercise background:

[Petra: Lost City of Stone, The Great Earthquake](#)

['Study examines effect of earthquakes on Petra region'](#) (*Jordan Times*)

['Archaeoseismology: Past, present and future'](#) (*Quaternary International* 242)

Exercise due:

A frequent refrain about Petra is that earthquakes (especially the Great Earthquake of 363 CE) 'finished off' the city or 'it never was important again'. Does this make sense to you? Find another example where a disaster (earthquake or other, past or present) either did or did not 'end' a city's life. What factors appear to have determined the outcome?

September 18

Downtown Petra

*The Great Temple

Class material (potential quiz material!)

The map illustrates the layout of Petra, Jordan, with a scale of 500m and a north arrow. It shows the city's location within the Valley of Petra, bordered by the Jordan River to the east. The map identifies numerous historical sites, including the Lion Triclinium, Crusader Fort, Roman Theatre, and various tombs and temples. It also depicts the city's infrastructure, such as the city walls and the Jordan River. The map is divided into several regions, including the Valley of Petra, the Jordan River, and the surrounding landscape. Key locations marked include the Lion Triclinium, Crusader Fort, Roman Theatre, and various tombs and temples. The map also shows the city walls and the surrounding landscape, including the Valley of Petra and the Jordan River.

Petra National Trust

[Petra Virtual Tour #1](#)
[Petra Virtual Tour #2](#)
[Petra Panoramas](#)

Find at least five other maps of Petra (online example fine, but at least two should come from books); ideally these will belong to different periods and different genres (travel guides, scholarly works). What is consistently recorded in these maps, what inconsistently? How does site presentation (and navigation) change? What makes a good map?

And so on...