

**Bronze Age Crete and Santorini: CLAS 390**

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It is not unusual for classes to take occasional field trips, but some field trips are better than others. This spring term the Department of Anthropology and Classical Studies at the University of Waterloo will be offering a course, CLAS 390B, which has one of the best field trips of all. After two weeks of on-campus classes, we'll be leaving for a 17 day trip to Greece. The course is led by three faculty from the department, Professors Maria Liston, Phyllis Forsyth and Sheila Ager. The trip is offered as a credit course through the University of Waterloo, and anyone eligible to take courses at the university can enroll, although priority is given to current UW students.

The course will focus on the archaeology and art of the Aegean Bronze age. The class will begin with ten days in Crete, starting in the regional capital of Herakleion, the city of Heracles. We will visit a number of Minoan Palaces and towns associated with the Bronze Age civilization on Crete. The class will start with Knossos, the largest palace ever found on Crete, and probably the capital of Minoan Crete. Knossos was discovered and excavated in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Sir Arthur Evans. Evans also reconstructed parts of the palace, making it a great place to get the "feel" of Minoan architecture.

Knossos was the center of a political and commercial system that covered the island of Crete. In addition to the central palace at Knossos, there were subsidiary palaces and towns scattered across the island. On the south side of Crete we will visit the Palace of Phaistos, a Minoan villa at Aghia Triada, and a Minoan port city at Kommos. We will also visit the

Classical-period city of Gortyn, home of the famous Law Code inscription, one of the oldest written law texts in Europe.

After seeing a number of the Minoan archaeological sites the class will visit the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion. Here, in the world's largest collection of Minoan artifacts, we will see the pottery, stone, and metal objects with which the Minoans furnished their houses, palaces and graves.

Next the group will travel to the east end of Crete, stopping at the Palace of Mallia on the way. We will stay in Sitia for several days. While there we will visit the Sitia Museum, where the recently discovered chryselephantine (ivory and gold) figure of a Minoan worshipper is displayed. We will also visit the small palaces and towns at Palaikastro and Kato Zakro. While there we may have to spend a little time at the beach too.

After Sitia we travel west to Agios Nikolaus (St. Nicolaus!), where we will stay while we visit the Greek Dark Age site of Kavousi, and the Minoan village of Vasilike. These sites offer a contrast to the larger, wealthier palaces, offering a glimpse into ordinary village life for the Minoans and a look at what life was like after the Minoan civilization collapsed.

After 10 days in Crete, the class will travel to the island of Santorini. This is a volcanic island that has been destroyed and rebuilt in a series of eruptions. Today the island is a c-shaped sliver, and the sea fills the ancient caldera of the volcano. On Santorini we will visit modern quarries where we can study the history of the eruptions through the layers of volcanic material deposited on the island. In particular we are interested in the Bronze Age eruption which buried the town of ancient Thera under meters of ash and pumice. We will then visit the excavations at ancient Thera, where archaeologists are uncovering details of town life including house furnishings, stored food, and elaborate frescoes decorating the walls.

The trip will end with three days in Athens. There we'll visit the Acropolis of Athens. Today the Acropolis is covered with the remains of Classical temples including the Parthenon of Athena and the Erechtheion. In the Bronze Age however, it was a fortified citadel, with a protected secret

spring which provided water in times of siege. We'll take a day trip to visit the mainland Bronze Age cities of Mycenae and Tiryns, the home of Agamemnon and the house of Atreus.

Back in Athens, we will visit the museum of Cycladic Art which houses a large collection of early Bronze Age sculpture and pottery from the Cyclades Islands of the Aegean. We have also planned to visit the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, where extensive collections from Mycenae, and the fresco paintings from ancient Thera are displayed. This museum however was damaged in the recent earthquake in Athens. Pieces of sculpture fell from the roof of the museum, and in the pottery collections, glass cases collapsed, shattering hundreds of vases. We hope the museum will reopen by the time we visit, but one of the most predictable things about travel in Greece is that it is always unpredictable!

When we are through, the class will have surveyed many of the most important Bronze Age sites in Crete and Santorini, as well as two of the main Mycenacan sites on the mainland. We also will have seen artefacts recovered from the excavations of these sites which illustrate the arts, technologies and living conditions of people in this time period.