

# ARCH367 | Aegean Prehistory: The Rise & Fall of the Bronze Age Cultures Fall 2024

**INSTRUCTOR: ANGELOS PAPADOPOULOS** 

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# **Course Description**

This course provides an exploration of the Aegean prehistory from the Neolithic times (7th millennium BCE) up to the beginning of the Early Iron Age (11th c. BCE), focusing primarily on the Bronze Age cultures that flourished in the region. The archaeology of the islands and the mainland will be placed within the greater Eastern Mediterranean cultural sphere in order to achieve an in-depth survey of the various aspects of political, artistic, technological, religious, administrative and social dynamics of the Bronze Age people. When did people begin to build permanent settlements? Why are the deceased buried frequently with grave offerings? How can civilisations collapse? Does the climate have an impact on populations' well-being? What information can we get from images when textual documentation is lacking?

Students will be introduced to theoretical and interpretative methodologies, current debates as well as old and modern approaches of studying the available corpus of archaeological data. At the same time, the results of new and on-going research projects and excavations will be discussed offering a fresh look on the large number of sites in the areas of interest. Finally, the students will be able to experience site and museum visits (such the Acropolis and the ancient Agora of Athens, the National Archaeological Museum and the Museum of Cycladic Art), as well as unique hands-on activities (at the British School at Athens and at our CYA workshop) in order to study closely the construction, function, circulation and consumption of the abundant material culture of the Aegean Bronze Age.

#### **Learning Goals**

During the course, students will:

- study the emergence of social complexity as well as the cultural and technological processes that took place in the Aegean during the Bronze Age;
- explore the unique material culture of these areas in museums and sites in order to ensure familiarity;
- familiarise themselves with the various approaches, theories and models regarding the interpretation of this material culture;
- place various aspects and themes of Aegean archaeology within the wider Eastern Mediterranean context.

By the end of the course, students will:

- have familiarised themselves with the prehistoric archaeology of the Aegean through personal experience and extensive bibliographic research;
- have improved their critical skills in reading and debate through extensive discussions and exchanges of points of view between themselves and their instructors;
- be further aware of the application of scientific methods in the interpretation of the archaeological data.

## **Course Requirements and Assessment**

# **CYA Attendance Policy**

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential, so attendance at all scheduled meetings is required. All absences are recorded and have consequences that may affect your grade.

# i) Attendance and participation (10%)

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. Illness or other such compelling reasons which result in absences should be reported immediately to the Student Affairs Office.

In our course the policy is simple: when you miss a class for any reason, you are requested a) to get notes from your fellow students and b) to provide your instructor with a summary (one A4 page long) of the Required Reading (see below) of the day of absence (within 5 days). Unexcused absences or non-delivered make-up work will affect the Final Grade. Important:

In order to be more involved in the course, you are requested to create small Research Groups of three or four participants. As members of these research teams you will be working together in order to complete various assignments and activities based on the topic of the classes. These activities will be distributed throughout the semester.

Note: See moodle for a scoring rubric



A short quiz will take place instead of mid-term exams, so that you and the instructor will get an idea about your progress up to that moment. **Mid-term quiz: 24 October 2024** 

### iii) Research essay (30%):

The participants are required to write one research essay

Format: Use Times New Roman font, 1.5 space, size 12 and preferably footnotes (no endnotes or in-text references).

Length: The essay should be no more than 2000 words (excluding bibliography, tables, maps and illustrations).

Essay title: You can either choose from the available list of topics (see page 8) or select a new one that suits your own questions and interests, always in discussion with your instructor. In any case, you are strongly advised to contact your instructor well before the deadline and discuss thoughts and queries you may have.

Plagiarism: You should be very clear and careful in order to reference your work, source the illustrations and give proper reference to other people's work. There is nothing wrong in using theories and ideas found elsewhere in publications or online, but it is considered a copyright violation to use this data without properly referencing the person who made it available to the public. Delivery: You are asked to submit your paper to the instructor electronically via email only.

Note I: You are expected a) to use at least 3 bibliographic references from the Required reading/ Recommended bibliography, b) to inform via email the instructor on your progress (Milestone email) and c) to attend the personal feedback session.

Note II: See moodle for a scoring rubric. Research essay submission deadline: 26 November 2024.

#### iv) Museum exhibition (25%):

You (and your Research Group) are going to choose one object from a number of different Bronze Age replicas and you are going to prepare a mini exhibition that will last for two weeks within the CYA building facilities. You are requested to study about these objects, provide information and generally present it to the wider public. Feel free to see it from your own perspective and use visual aids if you want to achieve your target. In Week II you will receive a handout with hints and tips to prepare a memorable mini-exhibition. Basically, tell us a great story... **Exhibition launch: 5 December 2024 (TBC)** 

## v) The Debate: Group presentations (20%)

Towards the end of the semester (class no. 23) we are going to explore the various theories that have been put forward to explain the collapse of the Bronze Age societies in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean. Students will be divided into pre-agreed research groups in order to present and support one (or a combination) of the various hypotheses. Each member of the group will present a part and a lively discussion will take place.

Note: See moodle for a scoring rubric. Debate date: 10 December 2024

The Final Grade is broken down as follows:

<ul><li>Research essay</li><li>Museum Exhibition</li><li>The Debate</li></ul>	10%
<ul><li>Museum Exhibition</li><li>The Debate</li></ul>	15%
• The Debate	30%
	25%
_	20%
Total:	100%

### Policy on Assignments and Make-up Work

Details about assignments and exams will be given in advance. I will accept no late assignments or make-up exams unless discussed with me in advance.

## **CYA Policies and Regulations**

# **Academic Accommodations**

Students are required to submit an official letter from the office at their school that handles academic accommodations (generally the Office of Disability Services), or to have that office send a letter. Students who have submitted such a letter to CYA should also talk to their professors individually to discuss how these accommodations will work in each specific course.

# Site Visits and Accessibility

There will be plenty of outdoor activities, such as visits to museums, excursions to archaeological sites and city walking. Ideally, as some of the visits are one off, you should carry with you your notebook and a pen/ pencil, a photographic camera (be aware that in some museums and sites photography is not allowed) and your smile.



## ePolicy on Original Work

Plagiarism is literary theft. As such, it is a serious offense which will not be tolerated either at your home institution or at CYA. Plagiarism on an examination or in a paper will result in an F for the course. You must cite the author of any and all ideas that you use that is neither common knowledge nor your own idea. If you are in doubt, it is safest to cite the source. Your work should be original and reflect your own ideas and thoughts. If you are unsure about what counts as original work, please consult your professor and check the Student Handbook.

## **Use of Laptops**

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

## Upgrade to 400-level course

Courses can be upgraded to a 400-level. This constitutes usually 25% additional work on the part of the student. The option to upgrade opens the second week of classes. If you are interested in this option, please talk to your professor.

#### Readings and other documents

### i) Required Reading

For each class/ visit the Reading of one or two papers is Required. Ideally the participants should read these papers before the class, in order to comprehend the topic and participate lively in the discussion. All the Required Readings are available on moodle as pdf files.

## ii) Recommended Reading (list of readings per class and full bibliography available on moodle)

The course covers a wide range of themes and topics throughout a lengthy period of time over a wide geographical region. As a result, the bibliography is immense, starting from simple excavation reports to long, synthetic work bringing together data from a variety of sites and offering various interpretations. The Recommended Reading consists of a list of publications, all of which are available at the CYA library and/or online. Students are encouraged to consult this list for further personal research, either towards your essay work or simply to better comprehend the dynamics and the complexity of the Bronze Age societies of the Aegean region.

#### iii) Study Guide

A Study Guide will be given to you so that you can use it for key-aspects of Aegean archaeology, chronologies, maps and other useful information. Bear in mind that this is only a Study Guide and not a textbook as it cannot replace your attention in class and the study of the Required Readings.

#### iv) Handouts

The handouts will include basic keywords, research questions and important issues that will be discussed in class (that could be the basis of your essay titles) and the Required and Recommended Readings.

# Fall 2024 Schedule

Day #	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)		
	Sep 5-7	Field Study   Delphi and Ancient Olympia		
1	Sep 10	1. Introduction. Chronology, geography and the history of research Aegean societies should be studied and understood within the greater environment		
	Venue: CYA	and geographical context over a long period of time. This introduction will focus on the climate and ecology of the Greek region, the connection between people, animals, land and sea and how all these factors affected the development of these very distinctive local cultures. Issues of chronology will be addressed and we shall discuss briefly the key-characters in the history of research in the prehistoric Aegean.  Required reading  Mee 2011: 1-7		
2	Sep 12	Shelmerdine in Shelmerdine 2008: 1-18  2. The Neolithic culture of Greece		
2	3ep 12	Major events took place in the Aegean region during the Neolithic period (6800-3200		
	Venue: National Archaeological	BCE). The stabilization of climate and the systematic farming, stock-breeding, trade of raw material and finished products and production of pottery vessels led to the		
	Museum (NAM)	establishment of permanent settlements. This visit to the National Archaeological Museum will allow us to explore the material culture of this period (including some		



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		famous pieces of golden jewellery) and discuss the case of the major sites of Dimini and Sesklo. Required reading		
		Chourmouziadis in Valavanis 2007: 184-195		
3	Sep 17	3. The Neolithic household and society		
	Venue CYA	After our examination of the Neolithic material culture exhibited at the NAM, we are going to explore the permanent structures and try to reconstruct their function and how Neolithic societies were stratified. The main focus of this class will be on the Final Neolithic (ca. 4500-3200 BCE).  Required reading  Tomkins in Cline 2010: 31-49		
	Sep 18-21	Field Study   Crete		
	-			
4	Sep 24 Venue: CYA	4. Burial practices and settlement in the Early Bronze Age Cyclades  We are going to explore some of the major sites that the early Cycladic people lived and explore how some of these towns grew out to become major ports. However, a great amount of information on everyday life comes from the study of burial practices and it deserves our attention.  Required reading  Sherratt in Galanakis 2013: 84-101		
5	Sep 26	5. The art of Early Bronze Age Cyclades		
	Venue: NAM	The material culture of the Early Bronze Age Cyclades, a very distinctive island civilisation, is well represented at the collection of the NAM which includes marble figurines, weapons, vessels and tools. We are going to investigate the various beliefs and ideologies behind these distinctive objects and at the same time discuss how a major limitation of study, the looting and illicit trade of antiquities, can damage the study of the ancient world.  Required reading  Betancourt 2007: 9-26		
	0.14			
6	Oct 1 Venue: CYA	6. Before the palaces: a look at Prepalatial Crete It is now time to start exploring the magnificent island of Crete, long before Knossos, Phaistos and other so-called Palaces were built. It is the time of the Early Minoan Period in Crete. Tholos tombs with multiple inhumations, bronze objects, contacts with the Aegean, specially designed pottery are all signs of definitive cultural change. Required reading Wilson in Shelmerdine 2008: 77-104		
7	Oct 3			
,	Venue: CYA	7. The emergence of the Palaces in Crete  At the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE Crete enters a new cultural era, that of the First Palaces. After centuries of occupation, major architectural complexes appear at Knossos, Mallia, Zakros and Phaistos that appear to be the focal point of the local communities; it has even been suggested that these were Protopalatial 'states'. This class will focus on the architecture, material culture and the foreign relations of these major centres and discuss their function according to recent scholarship.  Required reading  Fitton 2002: 66-108		
8	Oct 8	8. Minoan Crete at its peak: The Neopalatial period		
	Venue: CYA	The complex political geography and the economic activities of the Neopalatial centres will be explored in this session. The sites of Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia seem to have been culturally inter-related states (or polities), yet politically independent and perhaps equal. This "peer-polity" model will be analysed and discussed over the new data, especially the recent discovery of a new "palace" at Galatas. Required reading		
		Bennet in Bang and Scheidel 2013: 235-243		
9	Oct 10	9. New Kingdom Egypt		
	Venue: NAM	This visit to the very impressive collection hosted by NAM aims at introducing students not only to the world famous and extremely impressive art and archaeology of Egypt,		



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		but also to highlight the connections between the Aegean and the land of the Nile.  Aspects of material culture as well as written sources will be discussed, while walking around some of the most characteristic Egyptian artefacts, forming one of the most important collections in Europe.  Required Reading  Bard 2008: 208-216  Schneider in Aruz et al. 2008: 251-259	
10	Oct 15	10. The Art of Neopalatial Crete In this session we are going to explore various aspects of Minoan art. Wall paintings, ivory figurines, jewellery made of gold, silver and semi-precious stones, stone vases and other arts and crafts will be presented in class and discussed in order to appreciate the qualities of the Cretan artist.  Required reading Fitton 2002: 146-163 Nikolakopoulou and Knappett 2016: 102: 115	
11	Oct 17	11. The town of Akrotiri on Thera	
	Venue: NAM	Having discussed the relationship between Crete and the Cyclades, we should explore a case study: Thera. Also known as the prehistoric "Pompeii of the Aegean", this settlement was discovered in 1967 and it offers a unique opportunity to study aspects of Late Bronze age everyday life thanks to its amazing state of preservation under the volcanic pumice. The major issue of the dating of the Thera eruption, the history of the excavations, as well as some of the highlights amongst the discoveries, will be discussed. A very representative portion of the amazingly well-preserved artefacts recovered at the site of Akrotiri on Thera is on permanent exhibition at the NAM, allowing a good glimpse to that spectacular site.  Required reading	
12	Oct 22	Doumas in Cline 2010: 752-761  Midterm Week	
12	Venue: CYA	12. The last days of Akrotiri  One of the most devastating eruptions in the history of human race did not occur suddenly. The inhabitants of the island of Thera must have seen early signs of the disaster-to-come, but could they have known? What about their way of life and how did they react to these early pre-eruption events? Were they interpreted as warnings or had to be treated as divine signs?  Required reading  Driessen 2019: 195-204	
13	Oct 24	13. The mainland during the Early Bronze Age	
	Venue: CYA	(Note: Mid-term quiz)  The Early Bronze Age (ca. 3200-2100 BCE) in the mainland is characterised by the intensification of the use of metals (especially bronze) for the manufacture of tools and weapons. As a result, the increase of production, the creation of surplus goods and the development of productive activities is noticeable. The need for metals and various raw materials led to the intensification of commercial contacts, the development of navigation and the exchange of technological knowledge. Major buildings at sites, such as Lerna and Zygouries in the Peloponnese show evidence of distinctive social stratification.  Required Reading  Bintlilf 2012: 84-92	
	Oct 25-Nov 3	Fall Break	
14	Nov 5 Venue: CYA (lab)	14. Wall-paintings: A passport to the past Many sites in the Aegean and especially Akrotiri on Thera, Knossos in Crete and Mycenae on the mainland have yielded a significant amount of fragmentary wall- paintings. The iconographic repertoire varies and it includes processions, battle scenes, gatherings, chariots and ships, mythical beasts and geometric motifs. These paintings though may be used as "photographs" of the past and precious information can be	



Day#	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)		
		extracted if read and interpreted properly. In this class we shall experience the process of preparing the designs for some of the most well-known Aegean frescoes.  Required reading Chapin in Cline 2010: 223-38  Doumas 1994: 14-32		
15	Nov 7 Venue: NAM	15. The Shaft Graves of Mycenae The finds from the "Rich-in-Gold" Mycenae, a site that gave its name to a civilization, are exhibited at the Prehistoric Galleries of the NAM. This visit will allow the students to examine closely these magnificent objects and identify for themselves the common elements between early Mycenaean and other Aegean art.  Required reading Schofield 2007: 32-47		
	Nov 12-15	Field Study   Peloponnese		
16	Nov 19  Venue: Acropolis of Athens	16. A Mycenaean citadel We are going to visit the diachronic site of the Acropolis of Ancient Athens and with careful exploration we will be able to discuss the presence (or not) of a powerful Mycenaean fortified acropolis, now gone forever. Despite the fact that prehistoric Athens is covered by structures or destroyed due to continuous use of the land and habitation (up to this day) the subject of this class will be this "invisible" yet very present Mycenaean citadel. Required reading Bennet in Bang and Scheidel 2013: 243-254 Camp 2001: 11-20		
17	Nov 21  Venue: Agora of Athens	17. Exploring the "invisible" Bronze Age Athens Bronze Age Athens has been mostly under the later architectural phases of the city, namely Classical and Roman. The site of the ancient Agora however is one of the few areas that has yielded important data as evidently the Mycenaean cemetery of the area was located there, close to the slope of the Akropolis. Our aim is to investigate this area, discuss the grave offerings and try to describe what must have been a rather thriving region.  Required reading Gawlinski 2014:101-108		
18	Nov 22  Venue: British School at Athens	(Make-up T TH class)  18. Pottery: How, Why, When, What does this mean?  The study of pottery is one of the most important tools of the archaeologist as it can provide scholarship with information on the level of local technologies, trade and exchange, interaction between people, provenance, social organization, population movements and chronology. We have the privilege to spend our class at the museum of the British School at Athens and study closely several pieces of characteristic Aegean pottery.  Required reading  Mee 2011: 129-139		
19	Nov 26 Venue NAM	19. The art of the Mycenaean Palaces (Note: Research essay submission) Mycenaean art seems to be directly associated with the ruling elite(s) and the need of the patrons and their families to acquire and be buried with luxurious jewellery, magnificent weapons, sealstones of semi-precious stones, niello daggers and other spectacular artefacts. Aim of this class is to explore aspects of Mycenaean art and discuss its purpose and constructing techniques. Required reading Crowley in Shelmerdine 2008: 258-288		
	Nov 28-Dec 1	Thanksgiving Break		
20	Dec 3	20. Mycenaean architecture		
	Venue: CYA	(Note: Exhibition)		



Day#	Date/Day	Topic / Readings / Assignments Due / Place (if applicable)	
		During the Late Bronze Age, intensive engineering activity took place in mainland Greece. Citadels, tomb architecture (chamber and tholoi tombs), bridges, large scale drainage systems, dam and the so-called Cyclopean fortification walls were constructed by skilled Mycenaean engineers and craftsmen. We are going to briefly survey several examples of them highlighting the level of organisation of the Mycenaean polities.  Required reading  Bintliff 2012: 185-195  Dickinson 1994: 153-164	
21	Dec 5  Venue: CYA &  Museum of  Cycladic Art	21. Trade and exchange: Sea routes and shipwrecks.  Already from the 3 <sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE the people of the Cyclades, and in fact from be sides of the Aegean, had developed maritime skills judging from the various artefall and raw materials recovered. By the 14 <sup>th</sup> c. BCE a series of land and sea routes here been established, in addition to the written sources and the various technological pictorial influences in the local arts, suggesting the existence of exchange of what reprovide an eastern Mediterranean koine. Shipwrecks, actual frozen moments in the provide modern archaeology with all kinds of information. We shall focus on the case of Uluburun and Cape Gelidonya in (modern) south Turkey and the case of Point and Modi in Greece in order to explore what we can learn about travel, exchange connectivity via land and sea.  Required reading Pulak in Aruz et al. 2009: 289-310	
22	Dec 6  Venue: CYA &  Museum of  Cycladic Art	(Make-up T TH class)  22. Moving between the Aegean and the Levant.  Trade is considered to be the life-blood of several island communities already from the 3rd mil. BCE. In addition, it is one of the reasons why some settlements thrived over the centuries. Selection of location is a key decision, as trade routes between the Aegean, Africa and Asia were more or less established from the Middle Bronze Age. Cyprus played a major role in the trafficking of goods and raw materials and this visit to the Cypriot collection of the MCA will make clear how objects, technologies and peoples were moving around the coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean littoral. Required reading  Sherratt in Steiner and Killebrew 2014: 497-508  Steel in Steiner and Killebrew 2014: 577-591	
23	Dec 10 Venue: CYA	23. Systems collapse and the LH IIIC period. (Note: The Debate)  The Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean witnessed a widespread transformation due to the collapse of the political systems during the late 13th and 12th centuries BCE Several theories and hypotheses have been suggested in order to explain these radical changes and they will be under examination at this class. However, life goes on and a very interesting post-palatial period appears to have happened, the Late Helladic IIIC that will be our second focus of the day.  Required reading Schofield 2007: 170-185	
24	Dec 12 Venue: CYA	24. Wrap-up and review session  Last day of class. Bring together your notes, questions, queries and let us have a discussion about the rise and fall of Aegean Bronze Age cultures.  Required reading  Driessen in van Wjngaarden and Driessen (2022): 3-14 van Wjngaarden in van Wjngaarden and Driessen (2022) 15-27	



## Schedule at a glance

Day #	Date	Session	Venue
	Sep 5-7	Field Study	Delphi and Ancient Olympia
1	Sep 10	Introduction. Chronology, Geography and the history of research	CYA
2	Sep 12	The Neolithic culture of Greece	NAM
3	Sep 17	The Neolithic household and society	CYA
	Sep 18-21	Field Study	Crete
4	Sep 24	Burial practices and settlement in the Early Bronze Age Cyclades	CYA
5	Sep 26	The art of Early Bronze Age Cyclades	NAM
6	Oct 1	Before the palaces: a look at Pre-palatial Crete	CYA
7	Oct 3	The emergence of the Palaces in Crete	CYA
8	Oct 8	Minoan Crete at its peak: The Neopalatial period	CYA
9	Oct 10	New Kingdom Egypt	NAM
10	Oct 15	The art of Neopalatial Crete	CYA
11	Oct 17	The town of Akrotiri at Thera	NAM
12	Oct 22	Midterm Week	CYA
		The last days of Akrotiri	
13	Oct 24	Midterm Week	CYA
		The mainland during the Early Bronze Age	
	Oct 25-Nov 3	Fall Break	
14	Nov 5	Wall-paintings: A passport to the past	CYA (lab)
15	Nov 7	The Shaft Graves of Mycenae	NAM
	Nov 12-15	Field Study	Peloponnese
16	Nov 19	A Mycenaean citadel	Acropolis
17	Nov 21	Exploring the "invisible" Bronze Age Athens	Agora
18	Nov 22	Make-up T TH class)	BSA
		Pottery: How, why, when, what does it mean?	
19	Nov 26	The art of the Mycenaean palaces	NAM
	Nov 28-Dec1	Thanksgiving Break	
20	Dec 3	Mycenaean architecture	CYA
21	Dec 5	Trade and exchange: Sea routes and shipwrecks	CYA
22	Dec 6	Make-up T TH class)	CYA & MCA
		Moving between the Aegean and the Levant	
23	Dec 10	Systems collapse and the LH IIIC period	CYA
24	Dec 12	Wrap-up and review session	CYA

# Course Bibliography (REQUIRED)

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#### Optional bibliography

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# Online resources (last accessed 15 April 2024)

• Dartmouth Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology <a href="https://sites.dartmouth.edu/aegean-prehistory/">https://sites.dartmouth.edu/aegean-prehistory/</a>

(Very useful summaries of topics with extra bibliography)

• Nestor Aegean Bibliography

https://classics.uc.edu/nestor/nestor-search

(An amazing search tool for relevant bibliography)

• Foundation of Hellenic World

http://e-history.gr/en/index.html

(The history of Greece in chapters)

• Herakleion Museum (of Minoan Crete)

http://heraklionmuseum.gr/

• National Archaeological Museum at Athens (Collections)

https://www.namuseum.gr/en/collections/

• Museum of Cycladic Art

http://www.cycladic.gr