

## Migration and Multiculturalism in the World of Alexander the Great

Because of an ongoing reduction in faculty, my department had for some time not been able to include the Hellenistic Period in our curriculum in any meaningful way; however, as we sought to overhaul our curriculum just prior to the COVID pandemic, we discussed the appeal a course on Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic world might have to the general Miami student population. I was especially committed to introducing such a class because I thought it might be possible to use general interest in Alexander as a gateway for introducing classics and non-classics students alike to the racial and cultural diversity of the ancient Mediterranean.

So, in fall 2021, I designed and taught for the first time an upper-level seminar entitled “Migration and Multiculturalism in the World of Alexander the Great.” While the course began with study of the literary sources portraying Alexander's life, as well as discussion of Alexander's legacy in more modern eras (including debates over Alexander's sexuality, his attitudes toward “race,” and his creation of a model for modern “globalization”), it then examined the ways that various territories Alexander came into contact with—including what are today the modern nations of Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, and India—developed politically and culturally in the centuries following his death.

To try to highlight the goals of the class, and especially its geographic breadth, I broke our readings into four basic units, beginning with discussion of Alexander and some of the basic methodologies for studying Hellenistic history. I then divided the remaining units into geographic blocks that roughly followed the progress of his campaigns: Egypt, Asia and India. Throughout, I tried to decenter any focus on the “Greeks” alone; thus, for example, I asked my students to grapple with the formation of the Achaemenid empire on its own

terms. Moreover, throughout the class (and especially on the final) I invited discussion of ways this period could be used to challenge concepts like “Greek history” or even the “West,” labels that are often imposed on the ancient Mediterranean in hindsight. Although I will talk about ways I would like to further revise the class (for one, I found it much more challenging to find readings about “migration” than “multiculturalism”), I was really excited by the overall results, and especially the ways my students rose to the challenges the class presented—not least, because, as I discussed openly with them, we were both trying to learn about a specific historical era and learning, at the same time, how historians are trying to transform their methods for studying it.