

Things to think about: History and Material Culture:

Questions from Will Broadhead about the Wallace-Hadrill reading:

- 1) Though the focus of the book is on the surviving archaeological record of Pompeii and Herculaneum, Wallace-Hadrill makes frequent use of the literary record of ancient Rome (the architectural treatise of Vitruvius, the letters of Pliny, the various surviving legal sources, etc). How would you characterize the relationship between these two different kinds of evidence - archaeological and literary?
- 2) Pompeii and Herculaneum are justifiably famous for the high level of preservation that resulted from their being buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79; and yet Wallace-Hadrill warns us many times that the evidence often does not tell us what we might wish to know. What are the most significant obstacles in the way of deriving useful and interesting historical information from the material remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum?
- 3) Wallace-Hadrill's sample sets from Pompeii and Herculaneum reveal a great diversity of house types, sizes, and decoration; but they seem at the same time to support several generalizations about Roman domestic life. What are some of the recurrent patterns that Wallace-Hadrill finds among the diversity? What criteria should an archaeologist employ when attempting to identify such patterns within a sample of remains?
- 4) A central assumption of the increasing number of archaeologists and ancient historians contributing to 'space and society' studies is that culturally specific expectations revealed by the organization and use of space are determined by broader social, cultural, and historical factors. Wallace-Hadrill draws many such connections between the surviving archaeological record of Roman domestic space and the broader social, cultural, and historical context of ancient Pompeii and Herculaneum. Which of those connections did you find the most compelling? Why?

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21H.991 Theories and Methods in the Study of History
Fall 2014

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