The Roman Empire was uncontestably diverse and multicultural, and demonstrably connected with peoples residing far beyond state boundaries. Roman art and material culture however, are often viewed as homogenous, especially when considered within the contexts of histories of Western Civilization. This class critically examines common (mis)perceptions of the ancient past, looking at the foundations of the disciplines of Roman art and archaeology, introduces post-colonial critiques and alternate methods of inquiry (hybridity, creolization, network analysis, and selective consumption), and familiarizes students with bodies of Roman evidence often marginalized in traditional discourse. Among others, specific topics for inquiry include: the promise (and dangers) of the integration of forensic scientific techniques into the study of ethnicity and identity in the ancient past; unintended consequences of post-colonial critiques of the traditional “Romanization” model; historiographic factors contributing to the marginalization of certain material within Roman territory; the definition/dispute of ‘boundaries’ both physical and intellectual that have shaped the field; and evidence of Roman intercultural connections and bi-directional exchange with China, India, Persia, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

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