How do institutions such as museums, websites and archaeological sites developed as tourist destinations shape and construct our notions of the past? How are these institutions enmeshed with broader cultural and political agendas regarding identity and otherness, the formation of artistic canons, and even the concept of ancient art? This course explores modern strategies of collecting, classifying, and displaying material culture from ancient Egypt, the Middle East, Greece, and Rome, both in Europe and the United States and in their present-day homelands.

The course approaches the construction of ancient Mediterranean, Egyptian, and Near Eastern art through modes of reception over the past two centuries. By analyzing collection and display practices, it seeks to understand both the development of modern scholarship in ancient art and the intersection of institutional and scholarly programs. Topics examined include the historical development of modern displays devoted to ancient civilizations in public and private museums, notions of authenticity and identity, issues of cultural heritage and patrimony, temporary and “blockbuster” shows, virtual exhibitions and museums, and the archaeological site as a locus of display. This course will include field trips to Chicago-area museums.