

21H.237
The City of Athens

Response Paper #3

Reading the Acropolis

One of the main challenges in ‘reading’ the Athenian Acropolis is developing an interpretation that accounts both for the many and various details of the archaeological remains of the site (e.g. the Parthenon pediments, metopes, frieze, statue of Athena, the Nike temple decorations, the various shrines elsewhere on the acropolis) and also for the broader historical and cultural themes that we believe were important to the Athenians of the 5th and 4th centuries BC (e.g. empire, democracy, victory, the patronage of Athena, the importance of the Panathenaic Festival). Hurwit and Neils both offer interpretations of the Periclean building program (in the case of Neils, one of its most famous products – the Ionic frieze of the Parthenon) that attempt just that.

In your response paper, please focus on the arguments of Hurwit and Neils and, as in the previous papers, try to include a healthy balance of description and analysis:

- 1) Description – compare and contrast the interpretations offered by Hurwit and Neils
- 2) Analysis – explain what is at stake in preferring one interpretation over another; what are the implications, for example, of choosing to emphasize victory, or piety, or idealized democratic virtue, or whatever.

The response paper should be 750-1,000 words, or about 3-4 pages long.

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