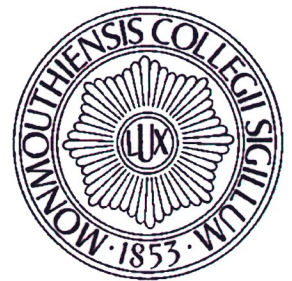




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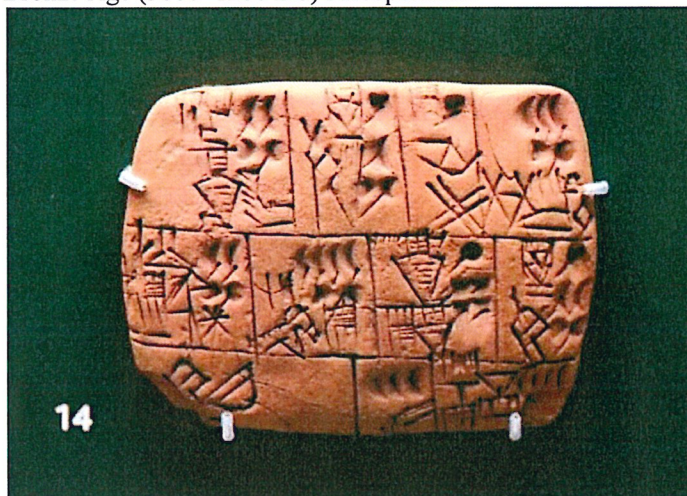
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Inebriation and the Early State: The Transformative Power of Beer in Bronze Age Mesopotamia

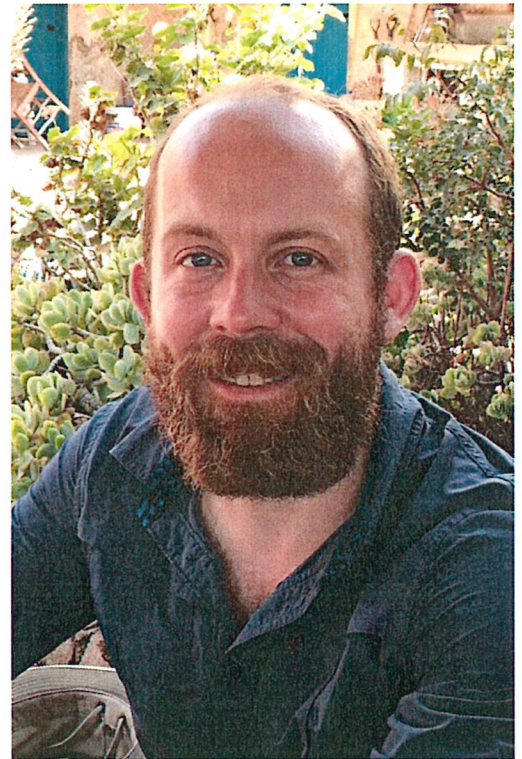
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For a broad range of societies worldwide, alcoholic beverages occupy a key position within the social, political, economic, and/or religious realms – a pattern that can be traced back thousands of years into the past. These beverages are often a constant focus of attention and discussion and a major destination for economic resources, and they are often subject to a whole range of rules and regulations. In the case of Mesopotamia, there can be no doubt that beer was a potent social, political, and economic force from at least the later fourth millennium BC onward. As in many other societies, past and present, beer occupied an ambiguous position in the Mesopotamian social world. It was consumed and enjoyed by many people on a regular basis, but there was also a fine line between enjoyment and overindulgence, between acceptable and unacceptable levels of inebriation. This conflicted stance toward beer and its effects provides some indication of the power and potential of beer as a force of social and political transformation. Like other alcoholic beverages, beer has a unique capacity to enter into relations with human beings – to transform individual people, groups of people, places, and occasions, if only for a restricted period of time. In this lecture, I argue that we need to pay closer attention to this transient, transformative potential and to the ways in which beer, as an active and dynamic force in its own right, may have helped to create the conditions for social and political change in Bronze Age (3000–1200 BC) Mesopotamia.



This piece of clay is a tablet that contains some of the earliest writing in the world. It's called 'cuneiform,' which means wedge-shaped. This tablet is a record of the daily beer rations workers would receive while working in the temples. From Mesopotamia, Iraq. Late Uruk Period, 3100-3000 BCE. (The British Museum, London)



Thursday, October 19, 2017

7:30 P.M.

**Pattee Auditorium, Center for
Science and Business 100
Monmouth College, Monmouth,
Illinois**

**THIS LECTURE IS A FREE
EVENT AND IS OPEN TO THE
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