



BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM
Monday, 29th of October, 5.00 pm

**ALEXANDER AND EGYPT: THE FOUNDING OF ALEXANDRIA
BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGY AND TEXT**
Tim Howe, St. Olaf College, Minnesota

What exactly Alexander the Great did during his five months in Africa (December, 332-April, 331) has puzzled experts since antiquity. For example, all of the surviving ancient sources report various motives for the Conqueror's engagement with his most famous civic foundation, Alexandria ad Aegyptum, and this has facilitated numerous modern interpretations. Yet Archaeological evidence conclusively proves that Alexander the Great did not found the most famous city named after him--Alexandria in Egypt. Consequently, the scholar is faced with a difficult problem: how did the literary sources become so convinced that Alexander the Great was responsible for establishing the Ptolemaic capital? This paper will argue that because Egyptian Alexandria became so famous, so rich and such a cultural center—and because Ptolemy said in his History of Alexander the Great that Alexander himself had indeed founded the city--ancient and modern authors have assigned an importance, even prescience, to Alexander's Egyptian sojourn that is unwarranted. In the end, this paper will demonstrate that because scholars have continued to prioritise the literary record over the physical evidence, the common perception of Alexandria's origins remains an imaginary construct somewhere between archaeology and text.

Venue: Seminar Room 204 Leibnizstraße 1, CAU Kiel