

BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM
Monday, June 12th, 4:15 p.m.

COPING WITH CRISIS AND RISK
IN THE RECENT AND ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN:
SURPLUS GRAIN, LIVESTOCK AND CUISINE

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Recent 'traditional' (pre-mechanised) and ancient Mediterranean farmers adopted a range of strategies for averting or mitigating crop failure, including the sowing of a diversity of crops, selection of resilient low-risk varieties/ species and mixed 'maslins', topographic dispersal of agricultural plots, manipulation of sowing and harvest times, and selective application of husbandry practices such as weeding, manuring and watering. When, in spite of these measures, staple crops did substantially fail, common responses included reliance on resources not normally eaten (animal fodder, gathered food), consumption of stored surplus grain from previous harvests, and recourse to the surplus of others – sometimes on very unfavourable terms. This presentation focuses on part of this array of mitigating and responsive measures in the intimate interrelationship between growing of low- and high-risk grain crops, surplus production and storage, and livestock husbandry. It will argue that diacritical cuisine may play a dynamic role in linking subsistence risk avoidance to the amplification of economic and social differentiation.