The ancient city of Petra, located in the al-Shera mountains just east of the Wadi Araba in Jordan, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985. Called by the poet John William Burgon the "rose-red city half as old as time," it served as the capital of the Nabataean Arab kingdom during the late Hellenistic and early Roman era. The excavations which began in the 1930s have illuminated the complex urban settlement of the Roman era, but have failed to penetrate the earlier Hellenistic period until recently. In the past 15 years, new literary sources, inscriptions, coins, and archaeological evidence have emerged to demonstrate that Petra was a major cultural center several centuries earlier when most scholars depicted the Nabataeans as merely nomads.

The lecture is sponsored by the Program in Mediterranean Archaeology, the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, and the Michael C. Carlos Museum. The event is free and open to the public.