

Course Title: FOUNDATIONS OF THE WESTERN TRADITION

Course number: HIST 101

Term: Fall 2023

Professor: Dr. Daniel T. Gresham

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Frequency: Mon. all class lecture, T-Th, small discussion groups

MATERIALS

Readings in Ancient History Course Pack (provided)

Old and New Testament (optional)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course traces the development of western culture from its beginnings with the ancient city states of Mesopotamia to the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. Students read diverse primary sources such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the writings of Herodotus, and the diary of St. Perpetua as they seek to understand how ancient people ordered their communities, made sense of the world around them, and shaped their environments. This course also helps students develop analytical thinking and writing skills.

COURSE GOAL

To provide a broad overview of key themes and trends that will serve as a springboard for further study.

OBJECTIVES

After completing the course students will be expected to:

Identify the major states, empires, and periods of the ancient world
Explain and provide examples of major themes and trends of ancient history
Analyze a given aspect of the past using primary sources
Defend a thesis using evidence

ASSESSMENT

Participation: 10%
Connection papers: 10%
Compositions: 30%
Midterm Exam: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

PARTICIPATION

Punctuality is expected. Students should be attentive and engaged during class. They should have completed their readings by the appointed days and should be prepared to discuss them critically. This means that students should be ready to discuss the author's background, the author's motivation for writing, the context of the source, and their insights about the sources.

Service as discussion leader is a major component of the participation grade. On the first day of the discussion section, students will choose 2 chapters from the course pack for which they will be responsible guiding the in-class discussion. Each chapter will have 2-3 student discussion leaders. The responsibility of this role is to generate 3 to 4 questions regarding the readings to serve as prompts. These should be open-ended questions. The discussion leaders should meet before class to prepare the questions.

EXAMS

The midterm and final exam consist of short answer and/or an essay derived from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. These questions will be based on one

or more of the course themes. Both exams are cumulative. These exams require the student to synthesize information and demonstrate an awareness of the past's complexity.

COMPOSITIONS

Analytical Essay

During the semester, each student will write one analytical essay based on a course theme from ancient history. The paper should have a thesis and main points supported by primary sources. Use at least *four* of the course pack readings and at least one quote from each source. Citations should be made as footnotes. The essay should be 1,000 words in length, in 12-point font, and double spaced.

Article/Chapter Review

Students will select an article or book chapter associated with one of the topics from the course pack from Jstor open access. These readings must be approved in advance by the professor, be of a recent publication date (within the last 50 or so years), and range between twenty to thirty pages. A brief guide to writing book reviews is provided at the end of this document. The review should be roughly 600 words, typed in 12-point font, and double spaced.

Both the essay and the review should conform to the standards of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Below is a cumbersome link to an online version of the style guide.

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html

CONNECTION PAPERS

Each student will turn in 2 connection papers over the course of the semester. These are short analyses of two readings from the same chapter of the course pack. The primary purpose of these short compositions is for the student to think about relationships between readings as well as the meaning of these relationships. These papers could explain how the sources enrich our understanding of one of the course themes (found below). The connection papers should not exceed one paragraph in

length, should address the context of the primary sources, and should include a short quote from each source that supports the main idea. These papers can also serve as a good starting point for the analytical essays. Connection papers are due at the beginning of the discussion section.

ATTENDANCE POLICY, ACADEMIC HONESTY, & LATE WORK

Students are expected to attend every class. I will take roll for each class and will consider any absences unexcused. If you have a compelling reason for missing class let me know as soon as possible. Beginning with the fourth unexcused absence, students will have a third of a letter grade deducted from their final grade. Late assignments will have one third of a letter grade deducted for each day late (from A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). Extensions may be issued at the sole discretion of the instructor, but only for grave reasons.

Plagiarism is a matter of justice and individual honesty. It consists of passing another person's work off as your own. To avoid plagiarism, and to give others their due, you must use citations in your work. You should always cite direct quotes, paraphrases, ideas, and anything substantially borrowed from another. Clear evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and could result in stricter penalties at the discretion of the administration.

Limit your use of artificial intelligence to grammar and spell check only. Do not use ChatGPT, or other AI sources to do any of your writing or thinking in this class. Any students using one of these sources in their work will receive a zero and will be subject to the same penalties for plagiarism.

COURSE THEMES

Organizing human society—Humans are social animals and have always sought to live in communities. The organization of these communities varies widely over space and time. Some types of organization were hierarchical while others were more egalitarian. How and why did people bring order to their societies? What holds societies together? How do societies interact with one another? How did classical culture differ from eastern or Egyptian?

Making sense of existence—Humans tend to seek a higher power for creating meaning in their lives and in the events surrounding them. But ancient peoples, aside from the Hebrews, did not have the true religion and invented their own gods, myths, and liturgies. What purposes did these religions serve? How did these pagan religions shape ancient history? What effect did religion have on societies?

Interaction between humans and the environment—Resource use has posed special difficulties, really since Adam and Eve. The earth's regions vary tremendously, imposing limitations on people but also offering advantages. How did environment shape ancient cultures and conversely, how did people shape their environments? How did cultures differ in their use relationship with the natural world? What might account for these differences?

SYLLABUS

Week #, date, lecture, and discussion topics

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|---|-------|---|
| 1 | 09/05 | Course intro/Creation to Noah and his descendants
Discussion: handout on western tradition |
| 2 | 09/11 | Mesopotamia: Civilization and Order
Discussion on violence and warfare in Ch 1 readings |
| 3 | 09/18 | Egyptian Supernature
Discussion on Egyptian culture in Ch 2 readings |
| 4 | 09/25 | Assyrian Imperialism
Discussion on Assyrian Tyranny in Ch 3 readings |
| 5 | 10/2 | Cyrus the Great and Persian Imperialism |

- Discussion on Persian religion and culture in Ch 4 readings
- 6 10/11 Hellenic Antecedents: Mycenaeans and Minoans
Discussion on Idyllic depictions and reality in Ch 5 readings
- 7 10/16 Athenian Democracy and Golden Age
Discussion on Athens and Sparta in Ch 6 readings, **Analytical Essay Due**
- 8 10/23 Athenian Decline
Discussion on Crisis and Democratic Values in Ch 7 readings
- 9 10/30 Discussion: Who was Alexander the Great? in Ch 8 readings
(No classes Mon. – Wed.)
- 10 11/6 Midterm (Mon.)
Discussion on Greek Ideas in Ch 9 readings
- 11 11/13 The Roman Republic in the Punic Wars
Discussion: The values of the Roman Republic in Ch 10 readings
- 12 11/21 Decline of the Republic
Discussion on the causes of decline in Ch 11 readings
- 13 11/28 (no class Monday, Thanksgiving)

Augustus and the Foundation of Roman Empire, Ch 12 readings

- 14 12/05 The Messiah and Jewish Politics
Discussion on Christians and the State in Ch 13 readings,
Article/Chapter Review Due
- 15 12/11 End of the Ancient World
Discussion on the different views of Rome in Ch 14 readings (no
class Thursday)

Final Exams 12/16–12/20

Short guide to writing book/article reviews

Name, etc.

Title of work in Chicago format for bibliographic citation

Text

Information to include in the **first** paragraph:

1 Attention grabber (this could be a quotation from the work that encapsulates the argument or theme, a general statement, a thought provoking question, etc.)

2 How does the work fit into the broader literature? (what is the current scholarly opinion and how does your book challenge, affirm, depart, etc. from it? Or, what is the broader debate that the author engages?)

3 ID the author in one sentence, two max (give the author's title or position and something about their qualifications to write on the subject)

4 One sentence or so summary of the book (obviously, this is quite general)

5 The thesis (you can quote directly for this or put it in your own words)

6 Definition of major term (most arguments hinge on one key term. The author's definition of the term is crucial!)

7 Assessment of the work (for a positive review begin by listing criticisms, for a negative review begin with positives. Ex. Of positive: Even though Smith fails to . . . she nonetheless demonstrates x, y, and z. Ex. Of negative: While Smith excels in her treatment of . . . she unfortunately fails to substantiate (restate thesis) to X, exaggerates y, and neglects z.)

Ex.

As one of the most famous presidents of the United States—the one who ended slavery and saved the union—Abraham Lincoln's view of the Constitution is perhaps more important than that of any other president. Did he disregard the Constitution in order to save it? According to scholarly consensus, Lincoln pursued egalitarian goals at the expense of the constitution. Phillip Shaw Paludan, a professor in Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois, Springfield, and author of several works on Lincoln and the Civil

War, analyzes Lincoln's decisions and policies in *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*. Paludan challenges the consensus by arguing that "Lincoln respected equally the nation's institutions, manifested in the political-constitutional system, and its ideals, revealed in the Declaration of Independence." Paludan defines the "political-constitutional system" as "the rights and powers that the Constitution establishes, the ideals underlying the Declaration of Independence, and the discussion and debate over them that defines and redefines their meaning and relationship."¹ Although Paludan presents an excellent narrative he unfortunately focuses more attention on context than on Lincoln, fails to fully explain Lincoln's view of the constitutional issues, and maintains a big government bias which clouds his judgment.

Second paragraph—evidence. What sources, specifically, does the author use to support his claim? Judge the evidence—did the author look at the best sources to prove his thesis? (for instance, the thesis could be regional in scope, yet the evidence is almost all from one state.) Sufficient? Did the author consult enough manuscript collections, newspapers, censuses, etc. to justify his conclusion?

Next **three** paragraphs: explain your assessment.

Conclusion: restate your assessment (two to three sentences may be sufficient).

¹ Phillip Shaw Paludan, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 321, 363.