

Course Title: FOUNDATIONS OF THE WESTERN TRADITION

Course number: HIST 101

Term: Fall 2024

Professor: Dr. Daniel T. Gresham

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Frequency: Mon. all class lecture, T-F, small group discussion

MATERIALS

Readings in Course Pack (provided)

Old and New Testament (optional)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course traces the development of western culture from its origins in 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 memoirs 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. The Incarnation marks a pivotal shift in history with the time before and after understood as one of preparation and manifestation, respectively. This course also helps students develop analytical thinking and writing skills.

COURSE GOAL

To provide an introduction to major themes and events of that shaped western civilization.

OBJECTIVES

After completing the course students will be able to:

Identify the major states, empires, and periods of the ancient world

Explain and provide examples of major themes and trends in ancient history

Analyze a given aspect of the past using primary sources

Defend a thesis using evidence and reason

ASSESSMENT

Participation: 10%

Primary source analysis x2: 10%

Compositions x2: 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. Participation in discussion is the primary means of demonstrating to the professor whether a student has read the material.

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 for 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. The type of question is open, but some areas of interest are cause and effect, context, contingency, change over time, continuity, synthesis of readings, or relation to the present. The discussion leaders should meet before class to prepare the questions.

EXAMS

The midterm and final exam will be broad, open-ended, essay questions derived from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. Both exams are cumulative. These exams require the student to synthesize information and demonstrate an awareness of the past's complexity. Students should demonstrate a familiarity with the readings by referencing at least 5 in their essays.

COMPOSITIONS

Analytical Essay

During the semester, each student writes one analytical essay based on primary sources. Like other essays, this one should have a thesis and main points. Use at least *four* of the course pack readings and at least one direct 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 Review

Students select one peer reviewed article by a scholar from the JSTOR open access database. Articles 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 article reviews is provided at the end of this syllabus. The review should be roughly 800 words, typed in 12-point font, and double spaced.

Both the analytical 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

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

Each student will turn in two primary source analyses over the course of the semester. A guide to writing a primary source analysis can be found at the end of the syllabus. Every student completes the first primary source analysis on one reading from chapters 1-4 in the Course Pack. This ensures feedback before writing the analytical essay.

Because students choose which sources to analyze, the due dates are variable. Papers are due on the lecture day—usually a Monday—of the week in which we discuss the primary source. Though only 250 words long, the analysis should still have a thesis. It should include at least one relevant direct quote from the source—properly cited—and have a concluding sentence.

ATTENDANCE POLICY, ACADEMIC HONESTY, & LATE WORK

Students are expected to attend every class. I will take roll for each class and will consider absences unexcused unless the student is given written permission from a college official. If students have a compelling reason for missing class let the professor 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 professor, 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, writers use citations in their work. Direct quotes, paraphrases, ideas, and anything substantially borrowed from another should be cited. Clear evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and could result in stricter penalties at the discretion of the administration.

Do not use ChatGPT, or other generative 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 as for plagiarism.

SYLLABUS

Week #, date, lecture, and discussion topics

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| 1 | 09/03 | Course intro/Creation to Noah and his descendants Mesopotamia: Civilization and Order (no discussion) |
| 2 | 09/09 | Egyptian Supernature Discussion on violence and warfare in Ch 1 readings |
| 3 | 09/16 | Assyrian Imperialism Discussion on Egyptian culture in Ch 2 readings |
| 4 | 09/23 | Cyrus the Great and Persian Imperialism Discussion on Assyrian Tyranny in Ch 3 readings (T only) |
| 5 | 09/30 | Hellenic Antecedents: Mycenaeans and Minoans Discussion on Persian religion and culture in Ch 4 readings |
| 6 | 10/07 | Athenian Democracy and Golden Age Discussion on Idyllic depictions and reality in Ch 5 readings |
| 7 | 10/15 | Athenian Decline Discussion on Athens and Sparta in Ch 6 readings, Analytical Essay Due (W-F discussion) |

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| 8 | 10/21 | The Roman Republic to the Punic Wars Discussion on Crisis and Democratic Values in Ch 7 readings |
| 9 | 10/28 | Midterm (Mon.) Discussion: Who was Alexander the Great? in Ch 8 readings (T only) |
| 10 | 11/04 | Hellenistic Culture Discussion on Hellenistic Ideas in Ch 9 readings |
| 11 | 11/11 | Decline of the Republic Discussion: The values of the Roman Republic in Ch 10 readings |
| 12 | 11/18 | Augustus and the Foundation of Roman Empire Discussion on the causes of decline in Ch 11 readings |
| 13 | 11/25 | (Thanksgiving break 11/27–12/02) The Messiah and Jewish Politics Roman Empire Ch 12 readings (T only) |
| 14 | 12/03 | The Spread of Christianity in the Empire (Tuesday) Discussion on Christians and the State in Ch 13 readings, Article Review Due (W-F) |

15 12/09 End of the Ancient World
Discussion on the different views of Rome and the barbarians in Ch
14 readings (T-W)

Final Exams 12/14–12/18

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.

PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS GUIDE

Primary source analysis is the most important undertaking of the historian. There is no better way to understand events in the past than by examining the sources — whether journals, newspaper articles, letters, court case records, novels, artworks, music or autobiographies — that people from that period left behind.

The purpose of a primary source analysis is to draw information from the source beyond its face value. A consideration of the text in relation to other data such as the author's background and the historical context can provide new insights. The analysis then generates new historical knowledge.

There is no one correct analysis for a given text. Each student's approach to a source will be different due to differing interests, experiences, and previous knowledge. Therefore, multiple valid interpretations are possible.

Analysis of a primary source requires information about two things: the document itself, and the era from which it comes. Information about the time period may come from the lectures, the introductory material for the source, and/or perhaps other classes. Think about the document itself on your own. The following questions may be helpful to you as you begin to analyze the sources:

Think about the purpose of the source. What was the author's message or argument? What was he/she trying to get across? Is the message explicit, or are there implicit messages as well?

How does the author try to get the message across? What methods does he/she use?

What do you know about the author? Race, sex, class, occupation, religion, age, region, political beliefs? Does any of this matter? How?

Who constituted the intended audience? Was this source meant for one person's eyes, or for the public? How does that affect the source?

What can a careful reading of the text (even if it is an object) tell you? How does the language work? What are the important metaphors or symbols? What can the author's choice of words tell you? What about the silences — what does the author choose NOT to talk about?

Now you can evaluate the source as historical evidence.

Is it prescriptive — telling you what people thought should happen — or descriptive — telling you what people thought did happen?

Does it describe ideology and/or behavior?

Does it tell you about the beliefs/actions of the elite, or of “ordinary” people? From whose perspective?

What historical questions can you answer using this source? What are the benefits of using this kind of source?

What questions can this source NOT help you answer? What are the limitations of this type of source?

If we have read other historians’ interpretations of this source or sources like this one, how does your analysis fit with theirs? In your opinion, does this source support or challenge their argument?

How does context inform the meaning of the text?

Remember, you cannot (and should not) address each and every one of these questions in your paper. You need to be selective.

Adapted from:

– Molly Ladd-Taylor, Annette Igra, Rachel Seidman, et al.

<https://www.carleton.edu/history/resources/history-study-guides/primary/>

SAMPLE PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

The procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus was meant as a demonstration of power in a period of Egyptian weakness. Athenaeus wrote about an event that happened long before he lived, the splendors of the Egyptian king Ptolemy II on display during a procession in Alexandria, Egypt, in 285 BC. Athenaeus did not observe the events, but his writings were based on the observations of witnesses. People in the procession wore the most luxurious items of the day such as “garments embroidered with gold and splendid cloaks.” Athenaeus also described immense structures on carts such as “an altar six cubits high . . . covered with gilded ivy leaves, having a crown of vine leaves upon it all gold” and “an image of Dionysius ten cubits high [15 feet].”ⁱ So why did Ptolemy hold such an extravagant procession? Context provides a clue. The procession coincided with the war of the Diadochi in which Egypt failed to gain more territory, so the procession

acted as a way to save face. Ptolemy also recently assumed the throne from his father and may have felt insecure. In this light, he intended the procession as a show of solidarity as well as a demonstration of his vast resources. Under the Ptolemaic dynasty, Egypt ultimately declined and fell to the Romans. Athenaeus' audience knew this. Athenaeus may have meant this description of the procession as a subtle warning to his fellow Romans that luxury leads to weakness.

ⁱ Athenaeus, "The Procession of Ptolemy II," in *Ancient History Course Pack*, comp. Daniel T. Gresham, (St. Mary's, KS: Self-published, 2018), Ch 9, p. 11.