

East Meets West: The Persian Empire from Biblical and Classical Perspectives

HIS 511c

UNCG Fall 2001

Course Information:

Meets: M 3:30 – 6:20 PM in MHRA 1213

Instructor: Stephanie Reed, University of Chicago

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Office: 2113 MHRA Building

Office Hours: Wednesday 12:30-1:30 or by appt.

Office Ph: (336) 334-5206 (no voice mail)

Department Ph: (336) 334-5992 (leave message)

- ❖ I welcome your questions via email or office hours regarding the course lectures, readings, academic goals, etc. I will respond to your emails as quickly as possible M-F during normal “business hours,” or 8am-6pm. I will try but cannot guarantee a prompt response if I receive your mail after 6pm weekdays or on weekends/holidays.

Introduction:

In the sixth century BCE the Achaemenid Persians, an Indo-Iranian tribe, conquered the territories dominated by the Assyrians and Babylonians for millennia, becoming the new rulers of the Ancient Near East and the founders of the first Iranian empire. For two centuries the Persians managed to control the largest empire in the ancient world before the advent of Rome. Some evidence suggests that the Achaemenid Persians’ success may be attributed to a more ‘enlightened’, cosmopolitan attitude toward subject nations than their Mesopotamian predecessors. Yet much of Achaemenid history and society has been interpreted from the writings of two contemporary peoples with whom they had considerable interaction: the Hebrews and the Greeks. The convergence of Persian, Greek, and Hebrew theology and ideology, in fact, would come to affect ‘democratic’ ideals and the foundations of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in surprising ways.

Student Learning Objectives:

Because many of you may not have much familiarity with the Persian Empire, the Old Testament/ Hebrew Bible, or Classical literature like Herodotus, we will begin with a survey of the Near East in Achaemenid times, or the historical and geographical context of the empire. Classes will then become a series of discussions (and some lecture) about the Persians based on modern historiography (secondary sources), and a detailed, comparative study of the ancient and primary Achaemenid documents. Were the Persians really so different from their Near Eastern neighbors? How reliable are our sources, where do they diverge, and why?

The ultimate course objective, of course, is to produce a 15-20 page research paper. No need to panic, as this will be done over the course of several stages. The topic must be approved by the instructor, but it can essentially deal with any aspect of Achaemenid Persian history and the peoples of the empire.

Upon successful completion of this course, you will have:

- ❖ Acquired knowledge of Achaemenid Persian history with regards to its foundations, traditions, administration, royal ideology, theology, and its influence upon the social, political, and religious fabric of the Ancient Near East.
- ❖ Learned the stages of researching (including library work, note-taking, and source criticism).
- ❖ Learned to critique and synthesize secondary evidence alongside primary evidence, including translated historical and religious documents and material culture to build an interdisciplinary methodology.
- ❖ Orally presented your research to your colleagues.
- ❖ Learned to critique the written and oral work of your peers in constructive ways, and to receive and incorporate the constructive criticism of others into your own work.

Some background in ancient or biblical history may be helpful but is not required to take this course.

Readings:

Readings for each week are given on the attached syllabus. I will continue to add optional individual readings on Blackboard for each week in addition to the assigned readings, many from the reserved volume list below. Individual readings will be useful for those wishing to explore subjects (particularly for papers) in detail.

There are two required texts for the course, available at the bookstore:

Allen, Lindsay. (2007). The Persian Empire

Herodotus. (2008). The History, edited by David Greene. *An account of the Persian/Greek wars and the events leading up to it. Herodotus (lived 5th c. BCE) is considered the “father of history.”

In addition, you may wish to procure a copy of The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NOAB), especially if you want to focus on biblical texts for your paper. However, the biblical group readings we will do are not extensive, and I will post them or provide handouts. Suggested: New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha (collegiate version). ISBN: 0195289552. However, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) has several editions, any of which are fine. “Living Bibles” are strongly discouraged since they paraphrase the original text. The beauty of the NOAB is that it features in-depth academic research and commentaries from non-denominational perspectives.

For Reference or Research Papers:

The following texts, among others, have been placed on Library or eReserve; the list is far from exhaustive for Achaemenid studies, so feel free ask me for specific interests. For the full shelf Reserve list, look under “Library Catalogs,” check the “Reserves” tab and search under class or instructor). For any research books you would like that are unavailable in the UNCG catalog, you can request a copy through Interlibrary Loan. Ph: 336-334-5849. You can also simply go to Jackson Library's home page <http://library.uncg.edu> and click on "ILL Request Forms." Login to the ILL software (ILLiad) with your

Novel login/password. Click on either *Request a journal article*, *Request a loan*, or *Request a book chapter* and follow the instructions filling out the form.

- Bakker, Egbert J. (2002). Brill's Companion to Herodotus. Leiden: Brill. (eReserve)
- Boyce, Mary. (1984). Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226069303
- Briant, Pierre. (2002, English translation). From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire. *Most comprehensive account of Achaemenid history and Greek historiography. Includes full index of Achaemenid sources: pp. 1125ff. See also research notes for each chapter, pp. 877ff. (Ch. 1-5, 8, 12 on eReserve)
- Curtis, John and Nigel Tallis, eds. (2005). Forgotten Empire: The World of Achaemenid Persia. University of California Press. *Brief but excellent articles according to subject. ISBN: 0520247310 (full text will be on eReserve)
- Kent, Roland G. (1953). Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon. New Haven: American Oriental Society. ISBN: 0940490331
- Khurt, Amelie. (2007). The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period. Routledge. ISBN: 0415436281
- Root, Margaret Cool. *Multiple books and articles on Achaemenid art and cylinder seals.
- Sancisi-Weerdenberg, Helene, ed. (1987 to-). Achaemenid History. Vols. I-XIII. *Go-to series for Achaemenid scholars.
- Schmidt, Erich. (1953-1970). Persepolis. Vols. I-III. *Most complete archaeological report of the site and its monuments.
- Stronach, David. *Multiple articles on Achaemenid Persian archaeology and architecture
- Wiesehofer, Josef. (2001). Ancient Persia. New York: I.B. Taurus. ISBN: 1860646751 (Ch. 1-3 on Blackboard eReserve)
- Yamauchi, Edwin. (1996). Persia and the Bible. *Excellent encyclopedia-style history for quick reference. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. ISBN: 0801021081

General Reference:

- Sasson, Jack, ed. (1995). Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (CANE). (vols. 1-4). *"Encyclopedia" of ANE topics organized by theme.
- The Cambridge Ancient History Series. (1971-75). *Vols. 3-5 dedicated to Assyria, Persia, and Classical Athens respectively. (See library catalog- available on shelf and conveniently as eBooks)
- Freedman, David Noel et al., editors. (1992). The Anchor Bible Dictionary. (vols. 1-6). *Most comprehensive treatment of biblical subjects and scholarship.

Course Requirements:

Weekly Discussions and Peer Reviews	10%
Formal Presentation	10%
Ancient Source Analysis	10%
Modern Source Analysis	10%
Rough Draft and Annotated Bibliography	10%
Research Paper	50%

Bonus Points for Heroic Efforts/Improvement*

Up to 10 pts. over and above final score

(*Since these are at the instructor's discretion they are non-negotiable)

Assignments:

Assignment 1: Project description with 5 research questions due (one to two paragraphs) (**Sept. 5**)

Assignment 2: Abstract with annotated bibliography due (**Sept. 26**)

Assignment 3: Ancient source analysis due (Persian, biblical, or Classical) (**Oct. 10**)

Assignment 4: Modern literary analysis due (preferably cumulative) (**Oct. 17**)

Assignment 5: Formal presentation of your research (as developing project) (**Oct. 24, 31, Nov. 7**)

Assignment 6: Polished draft due (**Nov. 14**)

Assignment 7: Peer commentaries due (**Nov. 21**)

Assignment 8: Final draft due (**Dec. 12**)

For Your Information

Writing (and Speaking) Help: In addition to seeking your instructor's advice about writing in your own words or properly citing resources, you can utilize the Writing and Speaking Center in 3211 of the MHRA Building (334-334-3125), <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/>.

Jackson Library also has convenient citation guide links on its website. Other useful writing guides include: Kate Turabian's [A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations](#) (University of Chicago Press, 2007); William Storey's [Writing History: A Guide for Students](#) (Oxford University Press, 2009) or Purdue University's [Online Writing Lab](#) ("OWL"): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>. For graduate students especially, [The Chicago Manual of Style](#) is a highly detailed industry standard for academic and professional writing, also available online for a fee.

Attendance: Coming to class is mandatory, since we only meet once per week and lectures will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible. On several days, you will be presenting a reading or group of readings as part of the seminar discussion. If you miss more than one class period for any reason, your final grade will be reduced by two percentage points (e.g., from 88 to 86) for each additional absence.

Assignment Completion: No late assignments are accepted (unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances, such as loss of a limb). The course will move very quickly, so this rule is for your sanity as well as your teacher's. Failure to complete any assignment will result in an "F" for the course.

Academic Integrity: Any violation of the honor code (plagiarism or cheating) will be dealt with according to UNCG's academic integrity policy. As this course is about researching a topic and writing a paper based on primary and secondary sources, I do not wish to see plagiarism from the web. I strongly urge you not to use any websites (besides library databases) except as a means to find printed sources. If you

have good reason to use a website rather than a printed source, you must clear it with me. For specific explanations about UNCG's academic integrity policy, see <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/>.

Please do not come late to class as it is disruptive for both your fellow classmates and your instructor. Cellular phones must be silenced or turned off in the classroom. If you disrupt class by talking on the phone or text messaging, you will be asked to leave. Laptops are not allowed.

Tentative Lecture and Group Reading Schedule:

(Readings other than required texts will be on eReserve unless otherwise noted)

Aug. 22 – Introduction to the Achaemenid Persians and the Historical Sources

Handout, *The Roots of Western Tradition*

Allen, Introduction

Wiesehofer, *Ancient Persia*, Ch. 1

Yaumauchi, *Persia and The Bible*, pp. 65-92 (Library Reserve)

Aug. 29 – Medes or Persians?: The Roots of Persian Rule: Assyria, Babylon, Elam, Media, and “Pars”/Persia; Cyrus the Great and Cambyses

Allen Ch. 1; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, Ch. 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.7, 1.8 (skim), 1.9

HB (Hebrew Bible): Ezra 1:1; Isaiah 39-45; II Chronicles 36

Herodotus, Introduction (recommended but optional); I.95-106, 125-40 (do your best!)

Individual Readings:

J. Purvis, “Exile and Return: From the Babylonian Deconstruction to the Reconstruction of the Jewish State,” in *Ancient Israel From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Ed. Hershal Shanks. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society. 1999: 201-229.

HB, *Isaiah* (entire); HB, *II Kings 18-23.31; 24-25* (Jehoiakim, King of Judah/Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon); Jeremiah 25-40, esp. 27.4, 31.31-34 (6th c. prophet before fall of Jerusalem and during early exile)

Henkelman, W., “Persians, Medes, and Elamites: Acculturation in the Neo-Elamite Period,” in G. B. Lanfranchi et al., eds., *Continuity of Empire (?) Assyria, Media, Persia*, Padua: S.A.R.G.O.N. 2003: 282-232.

Kuhrt, Amelie. “The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy,” in *Journal of Studies of the Old Testament* 25, 1983: 83-97.

Herodotus, Book II (Cambyses)

Sept. 5 – Conquest and Politics: Darius I, Xerxes I, Behistun/Bisitun; Royal Capitals: Ecbatana, Pasargadae, Susa, Persepolis

Allen Ch. 2, 3

Briant, Ch. 5

Curtis and Tallis, *Forgotten Empire*, Ch. 4, 5 (Archaeology of the Ach. Period, The Palace)

Kent, selections from *Old Persian* (TBA)
HB: *Ezra* (finish); *Nehemiah* 1-8 (optional)

Individual Readings:

Curtis and Tallis, Ch. 6 (The Royal Table)

Khurt, Amelie. "From Babylon to Persia." In *Rituals of Royalty*, edited by D. Cannadine.
1987: 20-55. (Continuity of royal ceremonials and function of Persepolis)

Briant, Ch. 3 (Herodotus: Darius's succession conspiracy/the Behistun inscription)

Briant, Ch. 12 (Darius and Egypt, Population Settlement and Deportation, Diversity and
Unity (royal and local law)

Susa statue and Udjahorresnet (Art in the peripheries: selections TBA)

❖ **Project description due with 5 research questions due**

Sept. 12 – Achaemenid Material Culture and Influence in the Peripheries, Means of Communication,
Clash of the Greeks and Persians

Allen, Ch. 4, Ch. 5 up to pg. 122.

Briant, Ch. 4

Wiesehofer, Ch. 2 (short)

Herodotus, Books 5-9 (selections TBA)

Individual Readings:

Harper, P.O et al., eds. The Royal City of Susa- Ancient Near Eastern Treasures at the Louvre.
New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1992.

Curtis and Tallis, Ch. 2 (Achaemenid Lang. and Inscriptions); Ch. 6 (The Royal Table)

Allen, Ch. 9 (Decipherment of Old Persian script; Achaemenid legacy)

"The Persepolis Tablets," in News and Notes. Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications. 2008.

Sept. 19 – The King and His Subjects: Tribute-Gifts, Royal Ideology, Religion

Allen, Ch. 5, pg. 122-ff.

Curtis and Tallis, Ch. 8 (Achaemenid religion and burial customs)

Briant, Ch. 8 ("The King's Men." Court dynamics and administrative strategies)

HB, *Esther*

Selections from Herodotus and Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* (TBA)

Individual Readings:

Wiesehofer, Ch. 3 (Good, brief summary of peoples and tribute)

Royal Ideology and Image:

Kuhrt, A. and Sherwin-White, S. Xerxes' Destruction of the Babylonian
Temples." In *Achaemenid History II: The Greek Sources*. 1987: 9-78.

Briant, Ch. 6 ("Representations of Royalty")

Kuhrt, Amelie. "Earth and Water." In *Achaemenid History III*, A. Kuhrt and H.
Sancisi-Weerdenburg, eds. 1988.

Gift-Tribute and the Persepolis Treasury:

Gunter, A. and Root, M.C. "Replicating, Inscribing, Giving: Ernst Herzfeld and the Artaxerxes Silver Philae in the Freer Gallery of Art." In *Ars Orientalis* 28. 1998: 3-38.

Cahill, Nicholas. "The Treasury of Persepolis: Gift-Giving at the City of the Persians." In *American Journal of Archaeology* 89.3. 1985: 386.

Herodotus VII.134-37; VIII.5; 9.18; Xenophon, *Oeconomicos* IV.7, 8

Sept. 26 – Why Did the Empire Fall?: Cyrus III, Alexander, Sources and Synthesis

Allen, Ch. 6

Readings from Xenophon, *Anabasis*

Individual Readings (others TBA):

Sancisi-Weerdenberg, H. "Alexander at Persepolis." In Alexander the Great: Myth and Reality. 21: 177-188.

❖ **Abstract with annotated bibliography due**

Oct. 3 – Fall Break!

Oct. 10 – Individual Meetings begin (Details TBA)

❖ **Ancient source analysis due**

Oct. 17 – Individual Meetings

❖ **Modern literary/historiographic analysis due**

Oct. 24 – Formal Presentations/Individual Meetings

Oct. 31 – Formal Presentations

Nov. 7 – Formal Presentations

Nov. 14 – No Class (instructor conference)

❖ **Polished draft and bibliography due.** Send electronic copies to me and to the classmates reviewing your work by 3:30 pm.

Nov. 21 – In-Class Peer Review Session (small group discussions).

❖ **Draft commentaries due.** Bring each reviewed draft and comment sheets.

Nov. 28 – Course Wrap-up; Almost-There Soiree (details TBA)

❖ **Monday, Dec. 12 – Final draft due in my office by 3:30 (MHRA 2113)**

