

This course surveys the history of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean world from about 3000 BC to about AD 700. It concentrates on the interactions of the various societies of these regions as these culminate in the formation of two very large imperial states, one in the west (the Mediterranean-centered Roman Empire), the other in the east (the Parthian and then Sasanian Persian Empires stretching from Mesopotamia to the Himalayas). The survey is meant to provide the broadest possible overview of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean history. To accomplish this we will move rapidly, often covering centuries at a time. To facilitate learning, the course is divided (except at the very beginning and the end) into 1000-year (millennium) units and each of these units is organized around a particular story. There are 6 units, and it might be said that we are thus going to be looking at 6 stories. If you learn and keep in mind the “story line” (I will be discussing these at the beginning of each unit) for each of these, you will have a way to manage the many details you will be encountering in the readings and lectures.

**REQUIRED TEXT:** Ralph W. Mathisen, *Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations* (= M)  
This will provide the basic narrative. Web readings will provide primary source material, including illustrations of art and architecture. Lectures, often emphasizing details different from those stressed in the text, will shape the particular story we will follow.

There will be 3 exams, each counting 25% of the final grade (total 75%) and 5 Reading Responses (1-2 pages, typed, double-spaced), each counting 5% of the final grade (total 25%). Reading assignments are to be completed *before* the class meeting they appear next to. Make sure you look ahead to see when writing assignments are due.

Full attendance is expected. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in lowering of your grade.

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8/18 Introduction: Ancient History Beginnings to End/Insiders and Outsiders  
M 1-8

I.10,000-3000 BC: Backgrounds: Agriculture: origins, spread, and consequences  
*Central Questions: How, where, and why did agriculture begin? Why was agriculture revolutionary?*

8/20 Agriculture: origins and spread

M 9-27

8/25 Differential Consequences (flood plains favor population growth) M 31-39

\*\*Reading Response 1: Mathisen (M 33-38) discusses a number of sites in Mesopotamia (Iraq) whose remains point to successive developments that set the stage for the emergence of the first complex (= “civilized”) societies in Mesopotamia by about 3000 BC. Trace these developments by discussing the distinctive differences we see as we move from the Hassuna Culture to the

Halaf Culture to the Samarra Culture to the Ubaid Culture to the Uruk Culture (1-2 pages, due 8/27).

## II. 3000-2000 BC: First Cities and Civilizations

*Central Questions: How do we define (Old World) civilization? What were the reasons for warfare in southern Mesopotamia (Sumer) and in Egypt? What were the consequences? What were the bases of royal authority in Sumer and in Egypt?*

8/27 Sumerian cities—through 2000 BC M 39-56

9/2 Sumerian religion and outlook Creation story (handout )/Gilgamesh  
<http://www.jasoncolavito.com/epic-of-gilgamesh.html>

\*\*Reading Response 2: What wisdom does Gilgamesh gain from his journey to Utnapishtim?

9/4 Egypt, rise of Memphis M 65-80

9/9 Theology of Memphis (handout)

9/11 Old Kingdom Pyramid Age Middle Kingdom M 80-90; Pyramid sites:  
<http://www.archaeology.org/0705/etc/pyramid.html>;  
<http://www.narmer.pl/indexen.htm> (click on Pyramids in menu at left)

### 9/16 FIRST EXAM

## III. 2000-1000: New Peoples/Early Empires

*Central Questions: What technologies contributed to the development of large-scale empires in this period? In what sense did the eastern Mediterranean and Near East constitute an integrated world during this period?*

9/18 Migrations M 57-64

9/23 Consequences, including Egypt M 90-91

9/25 International Empires M 90-96

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/megiddobattle.htm>

[http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/egyptian-hittite\\_correspondence.htm](http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/egyptian-hittite_correspondence.htm)

<http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/suppiluliuma-letter.html>

9/30 Aegean Fringe M 99-106

## IV. 1000-1: BC Rise of the West

*Central Questions: How did situations in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean spur developments in the west (Greece and Italy)? What are the distinctive features of Greek civilization? What explains the Macedonian conquest of the Near East? What explains the Roman conquest of the Mediterranean world?*

10/2 New Migrations/New Peoples/Phoenicians in Mediterranean M 107-122, 124-140

<http://www.allempires.com/empires/assyria/assyria1.htm>

10/7 Greek Cities—M 153-178

10/9 Greeks and Persian Empire/Rise of Athens M 140-150, 180-214

\*\*Reading Response 3: Read the “Constitution of Athens” by the so-called “Old Oligarch”—<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0158>. What are the “Old Oligarch’s” criticisms of Athenian democracy?

10/16 Macedonian Conquest M 214-262

10/21 Rise of Rome M 265-289;

<http://thelatinlibrary.com/law/polybius.html>

\*\*Reading Response 4: What are the main features of Roman government in the period of the Roman Republic? Why, according to Polybius, does the Roman constitution (the institutions and practices of Roman government) produce a strong, stable state?

10/23 Rome in Mediterranean World M 289-306

10/28 SECOND EXAM

## V. AD 1-500: West and East

*Central Questions: How did the Roman Empire work? In what sense was the Roman Empire a “world-state”? What prevented Roman conquest of the Near East*

10/30 Roman Empire M 306-354

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/suetonius-augustus.asp>

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/14resgestae.asp>

<http://www.mircea-eliade.com/from-primitives-to-zen/215.html>

11/4 Parthian Empire M 245-246, 320-322,

11/6 Spatial and Cultural Consolidation

11/11 Religious Consolidation—Roman Empire becomes Christian M 364-408

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=MARK+1&version=NIV>

<http://www.ntcanon.org> (development of the NT canon)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/conv-const.asp>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/edict-milan.asp>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/codex-theod1.asp>

\*\* Reading Response 5: On the evidence of the last two readings (above), how does Constantine’s religious policy differ from Theodosius’?

11/13 Religious Revival—Sasanians and Zoroastrian Revival M 379

11/18 West vs. East

## VI. 500-700: End of the Ancient World

*Central Questions: How can we explain the end of the Roman Empire in the west? How can we explain the end of the Sasanid Empire in the east? What continues after 700?*

11/20 New Peoples—Germans M 419-441

11/25 New Peoples—Arabs M 441-461

12/4 FINAL EXAM 12-3