

This course surveys the history of the ancient Near Eastern (= Western Asian) and Mediterranean world from about 10,000 BCE to about 500 CE. This means that it covers a time period far greater than that from 500 CE to the present. It means also that a tremendous amount of stuff happened, particularly many “firsts”—agriculture, cities and civilization, writing, war making, kingship, empire, democracy, monotheism, and more. To try to make sense of all this, we are going to approach developments on the basis of a simple principle governing human behavior: “If it ain’t broke, people don’t fix it”. What this means in the context of ancient history is that if what people—human societies small or large—are doing (organizing themselves, gaining nutrition, dealing with outsiders’ attacks, managing relations with divine forces, etc.) works, people/societies don’t change their practices. When we see change or innovation, what we are seeing is not “progress” but response to failure or “adaptation” to an altered “environment”. We must then ask “what went wrong?” What made longstanding practices ineffective? How did new practices represent successful response or adaptation to change. Given this approach, think of this course as subtitled “Challenges and Changes: The Human Experience in Western Asia and the Mediterranean, 10,000 BCE to 500 CE”.

We will be using Ralph Mathisen, *Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., as our basic narrative guide. Web readings and some handouts will provide us with “primary source” information. The syllabus lists the reading assignments for each class meeting. These are to be completed by the day they appear as assignments in the syllabus. There are also two kinds of occasional graded writing assignments, also to be completed by the time of the class meeting for which they are assigned.

- 1) First and more frequent are “Change Assignments”. Each of these is to be based on the readings in *Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations* assigned for that day. While doing the assigned readings, consider the nature of changes indicated in the readings. The Change Assignment each time is to answer three questions: a) what is the pre-change situation? b) what changes? 3) what is responsible for the changes (this means what are the new conditions and what is the response or adaptation)? Typically 1 page. I will model the way to do this in the early class lectures before the assignments start.
- 2) Second are “Reading Response Assignments”. Here students will read assigned primary source selections and answer the question posed in the assignment. Typically 1-2 pages.

There will be 3 examinations of equal value—last one is not cumulative. Study guides will be provided before each exam.

Grading: 3 Exams 60%  
10 Change Assignments 20%  
4 Reading Responses 20%

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

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*Class Schedule* (AMC = Mathisen, *Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations*)

8/18 Introduction: What is History? What is Ancient History? What happened 100,000 to 10,000 BCE?

8/20 Mesopotamia General Picture 10,000-4,000 BCE AMC 3-33

8/25 Sumerian Cities, Priests, and Kings AMC 37-58; Creation Story, handout; Gilgamesh Epic; <http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/gilgamesh>  
\*\*Reading Response #1: What wisdom does Gilgamesh gain from his journey to Utnapishtim?

8/27 Patterns of Power: Hegemonies and Early Empires AMC 58-66 (up to Law Code part)

9/1 Laws and Babylonian Society AMC 66-70;  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/hamcode.asp> (scroll past lengthy introduction to get to the code itself)

9/3 Indo-European Migrations AMC 70-72

9/8 Egypt through Old Kingdom AMC 75-92; *Theology of Memphis* (handout)  
*Change Assignment #1*

9/10 Disintegration and Restorations AMC 92-100

9/15 Imperial Egypt and the Sea Peoples AMC 100-106  
*Change Assignment #2*

9/17 Coastal Peoples, Hebrews AMC 107-135

9/22 1<sup>st</sup> EXAM

9/24 Iron Age Empires AMC 135-164;  
<http://armieswiata.com/armies/aasyrian.html>  
[http://www.livius.org/da-dd/darius/darius\\_i\\_t08.html](http://www.livius.org/da-dd/darius/darius_i_t08.html)  
*Change Assignment #3*

9/29 Greece through Archaic Age AMC 167-189  
*Change Assignment #4*

10/1 Elements of Greek Civilization AMC 190-195

- 10/6 Persian Threat/Greek Response AMC 197-217  
*Change Assignment #5*
- 10/8 Athens and Radical Democracy AMC 217-236;  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/424pol-athens.asp> (Old Oligarch)  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/pericles-funeralspeech.asp>  
*Reading Response #2: Why does the Old Oligarch think that democracy is not the best form of government? Why does Pericles think that democracy is the best form of government?*
- 10/15 Arche and Anarchy AMC 237-240
- 10/20 Rise of Macedon: Philip and Alexander AMC 240-253  
*Change Assignment #6*
- 10/22 Hellenistic Age AMC 253-273, 274-281
- 10/27 Judaism AMC 273-274
- 10/29 SECOND EXAM
- 11/3 Early Rome—Beginnings to Italian Hegemony AMC 310-311, 325-347  
<http://thelatinlibrary.com/law/polybius.html>;  
*Reading Response #7: Why, according to Polybius, does the Roman constitution (the institutions and practices of Roman government) produce a strong, stable state?*
- 11/5 Rome in the Mediterranean AMC 347-360  
*Change Assignment #7*
- 11/10 Failure of Republic/Creation of Principate AMC 361-392;  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/suetonius-augustus.asp>  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/14resgestae.asp>  
*Change Assignment #8*
- 11/12 Imperial System/Imperial Society AMC 392-436
- 11/17 Third Century: Challenges and Adaptations 439-460  
*Change Assignment #9*
- 11/19 Imperial Christianity AMC 460-475  
<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/pliny-trajan1.asp>  
<http://www.ntcanon.org> (development of the New Testament canon)  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/edict-milan.asp>  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/codex-theod1.asp>  
*Reading Response #4: How does Constantine's religious policy (as announced in the Edict of Milan) differ from Theodosius (as stated in the Codex)?*

11/24 Late Empire 475-499

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/jordanes-goths20.asp>

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/salvian1.asp>

12/1 End of Ancient World 500-535

*Change Assignment #10*

12/? EXAM #3