History 501  
History of Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations  
3:30-4:45 PM Tues/Thurs.  Fall 2014  
AH 4176  
Sched. #:  21752  
Walter Penrose, Ph.D.  
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**The Instructor Reserves the Right to Revise this Syllabus**

Course Description:

In this course we will examine the major civilizations of the Ancient Near East (hereafter abbreviated as ANE) from the origin of civilization to the rise of world empires, including the Egyptians, Babylonians, Hebrews, Assyrians, and Persians. Particular attention will be paid to the social, political, and religious history of this period. We will focus on the role of geography in this region, the unique development of writing, literature, and literacy in each of these civilizations, the evolution of complex urban and agrarian societies, and the unique role of kingship and bureaucracy in urban city-states as well as the development of early empires.

Course Goals:

1) To improve written and oral communication skills.
2) To analyze the differences and similarities between polytheistic and monotheistic societies.
3) To identify geographical issues and their relationship to the history of the ANE.
4) To gain insight into the significant role played by both textual analysis and archaeology in the study of the remote past.
5) To conceptualize the usefulness and limitations of social and cultural anthropological methods in Ancient History.
6) To think critically and analytically about the Bible as it relates to the History of the Hebrews and Jews as well as both Mesopotamian and Egyptian literatures, cultures, and societies.
7) To develop an understanding of anachronism and how it should be avoided in the writing of history.
8) To conceptualize the role played by ethnocentrism in past scholarship on the ANE and to rethink the history of the region utilizing principles of World History.
9) To articulate current debates on the origins of civilization and develop an historical opinion synthesizing various viewpoints in light of available evidence.
Required Texts:
The Bible, any translation (Old Testament)

Texts are available for purchase in the SDSU Bookstore on campus.

Reader:
Texts listed under the heading Reader: on the Course Outline below will be made available on BlackBoard under Course Documents.

Course Policies:

There are no makeup examinations.

You must come to class having prepared assigned readings. I will not always lecture—we will discuss the readings. You will be expected to contribute to class discussions.

Attendance is mandatory. The instructor does not excuse absences—please don’t ask. Use your time judiciously.

Please be courteous to your fellow students and instructor. Do not speak when others are talking. Do not interrupt others. Raise your hand to ask questions or make comments.

Use of electronic devices is prohibited in class unless pre-approved by the instructor. This includes PDAs, Blackberries, laptops, and cell phones. There is to be NO cell phone in class WHATSOEVER. This includes playing games, sending text messages, or doing anything else on a mobile phone. Cell phones MUST be turned off before class, NO EXCEPTIONS. Anyone caught using a cell phone in class will automatically forfeit 10% of her or his class participation grade.

Taping in class is prohibited unless the student signs a consent form with stipulations provided by the instructor.

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism can consist of five words or fifty pages. If you are using someone else’s ideas, you must cite your source. If you are using someone else’s words, make sure you place them in quotes, and cite your source. All persons caught plagiarizing or cheating will receive an F for the course. For more information on what constitutes cheating and plagiarism, see:
Students must come to class having prepared all reading assignments and each student should be willing and able to contribute to class discussions. Be prepared—you will be called upon.

Grading Breakdown:

Essay: 25%
Midterm: 25%
Final: 25%
Quizzes 15%
Class Participation: 10%

Quizzes
Quizzes are marked on the course outline. Be sure you can answer all discussion questions on the syllabus for that day, and that you have done all of the assigned reading.

Essay:
Your essay should be approximately 5-8 pages in length. Assignments will be posted on BlackBoard.

Late Essays:
Late papers will be graded down by 10% for each class session late. Plan ahead! Paper topics will be handed out, well in advance, in class.

Graduate Students:
Students taking this course for graduate credit will write a research paper in substitution for Essay #2. The research paper should be approximately 10-15 pages in length and should focus on one particular topic relating to the class. Graduate students should follow this schedule with regard to their research:

Research Proposal Due: Sept. 25
Bibliography Due: Oct.
Research Paper Due: Dec.

Please come and talk to me during office hours if you are enrolled for graduate credit. Think of possible topics or areas of the course that interest you and in which you might like to do further research.

Course Outline:

Aug. 28  The Development of Civilization.  The Indus vs. the Tigris and Euphrates valleys—Where did civilization begin?  Issues of History vs. Pre-history.  
Reading:  Van de Meiroop, pp. 1-16

Reading:  Van de Meiroop, pp. 19-62.

Reading:  The Epic of Gilgamesh, intro. (all), pp. 61-84  
Reader:  Sumerian King List

Discussion Questions:  How is the distinction between civilization and the wild represented in the Epic of Gilgamesh?  Which characters represent civilization, and which characters represent the wild (think about ALL of the characters here)?  What are the dangers of becoming civilized for Enkidu?  How is the monarchy of Gilgamesh unjust?  Is his power limited?  How do the gods calm Gilgamesh?

Sept. 9  QUIZ 1, Epic of Gilgamesh.  Ancient Mesopotamian Literature (cont’d.).  Sumerian Sexuality.  Religion, the Afterlife and Immortality.  
Reading:  Epic of Gilgamesh, pp. 85-119.
Genesis 6-9
Pritchard, pp. 28-30.

Discussion Questions:  What is the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu?  Do Gilgamesh and Enkidu have wives?  How are women represented in the text?  Is this a story, or a history?  What historical facts can we gather from the epic?  How can literature serve as a conduit to understand ancient societies?  How is the Sumerian afterlife described?  Is it a happy place, or a gloomy site?  Why does Gilgamesh seek eternal life?  Is he successful in his quest?  How is the story of the flood similar to and/or different from the biblical story?

Reading:  Pritchard, 85-86.
Van de Mieropp, pp. 63-107.

Sept. 16  QUIZ 2.  Akkadians and Babylonians (cont’d.)  Law Codes and Legal History.  
Reading:  Pritchard, 133-170.
Reader: Pritchard (vol. 2), Law Code of Ur-Nammu

Discussion Questions: Is Justice relative? Are the laws in Hammurabi’s code fair? Do class and sex (gender) matter in ancient Babylonian justice? Note: A seignior is an aristocrat. Think about how aristocrats (seignors) are punished when they commit a crime against someone of their own class versus a commoner. Also think about how women are valued in the laws. From what gendered perspective are the laws written? What might they tell us about social structures and socially-constructed gender roles in ancient Babylon? Is there a relationship between Hammurabi’s Code and the Bible? (Note: we will continue to discuss the latter question when we come to the Hebrews later in the semester, but at least note the references in the margins of Pritchard’s The Code of Hammurabi excerpt).

Sept. 18  Rise of Assyria and the Hittite Empire.
Reading: Van DeMieroop, pp. 107-125.

Reading: Van de Mieroop, 171-189.
JSTOR: Gerda Lerner, “The Origins of Prostitution in Ancient Mesopotamia,” Signs 11:2 (1986): 236-254. (JSTOR is accessed through the databases on the SDSU Library website—please ask a reference librarian for help if you need help accessing and printing the article, or come to my office).

Discussion Questions: Was prostitution the oldest profession? Why or why not? How were class and status denoted by clothing in the Ancient Near East? How were dress codes for women enforced? What, if any, was the relationship between prostitution and religion in ancient Mesopotamia? What is the Mesopotamian conception of the afterlife?

Sept. 25  The Rediscovery of Pharaonic Egypt. Herodotus, Manetho, and non-Egyptian sources. Geography: Egypt is the Gift of the Nile. The rediscovery of reading hieroglyphs and other Egyptian languages.
Reading: Ikram, pp. 1-49
Herodotus The Histories, pp. 95-101; 132-133.

Reading: Ikram, pp. 53-85, 220-228, 275-299 (the last section is on mummification and mortuary practices).
Herodotus pp. 127-128; 146-150.
Pritchard, pp. 1-5

Oct. 2 The Old Kingdom (cont’d.) and the First Intermediate Period.
Scribes and Bureaucracy.
Reading: Ikram, 85-87; 115-163.

Oct. 7 Race and Ethnocentrism in Historical Thought.
Herodotus, pp. 103-110; 134.

Oct. 9 The Middle Kingdom, the Second Intermediate Period. The Hyksos.
Egyptian Religion (cont’d.).
Reading: Ikram, pp. 87-96.
Pritchard, pp. 5-11, 173-175, 225-230, 252-257.

Reading: Ikram, pp. 97-100; 165-182.

Oct. 16 Midterm Examination

Reading: Ikram, pp. 101-112; 183-217.
Van De Mieroop, 125-170,190-201.

Oct. 23 Late Dynastic Egypt: To the Ptolemies, Cleopatra VII
Ikram: pp. 112-114.
Reading: Bible: Genesis 1-25.

Reading: Bible, Genesis 26-50; Exodus 1-10.


Reading: Bible, Judges (all), 1 Samuel (all), 2 Samuel (all)

Nov. 11  Solomon and the Building of the Temple. Biblical Archaeology. 

Nov. 13  EXPOSITORY ESSAY DUE. The Rise of the Neo-Assyrians and the Fall of Israel. 
Reading: Van De Mieroop, 209-266. Pritchard, 188-205.

Nov. 18  Fall of Judah. The Babylonian Captivity and the Destruction of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezer and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. 
Reading: Van DeMieroop, pp. 266-285.

Nov. 20  Lydians and Medes. Croesus and the Kingdom of Lydia. Herodotus: Father of History or Father of Lies? Father of Anthropology? 

Reading: Pritchard, 278-282. Herodotus, pp. 50-94.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY. No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>Darius and Persian “Federalism”</td>
<td>Herodotus, pp. 232-270</td>
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<td>Dec. 9</td>
<td>Persians and Scythians</td>
<td>Herodotus, pp. 271-318</td>
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<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td>FINAL EXAMINATION <strong>1 to 3 PM</strong> (PLEASE NOTE THE TIME)</td>
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