

**IHST-200 IH1: Ancient Cultures  
MICA - Fall 2008**

**Course Syllabus**

*T 9:00-11:45 AM  
Bunting 480*



Vase Painting Depicting Greek Olympics, 5<sup>th</sup> C. BC

**Instructor: Michael Sizer**

Office: B413

Office Hours: T 11:45-12:45; T 2-3

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“We have invented nothing!”

- Pablo Picasso, upon seeing the prehistoric cave paintings at Lascaux

Course Description: In spite of the dynamic changes not only to human societies but also the planet itself in the past 2000 years, it must be remembered that this period represents less than 1% of our species' time on Earth. The technological and ideological trappings of the modern age lie atop a bedrock of deep-seated cultural, religious and intellectual legacies from Ancient Civilizations, both historical and pre-historical.

This course will introduce students to some of the major civilizations of the Ancient period (defined here as prior to circa 200 A.D.), as well as some of the major interpretative frameworks that have been developed by scholars to understand these peoples distant to us in time. As this is an intellectual history course, most of the readings will focus on ancient religious practice and philosophy, although social and political history will be presented as necessary background.

Students will learn through reading primary sources and scholarly essays that will be discussed as a group, but the most original aspect of the class will be in the student presentations. In order to achieve an in-depth coverage, to engage with the ancient past in a creative way, and to foster a collaborative learning environment, in the second half of the semester students, in teams or individually, will make presentations on a focused topic area to the rest of the class. The presentations will combine creative interpretation and historic research and analysis for discussion.

In the end, it is hoped that students, through a study of human social life at its origins will gain an appreciation for the dynamism and variety of the human experience, and learn what our cultural debt to ancient cultures is, but also what has, for better or worse, been lost.

## Course Format, Grading and Assignments

This course will emphasize class and small group discussion. Your participation will be evaluated not only based on the quality of your comments in open discussion, but also on alertness, energy, and preparedness. **Of particular importance will be your encouragement and participation during your classmates' presentations.** Various organized activities will also provide an opportunity to participate in class ways other than in large- or small-group discussion. **Class participation is crucial to this course, constituting 30% of your grade.**

The **readings** are vital, as they will form the basis of our discussions and activities. There will be about 20-75 pages of reading per week (lighter when papers are due, and at the end of the semester). It is important not only that you do the readings thoroughly, but that you **bring them with you to class** to use as a basis for discussion. **Failure to do so will result in a grade of 'F' for your class participation for that day.**

There may be **2-3 pop quizzes** during the semester to evaluate reading comprehension. **They are worth 10% of your grade.**

There will be a **short paper** (2-3 pages) on the Stone Age due in Week 7 of the semester, **This short paper represents 20% of your grade.**

The **most important aspect of your involvement in the class**, as well as your grade, will be your **major project and paper**, the particulars of which will be explained in a separate handout. The presentations will begin in week 9 and continue until the end of the semester; the paper will be due in the last class. The presentation and paper will be evaluated according to creativity, teamwork (where applicable), clarity of presentation, engagement with the material, originality, and effectiveness of expression in the written form. **There will be two grades for the final project: 1 for presentation, and 1 for the final paper, each worth 20% of your final course grade.**

## Late Assignment Policy

**Computer submissions of paper assignments are not allowed.** The first (short) paper will be marked down a grade for each day late (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) Once chosen, the date of your presentation cannot be changed. The final paper will not be accepted late - **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

## Attendance Policy

There are only 15 meetings in the semester and so we have to make the most of them. Any unexcused absence beyond 1 will result in a decrease of two grades from class participation (A to B+, B- to C, etc.). 2 late arrivals (> 10 minutes) equals 1 absence.

## ADA Compliance Statement

In order to provide the highest quality educational experience for every student, MICA is committed to compliance with the ADA and Section 504. Any student who has (or suspects he or she may have) a physical, cognitive, or psychological disability and who wants to request accommodations must immediately schedule an appointment to meet with the

Director of the Learning Resource Center, Dr. Kathryn Smith, by calling the LRC at 410-225-2416. The LRC is MICA's designated department for determining reasonable accommodations based on legal requirements and will provide the eligible student with an

official Accommodation Verification letter to the instructor.

Each semester the student must formally request accommodations from the LRC each semester, and format of the Verification letters change each semester to ensure currency.

NOTE: Students with disabilities who want assistance during emergency evacuations must

register with the LRC within the first week of each semester.

### **Health and Safety Compliance**

MICA has developed policies and practices to ensure a healthful environment and safe approaches to the use of equipment, materials, and processes. It is the mutual responsibility

of faculty and students to review health and safety standards relevant to each class at the

beginning of each semester. Students should be aware of general fire, health, and safety regulations posted in each area and course specific policies, practices, and cautions.

Students

who have concerns related to health and safety should contact the Environmental Health and

Safety Coordinator.

The Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator, Quentin Moseley, may be reached at 410-

462-7593 by email at [qmoseley@mica.edu](mailto:qmoseley@mica.edu)

### **Readings**

- *The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Civilizations* (New York, 2005).
- Supplementary texts on Blackboard class site, online, or handed out in class.

### **Course Schedule (Topics and Assignments) - Subject to change if necessary.**

Assignments are listed the day they are due, not the day they are assigned.

#### **Week 1 - 9/2: Introduction to course**

- Introduction to course syllabus and each other; our common ancestors Confucius and Nefertiti; "The Past is Another Country"

#### **Week 2 - 9/9: What is Civilization? Human Evolution and the Culture Question**

##### **Readings:**

- "What is Civilization?" in *Historical Atlas*, pp. 8-17
- Jared Diamond, "The Great Leap Forward" from *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Chimpanzee* (on Blackboard)
- Georges Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture* (excerpts - on Blackboard)

- Look at Chauvet Cave Paintings online:  
<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/chaufvet/en/>

Assignment:

### **Week 3 - 9/16: Old Eurasia's Culture of the Goddess and the Indo-Europeans; Ötzi**

Readings:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 94-97.
- Richard Rudgley, "Venus Figurines: Sex Objects or Symbols?" from *The Lost Civilizations of the Stone Age* (New York: Free Press, 1999) (on Blackboard).
- "Secrets of Stonehenge" from June 2008 *National Geographic Magazine* (on Blackboard)
- J.P. Mallory, "Discovery of the Indo-Europeans" from *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989) (on Blackboard).

Assignment: TOPIC SELECTIONS FOR MAJOR PROJECT MUST BE MADE BY TODAY

### **Week 4 - 9/23: Old-time Religion: Pagan Spirituality**

Readings:

- Michael York, "Paganism as Theology" from *Pagan Theology* (New York: NYU Press, 2003) (on Blackboard)
- René Girard, readings on Sacrifice from *The Girard Reader* (on Blackboard)
- Joseph Campbell, *The Flight of the Wild Gander: Explorations in the Mythological Dimension* (on Blackboard)

Assignment:

### **Week 5 - 9/30: Ahhh! Sweet Agriculture: The Neolithic Revolution**

Readings:

- *Historical Atlas*, 22-25.
- Jared Diamond, "Agriculture's Mixed Blessings" from *3<sup>rd</sup> Chimpanzee* (on Blackboard)
- Doug Brown: "A History of the Satiated Human Self" from *Insatiable is not Sustainable* (Westport CT: Praeger, 2002) (on Blackboard)
- Roger Sandall, "The New Stone Age" from *The Culture Cult: Designer Tribalism and other Essays* (on Blackboard)

Assignment:

### **Week 6 - 10/7: Mesopotamia**

Readings:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 26-35 (pp. 36-49 optional but recommended).
- Code of Hammurabi (scan through the whole Code, paying particular attention to laws #1-25; 53-65; 127-158; 195-223, 257-261):  
<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/hammurabi.htm>
- The Flood Story from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*:  
<http://web.archive.org/web/19990221091328/http://puffin.creighton.edu/theo/simkins/tx/Flood.html>

Assignment:

**Week 7 - 10/14: Ancient Egypt**

Readings:

- *Historical Atlas*, 54-67.
- Hymn to the Nile: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/hymn-nile.html>
- Gregory Jaynes, "Mummy's Curse: an Archaeological Dispute" from January 2008 edition of *Harper's Magazine* (on Blackboard).

Assignment: SHORT PAPER ON THE STONE AGE IS DUE IN CLASS TODAY

\*\*\*FALL BREAK - No class 10/21\*\*\*

**Week 8 - 10/28: The Axial Iron Age**

Reading:

- Shmuel Eisenstadt, *The axial age, rise of transcendental visions, the emergence of intellectuals and of clerics, and the structuring of world history* (on Blackboard)
- Online interview from *What is Enlightenment?* magazine with theologian Karen Armstrong on Axial Iron Age and today (2-page interview of which this is the link to p. 1): <http://www.wie.org/j31/armstrong.asp?page=1>

Assignment:

**Week 9 - 11/4: Ancient India; Buddhism & Hinduism**

Reading:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 72-81
- Selections from the Upanishads: <http://members.aol.com/Heraklit1/upanish.htm>
- Basic Teachings of Buddhism:  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20000519140345/http://www.humanities.cuny.cuny.edu/history/buddha/buddhawd.htm>
- Mischa Berlinski, "Woman Marries Snake" from the November 2007 edition of *Harper's Magazine* (on Blackboard)

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS BEGIN TODAY.

**Week 10 - 11/11: Ancient China**

Reading:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 82-89.
- Odes from Zhou Dynasty (on Blackboard)
- Selections from Confucius, *Analects* (on Blackboard).
- Selections from Lao Tzu, *Daodejing* (on Blackboard)

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE TODAY.

**Week 11 - 11/18: Ancient Greece from the Archaic to the Classical Age**

Reading:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 98-105.
- Hesiod, *Works and Days* (on Blackboard)

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE TODAY.

**Week 12 - 11/25: Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic World**

Reading:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 52-53.
- Simon Goldhill, "Who do you think you are?" from *Love, Sex & Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives* (on Blackboard).
- Humorous short piece on lawsuit filed by the residents of the Island of Lesbos, taken from *Harper's Magazine*, July 2008

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE TODAY.

**Week 13 - 12/2: Roman Republic**

Reading:

- *Historical Atlas*, pp. 106-109
- Virgil's 1<sup>st</sup> Eclogue: <http://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/eclogue.1.i.html>

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE TODAY.

**Week 14 - 12/9: Roman Empire**

Reading:

- *Res Gestae* of Augustus Caesar:  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/14resgestae.html>
- Barbara Sher Tinsley, "Principes and Principate 27 BC-AD 180" from *Reconstructing Western Civilization: Irreverent Essays on Antiquity* (on Blackboard)

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE TODAY.

**Week 15 - 12/16: End of the Ancient World? Decline of Rome; Fall of the Han.**

Reading: None.

Assignment: PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE TODAY.

\*\*\* FINAL PAPER DUE TODAY \*\*\*