

ANCIENT HISTORY

The history of the ancient Near East and eastern Mediterranean from the 3rd millennium BCE to the 5th century BCE

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the history of the ancient civilizations that arose in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, Iran, Greece and the Aegean from the beginning of recorded history down to the time of the wars between the Persians and Greeks. It examines the historical and cultural development of these civilizations and their impact on both contemporary and later cultures. In particular, it stresses how the accomplishments of these ancient cultures influenced Greece and Rome, and continue to influence modern culture in a number of ways.

About the Instructor

This course has been prepared by Dr. Richard Dietrich, Lecturer in History, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. In addition to a Master's degree and a Doctorate in History from Ankara University, he also holds a Master's degree in Ancient Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from Cornell University.

Course Contents

- Unit 1- Developments towards Civilization
- Unit 2 – The Third Millennium BCE
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- Unit 6 – Submission of Final Papers

Study Guide

Course Requirements

This course is a graduate level course and requires both extensive reading and essay writing. The grade for the course is based on five (5) short essays (5 pages or 1250 words) and a final research paper (15 pages or 5000 words). The five short essays will be based on the questions following **any five (5) units** of the student's choice. Students will choose the topic of the final research paper, however it must be approved by the instructor. See the section **Format for Research Papers** at the end of the syllabus for more information.

Final grades are based on the total of the grades for the short essays (10% each) and the final research paper (50%).

Required Texts: The following works are widely available in most bookstores, libraries or online (as noted):

Albright, W.F. and T.O. Lambdin. "The Evidence of Language", in I.E.S. Edwards et al (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 1: Prolegomena and Prehistory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 122-155.

John Boardman et al (eds.). *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. III, Part 2: The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

_____. *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. IV: Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean c. 525 to 479 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

I.E.S. Edwards et al (eds.). *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 2: Early History of the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

_____. *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 1: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1800-1380 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

_____. *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 2: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

Gardiner, Alan. *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978).

Roux, Georges. *Ancient Iraq* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

Van de Mieroop, Marc. *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000-323 BC*, 2nd edition (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

Unit 1 – Developments toward Civilization

Outline

Chronology

Language

- Afro-Asiatic

- Indo-European

The Geographic Setting

- The Fertile Crescent

- Egypt

- Anatolia

- Syria-Palestine

- The Iranian Plateau

Agriculture, permanent settlement and domestication

Urbanization

The Development of Writing

Introduction

The climate and geography of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, Anatolia, Iran, Greece and the Aegean would play a major role in shaping the cultures that would develop in each of these regions. However, for these cultures to develop to the level where they could be called civilizations they would need to pass through a number of stages (domestication of wild animals, agriculture, urbanization etc.). One of the last developments that paved the way for the rise of civilization in Mesopotamia would be writing, a development that also made Mesopotamia the first "historical" civilization.

Readings

Albright and Lambdin, "The Evidence of Language", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 1: Prolegomena and Prehistory*, pp. 122-155.

Gardiner, Chapter III "The Land, its Neighbours, and Resources", pp. 27-45; Chapter XIV "Prehistory", pp. 384-399.

Van de Mieroop, "1 Introductory Concerns", pp. 1-16; "2 Origins: The Uruk Phenomenon", pp. 19-40.

Roux, Chapter I "The Geographical Setting", pp. 1-16; Chapter II "In Search of the Past", pp. 22-27; Chapter III "Village to City", pp. 48-65; Chapter IV "Birth of a Civilization", pp. 66-84.

Questions

1. In what ways are the geography and climate of Mesopotamia similar, and how do they differ? How do Syria-Palestine, Anatolia and the Iranian Plateau differ from these two regions? What effect did the geography and climate of each of these regions have on human settlement?

2. What are the methods used to establish chronologies of the ancient world and what are some of the problems associated with each of these methods?

3. What is civilization? Which cultural / technological developments were necessary for the development of civilization and why were they necessary?

4. What was the motivation for the development of writing in ancient Mesopotamia? What stages of development did it pass through before becoming the standard cuneiform writing system?

Unit 2 – The Third Millennium BCE

Outline

Mesopotamia

- Sumer, The Early Dynastic Period
- The Akkadian Period
- The Ur III Period

Egypt

- Protodynastic Period (1st – 5th Dynasties)
- The Old Kingdom
- The First Intermediate Period

Syria-Palestine

- Ebla
- The Amorites

Introduction

The 3rd millennium BCE witnessed the rise of organized, literate civilizations in both Mesopotamia and Egypt. While there are obvious similarities in the civilizations of these two regions, they also display striking differences. Mesopotamian civilization and the Sumerian cuneiform script in particular, was adopted by cultures and peoples far beyond the lands of Sumer, and adapted to their local conditions. In addition, this period saw the rise of the world's first empire, that of the Akkadians, as well as its decline.

Readings

C. J. Gadd, Chapter XIII "The Cities of Babylonia", pp. 93-144; Chapter XIX "The Dynasty of Agade and the Gutian Invasion", pp. 417-463; in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 2: Early History of the Middle East*,

I.E.S. Edwards, Chapter XI "The Early Dynastic Period in Egypt", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 2: Early History of the Middle East*, pp. 1-70.

Gardiner, Chapter II "The Egyptian Language and Writing", pp. 19-26; Chapter IV "The Foundations and Nature of Egyptian History", pp. 46-71; Chapter V "The Old Kingdom", pp. 72-106; Chapter XV "Manetho's First Two Dynasties. Epilogue", pp. 400-428.

Van de Mieroop, "3 Competing City-States: The Early Dynastic Period", pp. 41-62; "4 Political Centralization in the Late Third Millennium", pp. 63-84.

Roux, Chapter 6 "The Gods of Sumer", pp. 85-103; Chapter 7 "An Age of Heroes", pp. 104-121; Chapter 8 "The Early Dynastic Period", pp. 122-145; Chapter 9 "The

Akkadians”, pp. 146-160; Chapter 10 “The Great Kingdom of Ur”, pp. 161-178; Chapter 11 “The Amorites”, pp. 179-194.

W. Stevenson Smith, Chapter XIV “The Old Kingdom in Egypt and the Beginning of the First Intermediate Period”, in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 2: Early History of the Middle East*, pp. 145-207.

Questions

1. Describe the Sumerians’ political organization? What were its advantages and disadvantages?
2. How was the Akkadian state organized and in what ways did it differ from the Sumerian model?
3. Describe the Egyptian state during the Old Kingdom period.
4. How were the Amorites able to gain control of much of Mesopotamia in the late 3rd millennium BCE?

Unit 3 – The Second Millennium BCE

Outline

Babylonia and Assyria

- The Early Old Babylonian Period
- The Old Assyrian Period
- The Old Babylonian Period
- The Kassite Era

Egypt

- The Middle Kingdom
- The Second Intermediate Period
- The New Kingdom

The International System of the Late Bronze Age

- Syria-Palestine
- Anatolia and the Hittites
- Minoans and Mycenaeans
- The Sea Peoples

Introduction

In the 2nd millennium BCE new groups would struggle for power in Mesopotamia, each attempting to create its own empire, yet following many of the cultural patterns established in the 3rd millennium BCE. Egypt would recover from the instability of the First Intermediate period, but would later endure its first rule under foreign occupation, only to recover in an even more spectacular fashion. Other important cultures and states developed in the lands around the eastern Mediterranean and established relations of one form or another with Egypt and Mesopotamia. Among these were Ugarit, the Hittite Empire, the Minoans and the Mycenaeans. This period of intense international trade, rivalry and diplomacy was brought to a dramatic end by the depredations of the Sea Peoples.

Readings

R.D. Barnett, Chapter XXVIII “The Sea Peoples”, in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 2: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C.*, pp. 359-378.

John L. Caskey, Chapter IV “Greece and the Aegean Islands in the Middle Bronze Age”, in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 1: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1800-1380 B.C.*, pp. 117-164.

O. Eissfeldt, Chapter XXVI “Palestine in the Time of the Nineteenth Dynasty”, in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 2: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C.*, pp. 307-337.

Gardiner, Chapter VI "The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom", pp. 107-146; Chapter VII "From Collapse to Recovery", pp. 147-176; Chapter VIII "The Theban Supremacy", pp. 177-211; Chapter IX "The Religious Revolution and After", pp. 212-246; Chapter X "The Ramesside Period: (1) The Nineteenth Dynasty", pp. 247-280; Chapter XI "The Ramesside Period: (2) The Twentieth Dynasty", pp. 281-315.

Walther Hinz, Chapter XXIII "Persia c.2400-1800 B.C.", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. I, Part 2: Early History of the Middle East*, pp.644-680.

Van de Mieroop, "5 The Near East in the Early Second Millennium", pp. 85-105; "6 The Growth of Territorial States in the Early Second Millennium", pp. 106-125; "7 The Club of the Great Powers", pp. 129-148; "8 The Western States of the Late Second Millennium", pp. 149-170; "9 Kassites, Assyrians, and Elamites", pp. 171-189; "10 The Collapse of the Regional System and its Aftermath", pp. 190-206.

Roux, Chapter 12 "Hammurabi", pp. 195-207; Chapter 13 "In the Days of Hammurabi", pp. 208-224; Chapter 14 "New Peoples", pp. 225-240; Chapter 15 "The Kassites", pp. 241-252; Chapter 16 "Kassites, Assyrians and the Oriental Powers", pp. 253-265.

Questions

1. Discuss the cultural achievements of Middle Kingdom Egypt.
2. What was the international system that existed between the major powers in the Late Second Millennium and how did it operate?
3. What led to the collapse of the international system in the Late Second Millennium? What were the results of this collapse?
4. What was the "religious revolution" of the Pharaoh Akhenaton? What were its effects on Egyptian society during Akhenaton's lifetime and what were its effects afterwards?

Unit 4 – The First Millennium BCE

Outline

Mesopotamia

- The Rise of Assyrian Power
- The Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Dynasty

Egypt

- Egyptian Decline
- The 21st through 31st Dynasties

Syria-Palestine

- The Phoenicians
- The Hebrews

Persia

- The Rise of the Achaemenian Empire
- The Persian Wars

Introduction

From the destruction and collapse of societies that occurred in the wake to the Sea Peoples' raids only Egypt and Assyria survived into the 1st millennium BCE. While Egypt and Assyria worked to rebuild their states, new peoples moved to take the places of the destroyed states. Although Egypt was the only state to successfully resist the Sea Peoples, it never regained its former influence and power and entered a period of long decline and occupation by foreign invaders. Mesopotamia would alternate between the rule of Assyria in the north, and then that of Babylon in the south, until it finally came under the rule of one of the new powers that emerged in this period – Persia. Syria-Palestine would be divided among a number of different groups – the Philistines on the southern coast of the eastern Mediterranean, and the Phoenicians on the northern coast. Inland, a small, seemingly

insignificant people – the Hebrews – emerged as conquerors of some inland territories, and then went on to establish their own kingdom. However, it would be their religion and scriptures that would have an almost immeasurable impact on later history. Following the collapse of Mycenae, Greece entered a long dark age, but the culture that began to emerge in the 8th century BCE was one that would be both heir to the civilizations of the ancient Near East and a force to shape western culture for centuries to come.

Readings

W.F. Albright, Chapter XXXIII "Syria, the Philistines and Phoenicia", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 2: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C.*, pp. 507-536.

O. Eissfeldt, Chapter XXXIV "The Hebrew Kingdoms", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. II, Part 2: History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C.*, pp. 537-605.

Gardiner, Chapter XII "Egypt Under Foreign Rule", pp. 316-351; Chapter XIII "The Last Assertions of Independence", pp. 352-383.

Van de Mieroop, "11 The Near East at the Start of the First Millennium", pp. 209-228; "12 The Rise of Assyria", pp. 229-246; "13 Assyria's World Domination", pp. 247-269; "14 The Medes and Babylonians", pp. 270-285; "15 The Persian Empire", pp. 286-301.

Roux, Chapter 17 "The Time of Confusion", pp. 266-281; Chapter 18 "The Rise of Assyria", pp. 282-299; Chapter 19 "The Assyrian Empire", pp. 300-317; Chapter 20 "The House of Sargon", pp. 318-336; Chapter 21 "The Glory of Assyria", pp. 337-354; Chapter 22 "The Scribes of Nineveh", pp. 355-371; Chapter 23 "The Chaldean Kings", pp. 372-388; Chapter 24 "The Splendour of Babylon", pp. 389-404; Chapter 25 "Death of a Civilization", pp. 405-412.

Questions

1. Discuss how the Assyrians were able first to establish their empire and then administer it.
2. In what ways did the governance and administration of the Persian Empire differ from that of the Assyrians and Babylonians?
3. How did the Babylonian Captivity affect the exiles from Judah and what developments took place during this period?

Unit 5 - Submission of Final Papers

Completion and submission of the final research papers.

Format for Research Papers

1. Minimum 5000 words or 15 pages in length.
2. Typed, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman or Palatino font; pages must be numbered.
3. A full bibliography at the end of the paper should be included. The bibliography should include a minimum of five (5) entries not including the class books.
4. Notes (endnotes or footnotes) indicating the sources used must be included. The following formats for notes are preferred:

Book:

Author/Editor, *Title* (Place of publication, publisher [optional], year), p(p).

Example:

Elton L. Daniel, *The History of Iran* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), p.4.

Chapter in a Book:

Author, "Title of Chapter", in Editor (ed.), *Title* (Place of publication, publisher [optional], year), p(p).

Example:

Lazard, G. "The New Persian Language", in R.N. Frye (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. IV: The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 595-632.

Article:

Author, "Title of Article", *Name of Journal*, volume, number (date), p(p).

Example:

Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen, "Germanic and Hunnic Names of Iranian Origin", *Oriens*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1957), pp. 280-283.

Late submission penalty

A written assignment and final paper submitted later than the assigned date, without serious reasons for delay and without prior notification of the instructor about possible delay, will be graded $\frac{3}{4}$ of its real "weight".

Recommended / Optional Readings

Knapp, A. Bernard. *The History and Culture of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt* (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1988).

Kramer, Samuel Noah. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

Kuhrt, Amélie. *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 BC*. 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1995).

Oppenheim, A. Leo. *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

Shanks, Hershel (ed.). *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988).

Walker, C.B.F. *Cuneiform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).