

History 1024: Ancient History

Spring 2024

Instructor: Jesse Sadler, jrsadler@vt.edu
Office hours: Monday, 11:15–12:15 and by appointment
Office: Major Williams 4th floor

Location: Pamplin Hall 31
Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 10:10–11:00



History 1024 introduces students to the civilizations and peoples of the western ancient world, incorporating the peoples of the Mediterranean, the Near East, and outlying regions from the development of cities and invention of writing in Mesopotamia around 3,000 BCE to the fall of the western Roman Empire in the 5th century CE. The course examines the development and interactions of cultures and empires centered on the Mediterranean and radiating out across the Afro-Eurasian landmasses. Through lectures, textbook and primary sources readings, and online exhibits and resources, this class will focus on political, social, and cultural concepts such as political legitimacy, identity, and the development of social hierarchies. At all points emphasis will be placed on historical thinking and trying to better understand past cultures rather than memorization of facts, figures, and dates.

Learning Outcomes

This course introduces students to major themes in Ancient History. By the end of the course students will gain an understanding of the major events and civilizations in the ancient Near East, ancient Greece, and ancient Rome. Students will learn to think historically and to analyze historical sources within the context of their own time. Students will read and analyze a variety of primary sources and be exposed to historical scholarship through

lectures and the course textbook. Students will be asked to effectively analyze primary source materials in their writing and be challenged to improve their analytical writing through short weekly assignment. Finally, they will practice historical synthesis through in-class exams.

Required Reading

The required books for the course can be purchased at the bookstore. We will be using a single textbook, *An Introduction to the Ancient World*, to lay the groundwork for the topics discussed throughout the course. Reading from the textbook will be supplemented by three classics of the ancient world, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Aristophanes's comedy *Lysistrata*, and Plato's dialogues about the trial and death of Socrates. To best facilitate collaboration within the course, students should purchase the assigned editions of the books. We will also be reading a number of shorter texts from the ancient world that will be made available through Canvas. Primary source reading should be completed by the meeting under which they are listed. Students are expected to bring the relevant primary source reading to class to foster discussion. The weekly reading from *An Introduction to the Ancient World* can be completed at any time during the week in which it is assigned.

Lukas de Blois and R. J. van der Spek, *An Introduction to the Ancient World*, Third Edition (New York: Routledge, 2019).

The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian, translated by Andrew George (London: Penguin Classics, 2020).

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata and Other Plays*, translated by Alan H. Sommerstein (London: Penguin Classics, 2002).

Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, translated by George Maximilian Anthony Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002).

Grading

- Weekly assignments: 20%
- In-class exam: The Ancient Near East: 20%
- In-class exam: The Greek World: 20%
- In-class exam: The Roman World and Final: 40%

Weekly assignments: Students are expected to complete short weekly assignments that usually focus on one of the primary source readings for the week. The assignments are structured to be short—often just a couple of sentences—but the expectation is that these will be thoughtful, well structured sentences that demonstrate understanding of the texts. The assignments will be turned in on Canvas unless otherwise noted. They are due the night before they are listed on the syllabus, so that they can be referenced in class. The due date will be made clear on Canvas. The assignments will often be used as a starting point for discussion of the text(s) in class. Each assignment will be graded out of 3 points:

- (✓+) 3 points: Thorough, well considered, and demonstrates understanding of the text and/or prompt, including historical significance.
- (✓) 2 points: Shows some understanding of the text and/or prompt but does not get at the historical significance.

- (✓-) 1 point: Assignment is completed but does not display understanding of the text and/or prompt.
- 0 points: Incomplete or missing.

Late work and Whoopsie clause: All assignments are expected to be completed by their due date. However, things do not always go as planned. Therefore, each student is able to take advantage of the whoopsie clause once during the semester. This provides an extra 48 hours to complete one of the weekly assignments without any questions. The whoopsie clause will be automatically invoked the first time one assignment is late. If you have already used your whoopsie clause, it is still better to turn an assignment in late than not turning it in at all. A late assignment will be graded down one point.

Exams: There will be three in-class exams covering the three sections of the course. These will be short answer and will consist of analysis of a primary source and answering general questions derived from the reading and lectures. Students are allowed a study sheet of **one** sheet of 9x11.5 paper (front and back is ok) in the exams.

Participation and extra credit: Participation in the course is always encouraged. Students can get up to **two** extra credit points by participating in two specific ways outside of the lectures. First, visiting me in office hours one or more times will get you a point. Secondly, email me one or more memes that you find or even make that concerns the ancient world. I will share the best ones in class.

Course Expectations

- Come to lectures on time and ready to participate. Keep any in-class disruptions to a minimum.
- Be respectful of fellow students. Asking questions, discussion, and debate in class is encouraged, but it should always be done in a respectful manner.
- Complete primary source reading by the date it is due and come to class ready to discuss and ask any questions you might have about the reading. Please bring a copy of the relevant primary source readings to class with you to foster discussion.
- All exams must be completed and at least 70% of the weekly assignments need to be completed to receive a passing grade in the class.
- Academic integrity will be assumed and rigorously enforced. All writing for the course should be your own and not come from other sources or via AI chat programs. Students who hand in plagiarized material will receive a zero for the assignment and may be referred to the Department and Academic Dean for disciplinary measures.
- If you have questions regarding any aspect of the class, please contact and discuss the issue with Professor Sadler by email, in office hours, or after class.

Weekly Schedule

The syllabus is liable to change. Any changes will be made clear in class and on the website.

Week 1: Introduction to the Ancient World (16–19 January)

1. Introduction

2. Afro-Eurasia and the Mediterranean in the ancient world

Section 1: The Ancient Near East

Week 2: The development of cities and states in the 4th and 3rd millennium BCE

(22–26 January)

3. The birth of cities and writing
4. The development of states and monument building
Reading: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet 1: The Coming of Enkidu
Assignment: Source analysis of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet 1: The Coming of Enkidu.
5. The Epic of Gilgamesh
Reading: Everybody reads *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet 11: Immortality Denied. Read entirety of tablet assigned to you based on last name. Read summaries of each tablet.
Assignment: Source analysis of the tablet assigned to you from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*

Ch 1: The Origins of the Civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, 9–14.

Ch 2: The Third Millennium, 15–21.

Ch 5: Religion, 55–65.

Week 3: Empire and society in the 2nd millennium BCE (29 January–2 February)

6. Sex and political power in the ancient Near East
Reading: Egyptian love poems, A cycle of seven stanzas
7. The development of law and diplomacy
Reading: Code of Hammurabi, c. 1780 BCE
Assignment: Source analysis of the Code of Hammurabi
8. The eastern Mediterranean in the 2nd millennium BCE

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*

Ch 3: The Second Millennium, 22–37.

Ch 6: Economy and Society, 66–75.

Ch 7: Government, 76–80.

Week 4: Disruption and expansion in the Early Iron Age (5–9 February)

9. Trade in the Mediterranean: The Phoenicians
Reading: The Report of Wen-Amon, c. 1050
10. The Israelites
Reading: Hebrew Bible: Judges, 4 and 1 Kings, 5–10
11. Recovery of Near Eastern empires
Exhibit: [Historical city travel guide: Nineveh, 7th century BC](#)
Assignment: Post a question that you have about the ancient Near East to the Discussion Board on Canvas in preparation for exam.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 4: The First Millennium, 38–54.

Section 2: The Greek World

Week 5: Archaic Greece (12–16 February)

12. Test: The Ancient Near East

13. The development of the polis

14. The Greek hero and epic poetry

Reading: Homer, *Iliad* selections

Assignment: Source Analysis of the *Iliad*: Achilles as an archetypal hero.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*

Ch 8: The Early Iron Age (c. 1200–c. 750 BC): ‘The Dark Ages’, 83–84.

Ch 9: The Archaic Period (c. 750–c. 500 BC), 85–117.

Week 6: Classical Greece in the 5th century BCE (19–23 February)

15. Persia, Greece, and the Persian War

Reading: Herodotus, *Histories* on the Persians

16. Citizenship and slavery in Classical Greece

17. Athens and Sparta: The Peloponnesian War

Reading: Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*

Assignment: Source analysis of an ancient plague

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 10: The Classical Period (c. 500–c. 330

BC), 118–143.

Week 7: Greek society and culture in the Classical age (26 February–1 March)

18. Family, gender, and sex in Classical Greece

19. Greek theater

20. Discussion of Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata*

Reading: Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*

Assignment: Source analysis of *Lysistrata*: gender and sexuality in Ancient Greece.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 10: The Classical Period (c. 500–c. 330

BC), 143–158.

Spring Break, 4–8 March

Week 8: New horizons in the middle of the first millennium (11–15 March)

21. Trade in the Mediterranean: The Greeks and Carthaginians

22. Citizenship, morality, and nature: Philosophy and education in Classical Greece

23. Plato and the trial of Socrates

Reading: Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*

Assignment: Source analysis of the trial of Socrates.

Week 9: The Hellenistic World (18–22 March)

24. Alexander and the concept of empire

Reading: Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*

25. Hellenization: The spread of Greek culture
Reading: First Book of Maccabees
26. Cosmopolitanism in the Hellenistic world
Assignment: Post a question that you have about the Greek world to the Discussion Board on Canvas in preparation for exam.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 11: The Hellenistic World (c. 330–c. 30 BC), 159–188.

Section 3: The Roman World

Week 10: Early Rome (27–29 March)

27. Test: The Greek World

28. The western Mediterranean and continental Europe before the rise of Rome
29. The development of the Roman Republic
Reading: Livy, *The History of Rome*, Book 1.56–60 and 2.1
Assignment: Source analysis of Livy, *The History of Rome* on Roman republicanism.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 12: Early Roman History (753–265 BC), 191–223.

Week 11: From city-state to empire (1–5 April)

30. Empire and citizenship: Roman expansion in Italy
31. Building a Mediterranean empire: The Punic Wars
Reading: Polybius and Livy, Hannibal and the Second Punic War
32. Expansion and Crisis: The end of the Republic
Reading: Caesar, *The Gallic War*
Assignment: Swords and sandals: The ancient world in modern culture.

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*
Ch 13: Further Expansion and New Social Tensions (264–133 BC) , 224–243.
Ch 14: The Century of the Civil Wars (133–30 BC), 244–269.

Week 12: The Roman Empire: The Age of Augustus (8–12 April)

33. Augustus: The beginning of the Empire
Reading: Deeds of the deified Augustus
34. Pax Romana: Cross-cultural trade in the Roman world
Assignment: Mapping the Roman world
35. The city of Rome
Reading: Juvenal, Satire III: On the City of Rome c. 118 CE
Exhibit: [British Museum's Historical city travel guide: Rome, 1st century AD](#)

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 15: The Early Imperial Age (27 BC–AD 193), 270–303.

Week 13: Society and culture in the Roman world (15–19 April)

36. Family, gender, and sex in the Roman world
Reading: Funeral Eulogy of Turia, c. 20 BCE
Assignment: Source analysis of the Eulogy of Turia on marriage in Rome.
37. Slavery and social hierarchy in the Roman world
Reading: Plutarch, Life of Crassus, 8–11: The Slave Revolt of Spartacus (73–71 BCE)
38. On living well

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 15: The Early Imperial Age (27 BC–AD 193), 303–332.

Week 14: Crisis of the third century CE and Late Antiquity (22–26 April)

39. The crisis of the 3rd century CE
40. Religion in the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity
Reading: Saint Augustine, *Confessions*
Assignment: Source analysis of Saint Augustine, *Confessions*
41. The Fall of Rome?

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Ch 16: The Crisis of the Third Century AD and Late Antiquity, 333–370.

Week 15: Conclusion and legacies (29 April–1 May)

42. Roman legacies
Assignment: Post a question that you have about the Roman world and/or the course as a whole to the Discussion Board on Canvas in preparation for exam.
43. The Ancient world in the modern age

Textbook reading: *Introduction to the Ancient World*, Epilogue, 371–373.

In-class Final exam: Saturday, 24 May: 3:25–5:25pm