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HSTR 101H.00: Western Civilization I

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HISTORY [HSTR] 101: WESTERN CIVILIZATION FROM ITS ORIGINS TO 1648

Professor John A. Eglin (Office: LA 255; hours MWF 11:30AM-12:30 PM, or by appointment, or by accident. E-mail: john.eglin@umontana.edu).

Welcome! This course will take you across five millennia in one semester, so hold on tight! It will give you a basic understanding of the history of influential cultures in what is called Western Civilization, along with the controversies that surround both of those concepts. You will also gain experience in reading historical sources critically and analytically. You will learn how to think historically -- to understand how cultures of the past understood themselves. The syllabus you now have in your hand contains essential information about the course, and you should save it for future reference.

Course Texts: Clifford Backman, Cultures of the West (abbreviated BCW; ISBN 0190240466). There are also supplementary primary source readings to be discussed in weekly sessions. All but two of these readings are accessible through the links embedded in this syllabus. The two remaining readings will be e-mailed to you as pdf attachments.

Course Requirements are that in any given week, you must normally attend three lectures, attend and participate in one discussion section, and complete the assigned readings with the accompanying responses. Given the scope and pace of this course, it is essential that you keep up with the reading. Readings listed for the week will be discussed in sections on Tuesday. Each week students will turn in 200 word responses to the reading. There will also be two **midterm examinations** on 8 October and 12 November, and a semi-cumulative **final examination** on 14 December. These are essay examinations which allow students to demonstrate mastery of the subject matter, and enable us to see what students are thinking about the course material.

Lectures are given Monday, Wednesday, and Friday in LA 11, in the basement of the Liberal Arts building. Please refrain from any behavior likely to distract either your classmates or me. Such behavior includes late arrivals, early departures, unauthorized use of electronic devices, and--especially--talking during lectures. Cellphones *must* be muted and stowed during lecture. Lectures may not be recorded under any circumstances. You may, and in fact, you *really ought* to take notes on lectures – your *own* notes. You should no more borrow someone's else's notes than you should borrow their toothbrush. Taking notes on lectures obliges you to listen actively, and you are more likely to remember what is said. You may use laptops, tablets, etc. for taking notes, but *only* for taking notes. The

teaching assistants, seated in the rear of the lecture hall, will advise me of any unauthorized use of electronic devices.

COVID-19 Advisory: If you have not been vaccinated, and are medically able to be vaccinated, the University (myself included) urges you to do so. Please contact the Curry Health Center for information and with any questions or concerns. The University's pandemic protocols stipulate that masks *must* be worn in all indoor instructional settings, which in this case means lectures, discussion sections, and office hours. *The University Provost has instructed us to initiate disciplinary proceedings in the case of students who refuse to mask.* If our enrollment precludes social distancing in lecture (which is likely), we will have to implement a seating chart and take attendance in order to enable contact tracing. We have been warned that if we do not impose these measures, a single exposure could result in the entire class having to quarantine. If you fall ill or begin to exhibit symptoms, please do not attend class but contact the Curry Health Center. If you are required to quarantine or isolate, please contact us immediately so that we can take measures to support and accommodate you.

Discussion Sections for this course meet Tuesday for an hour in the morning or afternoon. Very importantly, sections will meet the first week of class to review the syllabus, go over course procedures, and answer your questions about either. Substantive sections will begin Tuesday 7 September with discussion of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Attendance at discussion sections is *mandatory*. Consult your course schedule and the course listings for the time and location of your section. Sections, conducted by teaching assistants, are your opportunity to discuss readings, lectures, and most importantly your thoughts and ideas about them. Your participation will be elicited by both fair means and foul, so you should come prepared, having completed all of the assigned reading. For every section for which there are packet readings assigned, you will hand in a 200 word response to a focus question. Teaching Assistants are not permitted to accept reading responses turned in after section has met, except for reasons that are verifiable and allowed under university regulations. You will get no points for participation if you do not turn in the response at the beginning of class. Attendance will be monitored in discussion section (which you might think of as the "lab" for this course). *If you are missing section, you are missing class!* If you miss your first two sections without excuse, you will be dropped from the course, in accordance with University policy. Moreover, an unexcused absence from section will result in a loss of two percentage points from the final grade -- which can easily make the difference between an A- and a B+, or a B- and a C+, etc.

Grades are assigned on a 100 point scale. 93 points are required for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for B+, 83 for B, 80 for B-, 77 for C+, 73 for C, 70 for C-, 67 for D+, 63 for D, 60 for a D-, below 60 F. Grades are assigned by the teaching assistants in consultation with the instructor. For students in 101, grades will be computed thus: lecture and section attendance and section participation 10%, reading responses 15%, midterms and final 25% each. While we will gladly discuss your exam and other results with you, we will *not* change grades once they are assigned. Make-up examinations will not be scheduled, nor any late work accepted, except for reasons that are verifiable and allowed under university regulations. (Do not, for example, make travel arrangements for winter break without consulting the final examination schedule, which is published at the beginning of August.) It is *your responsibility* to present these reasons as soon as you are able to do so, to provide documentation if asked, and to do so in a timely fashion. Students with legitimate excuses typically present them promptly, and often through the agency of a health care provider or a university official. Do not wait until the end of the semester!

Disabilities. Every effort will be made to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Requests for accommodation should be made through the Office of Disability Equity. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability, please contact the ODE by phone at (406) 243-2243, by e-mail at ode@umontana.edu, or visit www.umt.edu/disability for more information. As the ODE cannot honor retroactive accommodation requests, please contact them as soon as issues arise. And, of course, feel free to contact your TA or me, and be assured that we will hold all such communications in strict confidence.

Drops require the consent of the instructor after the fifteenth instructional day (20 September). After the forty-fifth instructional day (1 November), drops are available only in extraordinary circumstances and only through petition which must be approved by the instructor, your advisor, and the Dean. We reserve the right to investigate drop petitions, and to request documentation. You will need to contact your TA if you intend dropping the course after either deadline, as they have access to necessary records.

The History Department believes that students are best served by its maintaining high academic standards. It therefore takes academic dishonesty very seriously. Cheating and plagiarism undermine academic standards and threaten the reputation of an institution. Any student found cheating on an examination or plagiarizing on written assignments (including reading responses) will fail the course, and may incur more serious penalties under the Student Conduct Code.

Teaching Assistants run your sections, handle your paperwork, grade your reading responses and exams, and generally keep track of you. They are an enormous help to me, and they *can* be an equally great help to you -- *if* you establish and maintain a working relationship with them. Help is available if you ask for it, but you *must ask* -- and experience has taught us that the sooner students ask, the more help we can be to them. Your TA is the person to approach (initially) about bureaucratic matters such as adding or dropping, absences, etc. Questions about the actual course material may be addressed to any of us at any time. The teaching assistants for this course are Mr. Ben Yturri and Ms. Octavia Jimenez.

As this is an introductory course with a large number of students new to the University, let me conclude by urging you to become active participants in your own education. A UM education costs about what a new car does, and either one will go a lot further if you drive it yourself!

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I. 30 August – 3 September. Introduction. "Civilization" and the "West."
Reading for section: This course syllabus!

Week II. 7-10 September. The Ancient Near East: Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Hebrews. Readings for sections: BCW chapters 1-3; [The Epic of Gilgamesh](#). Focus question: Does the *Epic of Gilgamesh* present civilization as a blessing, or as a curse?

Week III. 13-17 September. Ancient Greece. Readings for sections: BCW chapters 4-5; [Aristophanes, Clouds](#). Focus question: The beliefs and assumptions of "Socrates" and Strepsiades in the *Clouds* are comic exaggerations of two positions in a debate about education. Reading between the lines of Aristophanes' characterizations, how would you describe these two positions?

Week IV. 20-24 September. Ancient Rome. Readings for sections: BCW chapter 6; [Quintus Cicero, Handbook on Electioneering](#). Focus question: What aspects of Roman electioneering are similar to modern political campaigns? How, on the other hand, were Roman campaigns different?

Week V. 27 September – 1 October. Christianity and Islam. Readings for sections: BCW chapter 7, 9; [The Gospel of Thomas](#). Focus question: Why, do you think, was this non-canonical account of the teachings of Jesus omitted from the New

Testament?

Week VI. 4-8 October. Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Readings for sections: BCW chapters 8, 10.

First Midterm Examination Friday 8 October

Week VII. 11-15 October. The High and Late Middle Ages. Readings for sections: BCW chapter 11; [Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, prologue](#). Focus question: What do Chaucer's descriptions of his traveling companions suggest about the changes that had taken place as the middle ages were ending?

Week VIII. 18-22 October. The Renaissance. Readings for sections: BCW chapter 12; [Machiavelli, *The Prince*](#) selections. Focus question: "Some day my prince will come." Where, and why, does Machiavelli say something like this in *The Prince*?

Week IX. 25-29 October. The Expansion of Europe. Readings for sections: BCW chapter 13; Columbus, *Voyages*. Focus question: How, and why, do the indigenous people described in Columbus' *Voyages* respond differently in different circumstances to the Europeans they encounter?

Week X. 1-5 November. The Reformation. Readings for sections: Erasmus, *Colloquies*, selections. Focus question: How Catholic -- or how Protestant -- are the *Colloquies*?

Week XI. 8-12 November. Consequences of the Reformation.

Second Midterm Examination Friday 12 November

Week XII. 15-19 November. Everyday Life in Early Modern Europe. Discussion: *The Return of Martin Guerre* (film). Focus question: The French peasants living in the village of Artigat in the earlier 16th century knew little of the world around them, until a piece of that world came crashing in on them. What do their responses to Martin's return tell us about their "mental world" ?

Week XIII. 22 November. Witchcraft and Science.

Week XIV. 29 November - 3 December. The Wars of Religion. Readings: BCW chapter 14. [Grimmelschausen, *Simplicissimus*](#), selections. Focus question: It has been said that all war is ironic. How is this thought reflected in *Simplicissimus*?

Week XV. 6-10 December. The Age of Absolutism. Readings: BCW chapter 15.

Final Examination 8AM Tuesday 14 December 2021