Course Syllabus
HIST 2311: Western Civilization to 1660

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Office Hours: after school daily (3:40-4:15); or by appointment.

Course Description
To begin at the beginning is to begin with what is right in front of us. Most immediate of all is
the educational project itself, a project which is fundamentally civilizational in character. It aims
at far more than simply communicating a way of life from one generation to the next. Every
species of animals has a way of life; only human beings speak of civilizations. The educational
project, and the civilizational goal that it reflects, aims to bring about something that
approximates the best way of life—or the correct way of life—for human beings.

“Western Civilization” is a modern concept. It is a product of the Enlightenment. It
reflected, somewhat problematically, the emerging consciousness of a shared cultural heritage—
a consciousness that reached full maturity in the 17th and 18th centuries. But it was also a term of
differentiation which implied the existence of civilizational alternatives. In particular it implied
an Eastern alternative. And it cannot be doubted that the growing cultural awareness of an
Oriental alternative helped give life to the idea of “the West” as something more than a vague
geographic descriptor. For things are known in two ways, by what they are and also by what they
are not.

But what is the West? And what is it not?—What did “the West” mean to those
Enlightenment men who conceived it, and from whom we have inherited it?—And to what
degree is that meaning grounded in the realities of history and human nature?

The twin roots of Western Civilization are Judeo-Christian monotheism and Greek
philosophy. To study Western Civilization means, then, to study the interplay of these ideas as
they have emerged into the full light of modern history, and to study the interaction of peoples
who held these ideas close. It is to observe how those ideas have developed; how they have
cooperated and competed over time; how they have been transfigured by historical
contingencies. The same Enlightenment which gave birth to the idea of the West was itself a
product of the western tradition—a tradition which in time produced our notion of modern
science and laid a foundation in political philosophy for the emergence of constitutional
democracies. And though it is surely problematic from the point of view of modern sociology to
give definite form to a concept like “the West”, it must also be admitted that the skeptical posture
of modern sociology is itself a product of a specifically western intellectual tradition. We can say
that although the Enlightenment may have produced the West as a concept, certainly it was the
western tradition which produced the Enlightenment. Thus it is only in the light of the western
tradition that the concept of the West can be doubted in any plausible way.
Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to . . .

- analyze cause and effect in the development of Western Civilization, from the emergence of ancient societies to the year 1660.
- analyze the relationship between economics, politics, demography, and social structure in American history to 1660.
- synthesize assigned readings and lectures into a coherent, fact-based narrative that demonstrates critical thinking skills.
- analyze historical documents in light of their context and particular point of view.
- evaluate the unspoken premises that are necessarily involved in the creation of any interpretive framework for history, including our own.

Grading Policy

Calculating 6-Weeks Grades

- For dual credit courses, major grades count for 70% of the total grade in each 6-week grading period; daily grades count for 30% of the total grade.

Major Grades

- As a general rule, there will be an examination during each 3 week grading period. The examination may or may not correlate to the units of study that are listed below. The units of study do not always fit neatly within the grading periods that are mandated.
- There can be no less than two major grades in each 6 weeks grading period. The major grades will usually be examinations, although projects may also be assigned as major grades.

Daily Grades

- The most challenging of the daily grades will definitely be reading quizzes, which you can expect on a regular basis throughout the semester.
- There will be other daily grades given from time to time, including the completion of timeline exercises, reading guides, map exercises, etc. These should generally be high grades.

Final Exam

- The Final Exam will be scheduled, tentatively, for 15 Dec 2017.
The Reading List

Primary Text

Major Supplementary readings will include selections from . . .

- Auerbach, Eric. from *Mimesis*. “Odysseus’ Scar”.
- Augustine. from *City of God*. Book III.
- Benedict of Nursia. from *The Rule of St Benedict*.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. from *The Decameron*.
- Cantor, Norman F. from *Civilization of the Middle Ages*. Chapter 12.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. from *The Canterbury Tales*. “Miller’s Tale”
- de Coulanges, Fustel. from *The Ancient City*. Chapter 1.
- Descartes, Rene. from *Meditations on First Philosophy*.
- Herodotus. from *The Histories*. The story of Gyges.
- Johnson, Paul. from *A History of Christianity*. “The Third Force.”
- Johnson, Paul. from *A History of the Jews*. “Israelites”.
- Las Casas, Bartolome de. from *Destruction of the Indies*.
- Livy, from *Early History of Rome*.
- Machiavelli. from *The Prince*. Chapter 15
- Plato. *The Euthyphro*.
- Xenophon. from *The Education of Cyrus*.

Course Sequence

Unit 1: Foundations in the Ancient Near East
- Session 1: Why study history?—Philosophy of History
- Session 2: What is civilization?—Six Elements of Civilization
- Session 3: Polytheism: the Egyptian & Mesopotamian pantheons
- Session 4: The Advent of Writing: from Contracts to Literature
- Session 5: Abraham; “Israelites” discussion; Monotheism; the Mosaic Code; Timeline: Hebrews to Israelites to Jews

Unit 2: Persians, Greeks, & Romans
- Session 7: Cyrus the Great; Herodotus and the significance of the *Histories*; Story of Gyges; Troy to Thermopylae
• Session 8: The Ancient City; Greek Culture & Thought; Socrates & Plato; Discussion of *The Euthyphro*
• Session 9: Aristotle; Discussion of *The Politics* & Aristotle’s regimes
• Session 10: Alexander and the Spread of Hellenism; The Ptolemies in Egypt
• Session 11: The Mythic Beginnings of Rome; Livy: story of the Sabine Women; Rome’s Expansion
• Session 12: The Punic Wars; the Civil Wars; Caesar & Empire
• Session 13: Decline & Fall; Christianity; Augustine; Discussion of *City of God*
• Session 14: Barbarians at the Gates; the Goths; Orthodoxy & Heresy; Arius & Arianism

Unit 3: The Post-Classical Slide
• Session 15: Muhammad & the Birth of Islam; the Koran; the Pillars of Islam
• Session 16: Islamic expansion; the Question of Jihad; the Battle of Tours
• Session 17: The Frankish Dynasties; Charlemagne’s Empire; the Holy Roman Empire; the Vikings & the Crusades
• Session 18: The Beginnings of Modern France and Modern England

Unit 4: The High Middle Ages
• Session 19: Monks and Monasticism; discussion of *Rule of St Benedict*; the Cistercians
• Session 20: Discussion of *Civilization of the Middle Ages*; Aristotle’s 2nd Sailing; Thomas Aquinas & the Scholastics
• Session 21: Plague & Recovery; discussion from *Decameron*; Giotto & the pre-Renaissance

Unit 5: Renaissance & Reformation
• Session 22: Art of the Southern Renaissance; Humanism; Christian Humanism; Art of the Northern Renaissance
• Session 23: Gutenberg & the Press; Erasmus; discussion of “The Third Force”
• Session 24: Columbus and the Age of Discovery; Africa, India, and the New World; discussion of *Destruction of the Indies*
• Session 25: Martin Luther; Protestant Reformation; Zwingli; Calvin; Henry VIII

Unit 6: A Kind of Revolution
• Session 26: The Situation on the Iberian Peninsula: Spain & Portugal; the Spanish West Indies; Brazil; the Spanish Armada
• Session 27: The Situation in England: Elizabeth, Shakespeare, and the English Civil War
• Session 28: Discussion of *The Prince*; discussion of *Leviathan*
• Session 29: The Situation on the Continent: Hapsburgs and Bourbons; The 30 Years War
• Session 30: The Tribes of Europe: Prussians, Russians, Slavs, and Turks
Academic Honesty

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, violations of published professional ethics/standards, and any act or attempted act designed to give unfair academic advantage to oneself or another student. See the Angelo State University Student Handbook, Part II B: Academic Integrity for more information.

Student Disability Services

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAA), and subsequent legislation.

The Office of Student Affairs is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting: Dallas A. Swafford, Director of Student Disability Services (325) 942-2047 (dallas.swafford@angelo.edu).

Absence for Religious Holy Day

A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.