Course Title  :  ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

Course Code  :  HST153

No. of Credits/Term  :  3

Mode of Tuition  :  Sectional

Class Contact Hours  :  3 hours per week

Category in Major Prog.  :  Elective

Prerequisites  :  None

Co-requisites  :  None

Brief Course Description  :  This course provides an introduction to the world of antiquity from the origins of humanity to the end of classical civilizations. Through the case studies across various regions and over different periods of time, we will seek out both the linkages and forces molding the contemporary human community, particularly in the context of culture and belief systems.

Aims  :  The objective of the course is to help students understand different cultural heritages and develop a complex view of the ancient human past as a whole.

Learning Outcomes  :  a) to develop analytical and critical thinking by exploring historical causation, interconnectivity and change in the context of ancient history

b) to understand different cultures, ideologies and value systems from a historical perspective

c) to increase understanding of important issues, such as religions and other belief systems

d) to develop students’ written and oral English

e) to develop students’ team-working and organizational skills

f) to be able to analyse secondary and primary sources

Indicative Content (subject to minor changes)  :  I. Humans and the World

A. Jared Diamond’s *Guns, Germs and Steel*
B. Hominids to Humans in Prehistory
C. BBC documentary on prehistoric humans

II. River Valley Civilizations (3500-500 B.C.E.)
A. Complex Societies
B. Mesopotamia: Sumerian City-States
C. Egypt: "The Gift of Nile"
D. India: The Indus Valley Civilization, The Indo-European Migration, and Caste
E. China: Xia, Shang, and Zhou
F. Mesoamerica: The Olmecs and the Maya
G. South America: The Chavin Cult and Mochica

III. Legacies of Classical Societies I (3500 B.C.E.-500 C.E.)
A. The Rise and Fall of Persian Empires and Religions of Salvation
B. The Unification of China: Qin and Han; Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism
C. India: The Maurya and Gupta Empires and Buddhism

IV. Legacies of Classical Societies II (3500 B.C.E.-500 C.E.)
A. Classical Greece: Greek Economy, Society, and Civilizations
B. The Roman Republic, Empire, Judaism, and Early Christianity
C. The Silk Roads: Cross-cultural Exchanges

V. The Post-Classical Era I (500-800 C.E.)
A. The Realm of Islam and Islamic Traditions
B. The decline of Buddhism in India
C. The “Dark Ages” in Europe and the Transition to Christian Monarchy

VI. Conclusion: The legacy of the ancient world

Teaching Method: Lectures are designed to provide students with a big picture of the human experience. Selected
primary readings will be discussed and students will give group presentations on thematic topics.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes:

a) through the final exam, group presentation and individual essay, which gives the choice of either doing a book review of an academic work or a comparative study of two ancient civilizations

b) through displaying an understanding of ancient cultures, ideologies and value systems in the group project, group discussions, individual assignment, and final exam

c) through displaying a comprehension of important issues, such as human rights, democracy (e.g., Athenian democracy), and religions and other belief systems in the final examination, group discussions, and in raising and answering relevant questions in class

d) through presenting ideas clearly and demonstrating an acceptable standard of written English in the, individual assignment and final exam and through coherently communicating knowledge and ideas in the group project

e) through participation in creating and presenting an acceptable group project to the class

f) through demonstrating the ability to effectively interpret and communicate secondary sources in the group project, individual assignment and final exam and primary sources in the individual assignment and group discussions

Assessment:

Students are expected to keep up with all assignments, and come prepared for each class discussion.

Continuous Assessment: 70%
A. Group presentation (15%)
B. Essay (40%)
C. Class attendance and participation (15%)
Final Examination: 30%

Required Reading:


Supplementary Readings: