

THE BRONZE AGE AND THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION

This course is concerned with the beginnings of civilization and the emergence of the earliest class-stratified societies and their interactions with their less socially developed or “barbarian” neighbors on their periphery. The course begins with a consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the archaeological and the earliest historic record for understanding this period of cultural evolution and briefly reviews archaeological evidence documenting the beginnings of food production, settled life, and advances in metallurgy. The course then concentrates on developments in western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean basin, particularly in Mesopotamia and Egypt, which lay the foundation for the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. The course also examines developments on the northern and eastern peripheries of the ancient Near East, reviewing the archaeological record for the development of social complexity in South Asia (the so-called Indus Valley or Harappan civilization) and Central Asia (the so-called Oxus civilization). It also briefly discusses the beginnings of civilization in East Asia. Finally, the last third of the course considers the rise of civilization in the New World, focussing in particular on the developments in Mesoamerica and Peru that culminated respectively in the emergence of the Mayan, Aztec, and Inca civilizations. Archaeological evidence will be supplemented with textually derived or historical information wherever possible and comparisons will be made with ethnographically documented early state societies.

Readings assignments are presented thematically below and are extensive but divided into "required" and "suggested" categories. Class discussions will be based upon the former, while the latter may be presented by Mr. Kohl in class or occasionally assigned in advance or in place of another reading. Three short (half-class) quizzes will be given during the term (**March 4th, April 11th, and May 6th**), but there will be no final exam. Students should consult with Mr. Kohl about final papers (c. 12-16 pages), **which are due at the end of Examination Period on May 19th**. A 2 page outline of the paper (**not graded**) will be due after spring break on April 4th, and students will be asked to make short 10-15 minute oral presentations of what they are researching in April after the second quiz on April 11th. Students are encouraged to select topics of their choice, but these must be approved by the instructor. Grades for the course will be calculated roughly as follows: 1/6 per quiz; 2/6 for the final paper; and 1/6 for class participation and the oral presentation. Students are invited to meet with Mr. Kohl at any time in his office, Pendleton East 345, particularly during his office hours, which are Tuesdays and Fridays 2:45-4:00 P.M.

Books Available for Purchase in the Bookstore

MAS – Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States and Civilizations by N. Yoffee

SS – Sumer and the Sumerians by H. Crawford, 2nd ed.

AE – An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt by K. Bard
IC – The Indus Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective by G. Possehl
AMR – Art, Myth, and Ritual: The Paths to Political Authority in Ancient China by K.C. Chang
IA – The Incas and their Ancestors by M. Moseley, 2nd ed.
RE – Religion and Empire by G.W. Conrad and A. Demarest
AM – Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization by A. Demarest

Recommended Books with Assigned Readings

AC – Ancient Civilizations by C. Scarre and B. Fagan
MBAE - The Making of Bronze Age Eurasia by P.L. Kohl
UEC – Understanding Early Civilizations by B. G. Trigger
EA - Early Antiquity ed. by I.M. Diakonoff
ESPE – Economy and Society in Prehistoric Europe: Changing Perspectives by A. Sherratt
ATA - Archaeological Thought in America, ed. by C.C. Lamberg- Karlovsky
CAM - Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East by M. Roaf
AESH - Ancient Egypt: A Social History ed. by B.G. Trigger, et. al.
ACS – The Archaeology of City-States: cross-cultural approaches, ed. by D.L. Nichols and T.H. Charlton
BAE – Bronze Age Economics: the beginnings of political economies by T. Earle
ECOW – Early Civilizations of the Old World by C.K. Maisels
AS – Archaic States, ed. by G.M. Feinman and J. Marcus

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Evolutionary and Historical Perspectives on Early Civilizations: some basic concepts; strengths and weaknesses of the comparative perspective; the nature of the archaeological and early historical record; the Bronze Age classically conceived
Readings through Feb. 5th:

required readings:

AC – Part I Background
MBAE – chapter 1
MAS – chapters 1-2 and 8

suggested readings:

UEC – Introduction
EA - "Introduction"
AS – chaps. 1-3

BAE – chaps. 1-5, part III

II. The Beginnings of Food Production through the Chalcolithic Period in West Asia with a brief consideration of Copper-Age Developments in Southeast Europe
Readings through Feb. 12th:

required readings:

CAM - part I

MBAE – chapter 2

suggested readings:

ECOW – chap. 3, pp. 80-156

ESPE – section I and chapters 6-8

III. The Urban Revolution in Mesopotamia: settlement distribution and the appearance of cities; the emergence of writing; political developments - city-states to empire; the development of craft production and the need to procure foreign resources
Readings through March 4th:

required readings:

SS - entire

MAS – chapters 3, 5, 6, and 9

suggested readings:

CAM - part II

EA - chapters

ECOW – chap. 3, 156-185

“Initial Social Complexity in Southwest Asia: The Mesopotamian Advantage” by G. Algaze (xerox, also available in Current Anthropology, vol.)

AS – chap. 6

"The Uruk Expansion: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Early Mesopotamian Civilization," by G. Algaze in Current Anthropology 30 (1989): 571-608 (reprint)

"The Origins of Tell Leilan and the Conquest of Space in Third Millennium Mesopotamia" by H. Weiss (reprint)

"The Organizational Context of Specialized Craft Production in Early Mesopotamian States" by G. Stein and M. James Blackman (reprint)

"Trade, Women, Class, and Society in Ancient Western Asia" by A. Zagarell in Current Anthropology 27 (1986): 415-430

"Iran: A Sumerian El-Dorado?" by P.R.S. Moorey (reprint)

Heartland of Cities by R. McC. Adams

1st Quiz: March 4th

IV. The Eastern Mediterranean Basin and the Rise of Pharaonic Egyptian Civilization: The Nile Valley and the Development of Egyptian Civilization; Egyptian and Mesopotamian Civilization Compared/Contrasted
Readings through March 18th:

required readings:

AE – chapters 1, 3, 5-8

EA - chaps. 6-9, 13-15

suggested readings:

CAE – pp. 12-21, 30-47, 134-165, 190-219

ECOW – chap. 2

ACS – chap. 3

AS – chap. 7

"Egypt: Origins of Complex Societies" by R. Wenke in Annual Review of Anthropology, vol. 18 (1989): 129-155:

AESH - entire

V. The Emergence of Secondary States along the Northern and Eastern Peripheries of the Ancient Near East to 1500 BC: developments on the Iranian plateau and Central Asia; the enigmatic Indus Valley Civilization – empire, classless state or stateless civilization; reconceptualizing long-distance Bronze Age exchange and interconnections; the beginnings of civilization in East Asia
Readings through April 11th:

required readings:

MBAE – chapter 5

IC – chapters 3-14

AMR – entire

suggested readings:

ECOW – chap. 4

AS – chap. 8

ESPE – chapter 18

ECOW – chap. 5

ATA - article by Fairservis

ACS – chaps. 4 and 5

EA - chapters 10 and 18

"Trade and World Systems in Early Bronze Age Western Asia" by C.M. Edens and P.L. Kohl (in Trade and Exchange in Prehistoric Europe, ed. by C. Scarre and F. Healy (xerox)

2nd Quiz: April 11th

VI. Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica: the indigenous development of food production and the rise of civilization in Mesoamerica; early Mayan history and the Aztec empire and the Postclassic Mesoamerican World; start of student oral presentations - approximately one presentation/class beginning on April 14th
Readings through April 25th:

required readings:

RE – chapters 1-2

AM – entire

suggested readings:

ACS – chapters 9 and 11

AS – chap. 10

AS – chap. 4

ATA - article by G. Willey

"The Mesoamerican Urban Tradition" by W.T. Sanders and D. Webster
in American Anthropologist, Sept. 1988

"Expansionary Dynamics of Some Early Pristine States" by G. Algaze in American Anthropologist, June 1993

VII. Early Andean Civilization: the beginnings of food production and the rise of civilization in western South America: the Inca and their Ancestors
Readings through May 2nd:

Required readings:

RE – chapters 3-5

IA – entire

suggested readings:

ACS – chap. 13

BAE – part two

AS – chap. 9

VIII. The Comparative Evolutionary Perspective: similarities or differences; A Consideration of the Nature of Ancient Agrarian States.

Readings through May 6th:

required readings:

UEC – Discussion, pp. 653-688

suggested readings:

ECOW – chap. 6

ESPE – section 6

"Economic Theory and Ancient Society" by Max Weber, part I in The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations (reprint)

3rd Quiz: May 6th