



Introduction and Evidence

Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #1

1

What is this course?

Civilizations of the Ancient World
HIS 246, cross-listed with LEH 354

Tuesdays and Thursdays
3:00 – 4:15 p.m. in Carman 209

markbwilson.com/courses/CC/CC_aw/



2

Who am I?

Mark Wilson
Adjunct Assistant Professor,
Dept. of History

- mark.wilson@lehman.cuny.edu
- Carman 292
- Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays,
5:00 to 5:45 p.m.



3

Four things today

- Civilization
- The syllabus
- Themes for the course
- Evidence

4

Civilization

5



6

Origins of civilization

- What do we need for civilization?
 - Agriculture (farming + pastoralism)
 - Not just subsistence farming but surplus production
 - Specialization of labor
 - Government
 - Religion
 - Long-distance trade
 - Metalworking
 - Writing

7



Civilization as a social revolution

- What do people sacrifice in adopting civilization?
- Why did people choose civilization?

8



civilization:

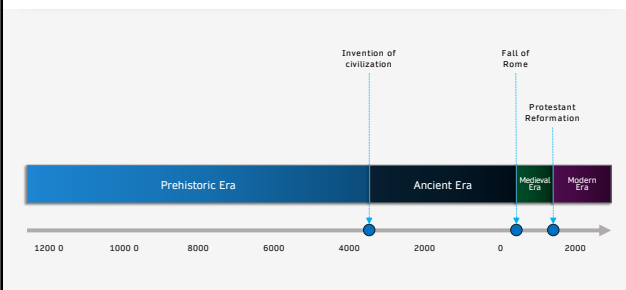
a social technology for the creation of stability and prosperity for the present and for posterity

9

The "ancient era"

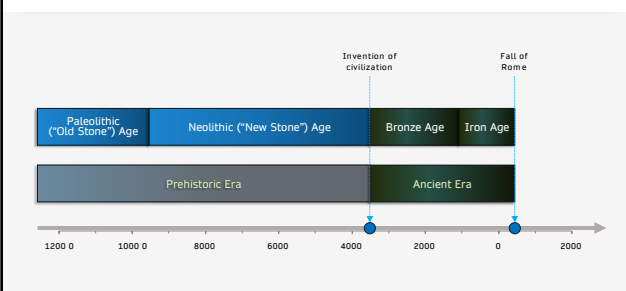
10

Eras of (Mediterranean) history

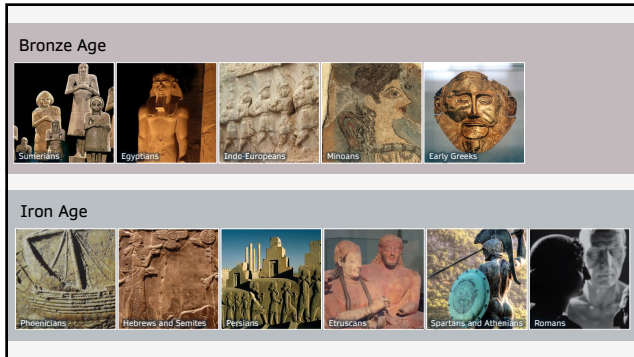


11

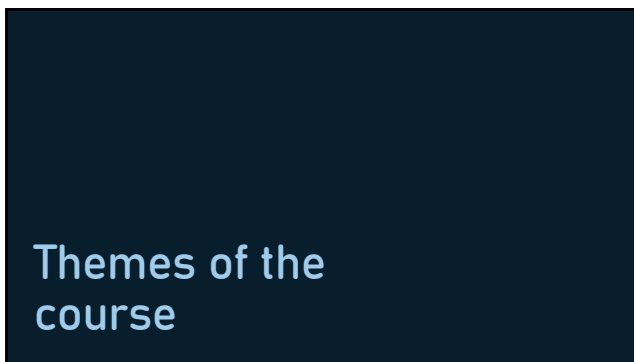
Ages of technology



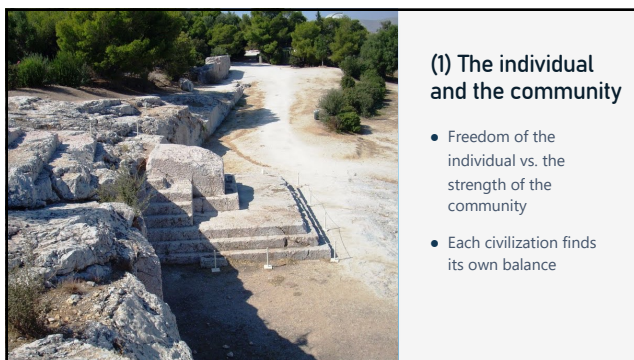
12



13



14



15



(2) The mortal and the divine

- Cultures envision the gods in different ways
- Stories and rituals tell us what the gods mean to each community
- Pagan gods represent local natural forces

16



(3) The male and the female

- The public and the private were each crucial to survival
- Men were responsible for the public/present, women the private/future
- Plays out differently in each community

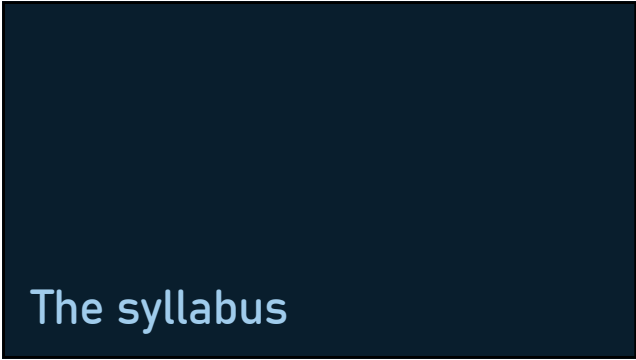
17



(4) City and empire

- Cities are strengthened by a strong central identity
- Empire is about control of distant resources
- Foreign rule conflicts with local identity

18



19

Books

The Textbook
Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations, 3d Edition
by Ralph W. Mathisen
Oxford U. Press, 2020. ISBN 9780190090945.

Gilgamesh
The Epic of Gilgamesh
trans. by Andrew R. George
London: Penguin, 2003. ISBN 9780140449198.

Clouds
Four Texts on Socrates, Revised Edition
ed. by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West
Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1998. ISBN 9780801485749.

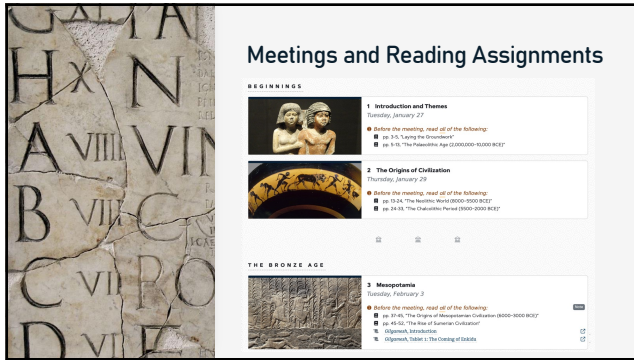
20

Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined from the following:

• Attendance, Responses, and Quizzes	20%
Each week there will be	
– attendance taken at class meetings,	5%
– a required online post in response to a source, and	5%
– a short, 5-minute in-class quiz.	10%
Quizzes are based on the assigned readings for that class meeting.	
Note: In-class quizzes take place at the start of our class meetings and are not made up, so it is important to arrive on time and prepared.	
• Interpretive Essays (3)	30%
– a 3-to-4 page essay on <i>Gilgamesh</i> (due March 9),	10%
– a 3-to-4 page essay on <i>Clouds</i> (due April 27), and	10%
– a 3-to-4 page essay on images of the ancient world (due May 18).	10%
• Exams	50%
– an in-class 75-minute midterm exam (March 17), and	20%
– an end-of-term in-class final exam (May 26).	30%

21



Meetings and Reading Assignments

BEGINNINGS

1. Introduction and Themes
Tuesday, January 27

- Before the meeting, read *all* of the following:
 - pp. 3-5, "Using the Coursebook"
 - pp. 9-10, "The Paleolithic Age (100,000-10,000 BCE)"

2. The Origins of Civilization
Thursday, January 29

- Before the meeting, read *all* of the following:
 - pp. 13-14, "The Neolithic Revolution (8000-5000 BCE)"
 - pp. 24-26, "The Chalcolithic Period (5000-3000 BCE)"

THE BRONZE AGE

3. Mesopotamia
Saturday, February 3

- Before the meeting, read *all* of the following:
 - pp. 37-38, "The Origins of Mesopotamian Civilization (4000-3000 BCE)"
 - pp. 45-52, "The Rise of Sumerian Civilization"
 - Epigraphic, Architecture
 - Epigraphic, Tablet 1: The Oath of Gudea

22



Approaching the course

- Come to class prepared
- Read critically
- Ask questions
- Take notes
- Discuss with each other
- Manage your time
- Use me as a resource

23



The course website
markbwilson.com/courses/CC/CC_aw/

24

Questions about whatever



25

website:
markbwilson.com

email:
mark.wilson@lehman.cuny.edu

26

Evidence

27



28



(1) Stories are passed on

- Written documents

29



(1) Stories are passed on

- Written documents
- Oral history

30



(2) Things survive

- Archaeology

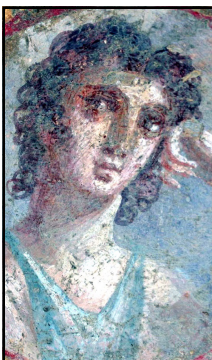
31



(2) Things survive

- Archaeology
- Material culture
 - tools, coins, household goods, etc.


32



(2) Things survive

- Archaeology
- Material culture
 - tools, coins, household goods, etc.
- Art

33



Example

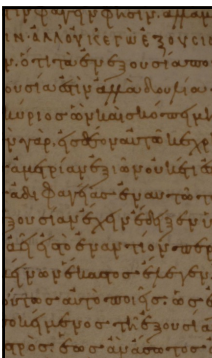
- *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
- Survives as 4000-year-old baked clay tablets
- Both the tablets and the contents are artifacts

34

Kinds of evidence

- Primary source
 - Eyewitness testimony from the place and time being studied
- Secondary source
 - A scholar collects and interprets primary sources on a subject
- Tertiary source
 - General scholarly consensus on a subject
 - Includes encyclopedias, textbooks, and almost everything on the web
 - NOT ALLOWED as a source for history papers

35

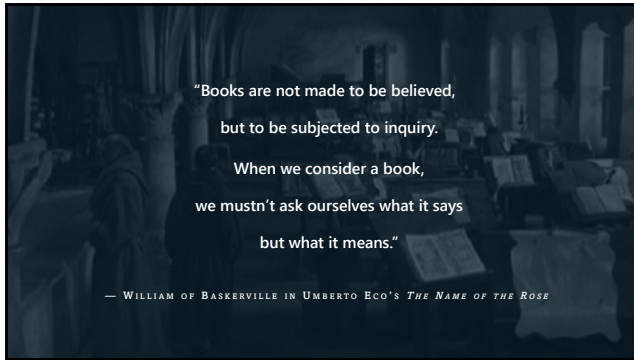


Problems with primary sources?

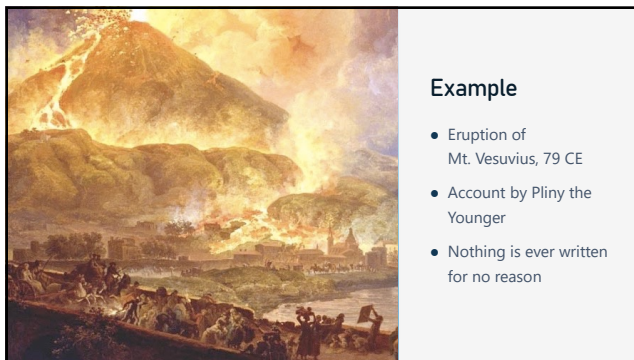
- Intentional bias
- Unintentional bias
- Point of view
- Survival
- Translation

CONCLUSION:
There are no facts in history

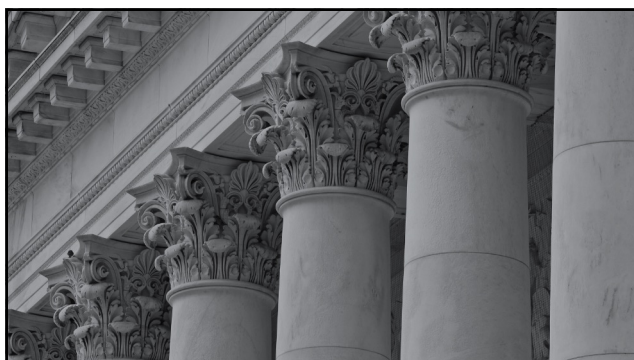
36



37



38



39
