



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

markwilson.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



What do we need for civilization?

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:

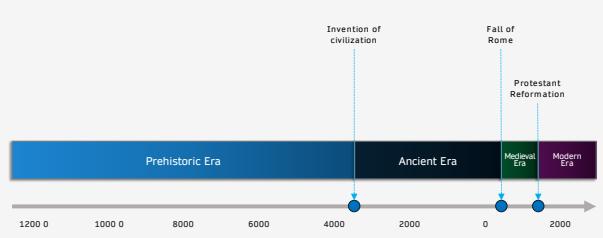
a social technology
for the creation of
stability and prosperity
for the present and for
posterity

9

The “ancient era”

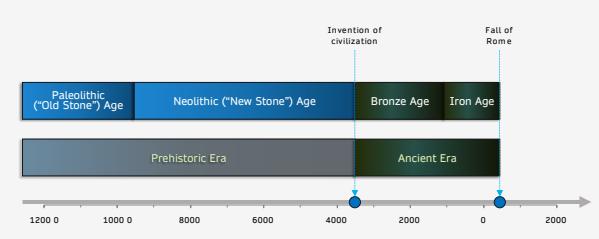
10

Eras of (Mediterranean) history



11

Ages of technology



12

Bronze Age

Iron Age

13

Themes of the course

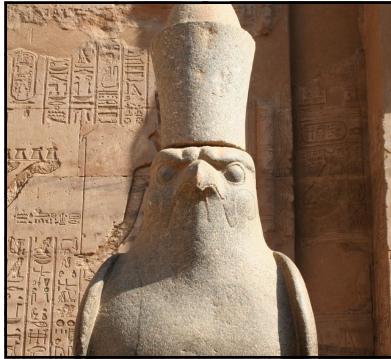
14

A photograph of the archaeological site of the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion, Greece. The image shows the remains of a large, multi-tiered stone structure, likely a portico or a series of steps, built into a rocky cliff face. The structure is made of large, light-colored stone blocks. In the background, there is a sandy area with some low-lying greenery and a clear blue sky. The overall scene is one of ancient architectural remains in a natural, coastal setting.

15

(1) The individual and the community

- Freedom of the individual vs. the strength of the community
- Each civilization finds its own balance



(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

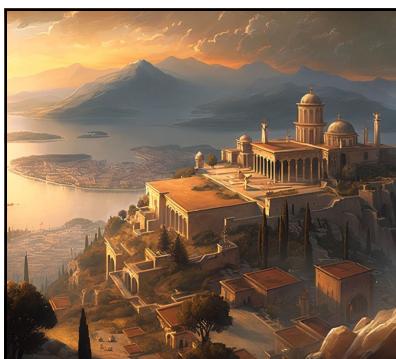
16



(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

The syllabus

19



Books

The Textbook
Ancient Mediterranean Civilizations, 3d Edition
 by Ralph W. Mathisen
 Oxford U. Press, 2020. ISBN 9780190080945.

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 C. West and Grace Starry West
 Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1998. ISBN 9780801485748.

20



Grading

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

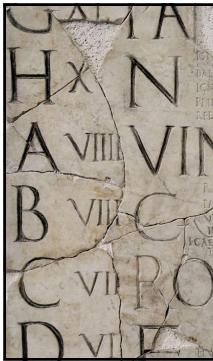
- **Attendance, Responses, and Quizzes** 20%

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 individual presentation, 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 *Gilgamesh* (due March 9), 10%
 - a 3-to-4 page essay on *Clouds* (due April 27), 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), 20%
 - an end-of-term in-class final exam (May 25), 30%

21



Meetings and Reading Assignments

BEGINNINGS	
	1 Introduction and Themes Tuesday, January 27 ● Before the meeting, read all of the following: ■ pg. 3-5, "Living in the Bronze Age" ■ pg. 4-6, "The Bronze Age (3000-800 BCE)"
	2 The Origins of Civilization Tuesday, January 29 ● Before the meeting, read all of the following: ■ pg. 13-24, "The Neolithic World (8000-3000 BCE)" ■ pg. 15-18, "The Bronze Age (3000-800 BCE)"
THE BRONZE AGE	
	3 Mesopotamia Tuesday, February 3 ● Before the meeting, read all of the following: ■ pg. 31-41, "The Origins of Mesopotamian Civilization (3000-1800 BCE)" ■ pg. 31-41, "The First Cities: Mesopotamian Civilization" ■ digraphs, introduction ■ digraphs, tables in the "Digraphs" table

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

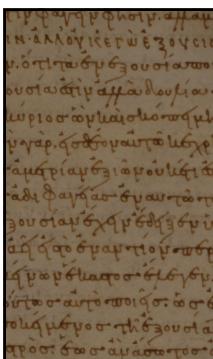
- *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
- Survives as 4000-year-old baked clay tablets
- Both the tablets and the contents are artifacts

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

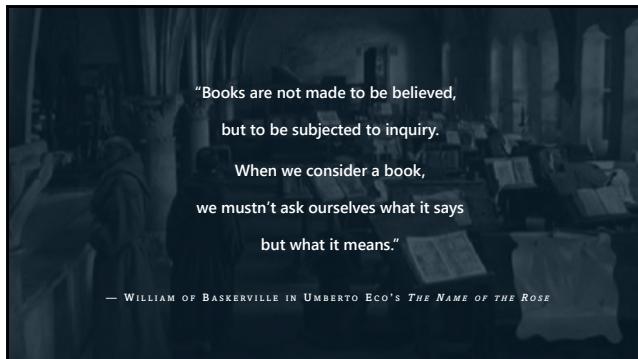


Problems with primary sources?

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

CONCLUSION:

36



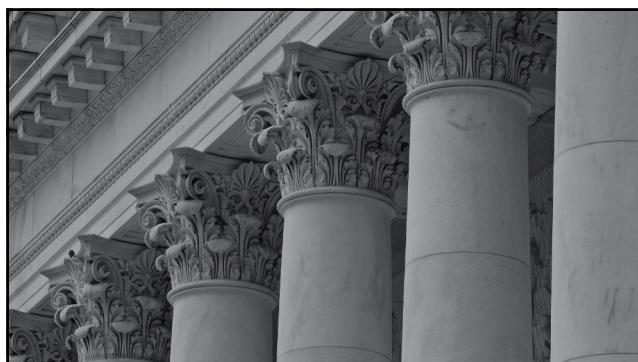
37



Example

- Eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, 79 CE
- Account by Pliny the Younger
- Nothing is ever written for no reason

38



39