



Introduction and Evidence

Civilizations of the Ancient World | Meeting #1

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, October 5
Gilgamesh Essay due
- Thursday, October 15
Midterm Exam
- Sunday, September 6
Responses for Week 1 Due

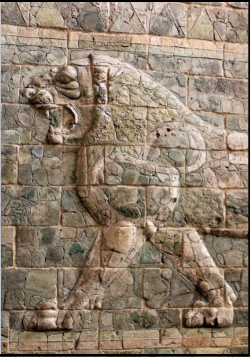
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What is this course?

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/



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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.



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Four things today

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

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Civilization

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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

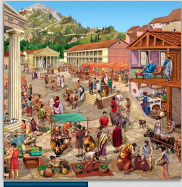
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Civilization as a social revolution

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

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civilization

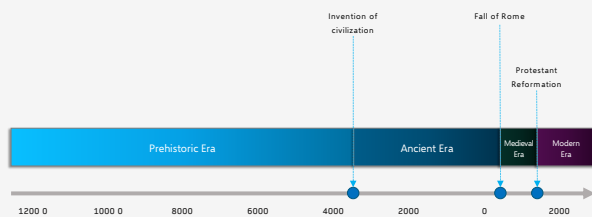
*a social technology for the
creation of stability and prosperity
for the present and for posterity*

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The “ancient era”

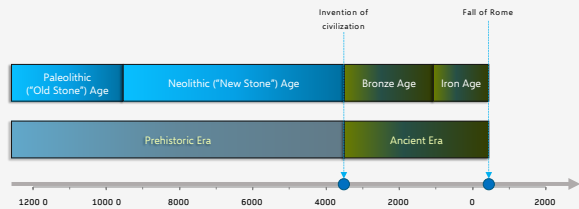
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Eras of (Mediterranean) history

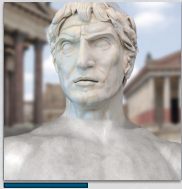


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Ages of technology



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ancient era

a historical period from ~3000 BCE to ~500 CE, characterized by experimentation with systems of community and empire

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Bronze Age



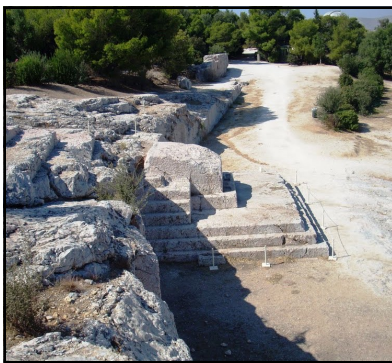
Iron Age



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Themes of the course

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(1) The individual and the community

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

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(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

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(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

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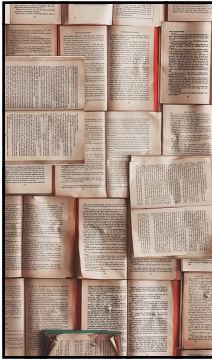
(4) City and empire

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

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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 G. West and Grace Starry West
Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1998. ISBN 9780801485749.

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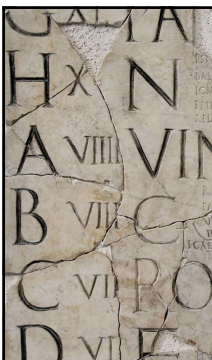


Grading

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 Gilgamesh,	10%
– a 3-to-4 page essay on Clouds, and	10%
– a 3-to-4 page essay on images of the ancient world.	10%
• Exams	50%
– an in-class 75-minute midterm exam, and	20%
– an end-of-term in-class final exam.	30%

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Meetings and Reading Assignments

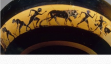
BEGINNINGS



1 Introduction and Themes
Tuesday, January 27

Before the meeting, read *all* of the following:

- pp 3-5, "Laying the Foundation"
- pp 9-10, "The Hellenistic Age (323/200-100/0 BC)"



2 The Origins of Civilization
Thursday, January 29

Before the meeting, read *all* of the following:

- pp 13-14, "The Mesopotamian Civilizations (3500-3000 BC)"
- pp 14-16, "The Chaldean Period (1800-500 BC)"

THE BRONZE AGE



3 Mesopotamia
Saturday, February 3

Before the meeting, read *all* of the following:

- pp 16-18, "The Origins of Mesopotamian Civilization (3500-3000 BC)"
- pp 45-52, "The Rise of Sumerian Civilization"
- Gilgamesh, Introduction
- Gilgamesh, Tablet 1: The Cloning of Eridu

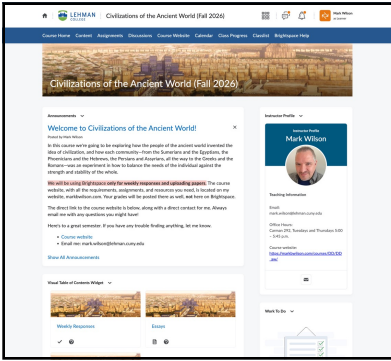
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Approaching the course

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

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Brightspace

- Weekly Responses
- Uploading essays

Everything else is on the course website

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The course website
markbwilson.com/courses/DD/DD_aw/

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Questions about whatever



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website:
markbwilson.com

email:
mark.wilson@lehman.cuny.edu

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Evidence



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(1) Stories are passed on

- Written documents

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(1) Stories are passed on

- Written documents
- Oral history

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(2) Things survive

- Archaeology

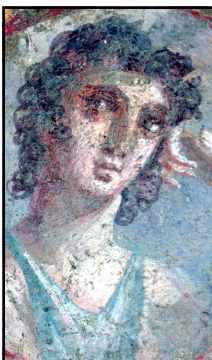
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(2) Things survive

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

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(2) Things survive

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

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Example

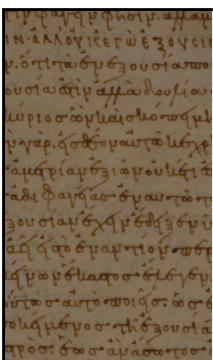
- The Epic of Gilgamesh
- Survives as 4000-year-old baked clay tablets
- Both the tablets and the contents are artifacts

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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

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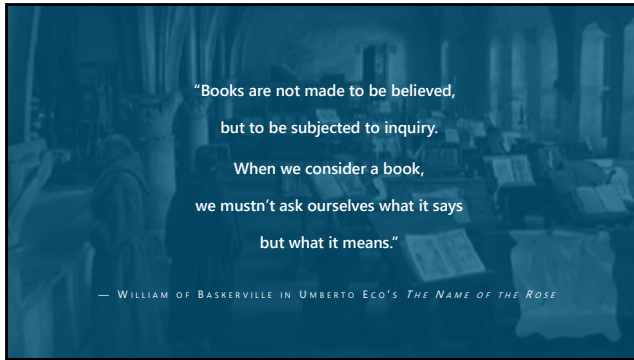
Problems with primary sources?

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

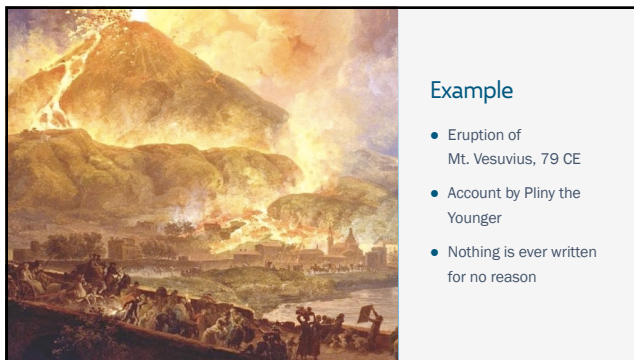
CONCLUSION:

There are no facts in history

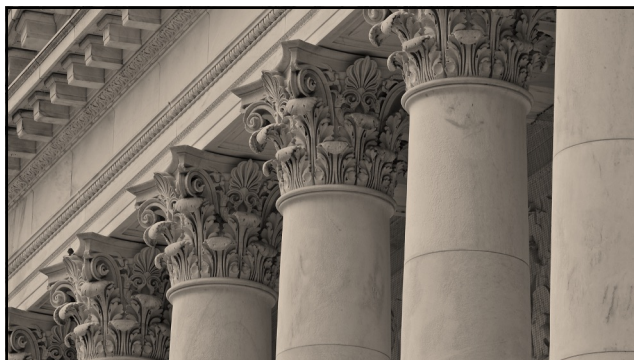
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