CH 201
Ancient and Medieval Cultures

Semester
Class Days and Times
Classroom

Instructor:
Office location:
Office hours:
CH Mailbox:
Phone:
E-mail:

Course Description and Core Objectives

This course surveys the cultures of the Near East, Greece, Rome, and the European Middle Ages. Students explore the roots of philosophy and science; learn about the cultural and historical origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and examine the interplay between ethics, law and religion. Core themes that are examined include concepts like the heroic code, justice and romantic love. We will be reading a wide variety of types of poetic, philosophical, theological and historical texts. As well as mining ideas about the cultures in which they were produced, we will also be studying these texts for their “literary value,” that is for what they can tell us about human nature.

This Core Humanities course satisfies Core Objective 5 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

**CO5. History and Culture:** Students will be able to describe the processes by which past and present societies have been created and perpetuated through their history, ideas, and cultural products. Students will engage both historical and contemporary cultural texts through critical reading, analysis, and interpretation in the context of culture, society, and individual identity.

In addition, CH 201 helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objectives 1 and 3. These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements:

**CO1. Effective Composition and Communication:** Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.
**CO3. Critical Analysis and Use of Information:** Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs):**

Students successfully completing CH 201 will be able to:

1. Express ideas clearly and persuasively, using relevant evidence to support their arguments. (CO1)
2. Analyze primary source texts with attention to content, historical and cultural context, and rhetorical techniques. (CO3, CO5)
3. Trace the sources and development of ancient and medieval traditions and cultural institutions, with attention to the diversity of experiences and voices that shaped them. (CO5)
4. Identify how arts, technologies, scientific knowledge, political ideologies, and religious beliefs contributed to ancient and medieval identities. (CO5)
5. Recognize ways in which ancient and medieval ideas provide the foundation for the modern world. (CO5)
6. Compare the ethical principles and notions of morality or justice in varying systems of belief, religions, and philosophies of ancient and medieval cultures. (CO5)

You may notice that the abbreviation SLO followed by a series of numbers appears on some course materials. This simply means that the lecture, discussion, assignment, or other activity offers opportunities for students to practice skills related to the learning outcomes listed above (e.g., “SLOs 1, 3” means the activity requires you to express ideas clearly and persuasively (SLO 1) and demonstrate familiarity with the cultural values and practices of the societies being studied in the course (SLO 3)).

**Required Textbooks**

Dante, *The Inferno* (translated by Mark Musa)
Sophocles, *Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus The King, Oedipus at Colonus,* (translated by Robert Fagles)
Homer, *The Iliad* (translated by Robert Fagles).
Plato, *The Republic* (translated by Allan Bloom)

**NOTE:** You will also be asked to print out several pdf articles and bring them to class throughout the semester. Links to the articles will be e-mailed in advance, but you must have PRINTED copies of these articles for class.
Assessment

Assessment will be based on how well students complete the following tasks:

Attendance and class participation 10 percent

Group work/Informal presentations 10 percent

Essays

Essay 1 (4–5 pages, due September 22) 15 percent
Essay 2 (4–5 pages, due October 29) 15 percent
Essay 3 (4–5 pages, due December 3) 15 percent

Exams

Midterm (October 22) 15 percent
Final (December 15) 20 percent

Participation is expected and can only help you and your classmates to get the most out of the course. During discussion you’ll have the opportunity to contribute, either by speaking up individually or during group work. For each worthwhile contribution made you will receive credit towards that day’s participation grade. A minimum of two contributions are needed per discussion session in order to receive all of the possible points. This ultimately accounts for 10% of your final course grade; if you find speaking up in class difficult please come and speak to me during office hours so that we can work on strategies to make you feel more comfortable or come up with other ways to handle your participation grade.

Group Work/Informal Presentations You will be asked to complete several group assignments throughout the semester, some of which will require you to present your work to the class.

Essays will consist of three 4–5 page papers, each one responding to a specific question and/or assignment. In each paper, students will be expected to refer to specific readings from the course. Guidelines for each paper will be handed out two weeks before the assignment is due.

Midterm/Final There will be a midterm and a final exam. These exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer and matching questions. You will be expected to have memorized certain key terms and concepts for the exams. Also, the exams will be designed to test how closely you’ve read the assigned texts.

Late Work will not be accepted.

Attendance: There are NO EXCUSED ABSENCES for this class. You may miss three classes without penalty. After that, each absence will result in a 3% deduction from your final grade. If you miss more than eight classes, you will fail the class, no questions asked.
Grading Criteria

Grading criteria for written work are set out below. Plus and minus grades will be used.

A– (90–94%), A (95–100%)
A is for work of exceptional quality. This grade is for essays that present a clear thesis supported by persuasive evidence and analysis, logically organized, and free from typing or grammatical errors. The A essay does more than just competently summarize material from the readings or lectures. It shows the student has thought things through on a deeper level and offers his or her own perspective on the topics under consideration.

B– (80–82%), B (83–86%), B+ (87–89%)
B denotes work that is above average in quality. It demonstrates that the student knows and understands the material covered in class, and that s/he is capable of synthesizing it into a competent essay. It is accurate, detailed, and well organized, with an introduction, a thesis, and a conclusion.

C– (70–72%), C (73–76%), C+ (77–79%)
C is given for work that is average. The student shows familiarity with the material and is mostly accurate, but the paper lacks detail or effective organization. The C essay might make general points but fail to support them with specific evidence, or it might be merely a collection of facts, with no coherent theme or thesis.

D– (60–62%), D (63–66%), D+ (67–69%)
D is given for work that is inadequate. It omits important points, contains more than a few inaccuracies, and is badly organized. It suggests that the student has not been paying much attention to the course or is having problems understanding the material.

F (less than 60%)
F is for work that is not acceptable. It demonstrates that the student has no idea what the course material is about, suggesting a lack of interest or effort and possibly some absences from class.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism (copying all or part of someone else’s work and passing it off as your own) is a serious form of academic misconduct and will not be tolerated in this class. The following definitions and possible courses of action are taken from the Academic Standards section of the university catalog:

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: Plagiarism: defined as submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one’s own; or assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one’s work to be used in this fashion. . . .

Sanctions for violations of university academic standards may include the following: (1) filing a final grade of “F”; (2) reducing the student’s final course grade one or two full grade
points; (3) awarding a failing mark on the test or paper in question; (4) requiring the student to retake the test or resubmit the paper.

**The sanction for academic dishonesty in this course is an F in the course.** All incidents of plagiarism or cheating are reported to the Office of Student Conduct and become part of the student's academic record.

**Disability Services**

The University of Nevada, Reno is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact the instructor or the Disability Resource Center (Pennington Student Achievement Center, Suite 230) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

**Academic Success Services**

Your student fees cover usage of the Math Center (784-4433 or www.unr.edu/mathcenter/), Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing_center/). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

**Audio and Video Recording**

Surreptitious or covert videotaping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

**Course Calendar**

**WEEK 1 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 6)**  
**AUGUST 25th:** THE ORIGINS OF CIVILIZATION

**AUGUST 27th:** LAW AND CULTURE  
Reading: Hammurabi, “The Law Code,” *Enduring Legacies*, 7-12

**WEEK 2 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)**  
**SEPTEMBER 1st:** MYTH AND FLOOD
Reading: “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” Enduring Legacies, 3-6

SEPTEMBER 3rd: GREEK CULTURE AND RELIGION
Reading: The Iliad, Books 1-8

WEEK 3 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
SEPTEMBER 8th: THE HERO’S JOURNEY
Reading: The Iliad, Books 9-16
Joseph Campbell, “The Hero’s Journey” (pdf)

SEPTEMBER 10th: GREEK VALUES
Reading: The Iliad, Books 17-24
Nicholas D. Smith, “Some Thoughts on the Origins of Greek Ethics” (pdf)

WEEK 4 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5)
SEPTEMBER 15th: THE POETICS AND THE ORIGINS OF GREEK DRAMA

SEPTEMBER 17th: IS ANTIGONE A FEMINIST?
Reading: Antigone, from Three Theban Plays
Selection from Judith Butler’s Antigone (pdf)

WEEK 5 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 6)
SEPTEMBER 22nd: OEDIPUS
Reading: Oedipus the King, from Three Theban Plays.
ESSAY # 1 DUE

SEPTEMBER 24th: HONOR AND THE GOOD CITIZEN
Reading: Plato, Crito (pdf)

WEEK 6 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
SEPTEMBER 29th: WHAT IS JUSTICE?
Reading: Plato, The Republic, Books I-III

OCTOBER 1st: UTOPIANISM AND THE JUST CITY
Reading: Plato, The Republic, Book IV

WEEK 7 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
OCTOBER 6th: THE DIVISION OF THE SOUL
Reading: Plato, The Republic, Books V-VII
John M. Cooper, “The Psychology of Justice in Plato” (pdf)

OCTOBER 8th: WHAT IS VIRTUE?
Reading: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book II (pdf)

**WEEK 8 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 6)**  
**OCTOBER 13th: SELF-LOVE AND HAPPINESS**  
Reading: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Books IX and X (pdf)

**OCTOBER 15th: ETHICS AND DEATH**  
Reading: *Excerpts from Epicurus and Lucretius* (pdf)  
ET Olson, “The Epicurian View of Death” (pdf)

**WEEK 9 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)**  
**OCTOBER 20th: THE WORLD OF ROME**  
Reading: Cattalus, Poems, *Enduring Legacies* 131-135  
Virgil, “The Aeneid” (selection), *Enduring Legacies* 138-153  

**OCTOBER 22nd: MIDTERM EXAM**

**WEEK 10 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)**  
**OCTOBER 27th: THE ORIGINS OF MONOTHEISM**  
Reading: Daniel Trimmer, “Is Monotheism Particularly Prone to Violence? An Historical Critique” (pdf)

**OCTOBER 29th: THE ETHICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**  
Reading: *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Genesis 1-26, Exodus 1-20  
**ESSAY # 2 DUE**

**WEEK 11 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**  
**NOVEMBER 3rd: THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
Reading: *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Mark (all), Luke 1-4

**NOVEMBER 5th: THE KORAN**  

**WEEK 12 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)**  
**NOVEMBER 10th: THE MONESTARY**  
The Name of the Rose (view on own)

**NOVEMBER 12th: THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF ST. AUGUSTINE**
St. Augustine, “City of God,” *Enduring Legacies*, 219-221

**WEEK 13 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)**

**NOVEMBER 17th: THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY**
Reading:  "The History of My Misfortunes," *Enduring Legacies*, 281-287
"Summa Theologica," *Enduring Legacies*, 373-376

**NOVEMBER 19th: BEOWULF**
Reading:  *Beowulf* (all)

**WEEK 14 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**

**NOVEMBER 24th: COURTLY LOVE**

**NOVEMBER 26th: SIN AND PUNISHMENT**
Reading:  Dante, *The Inferno*, Cantos 1, 4, 5, 18
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (pdf)

**WEEK 15 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)**

**DECEMBER 1st: DANTE’S HELL**
Reading:  Dante, *The Inferno*, Cantos 26-28, 33, 34

**DECEMBER 3rd: CHAUCER**
Reading:  Chaucer, “Pardoner’s Tale” (pdf)
Alison Gulley, "We Wol Sleen this False Traytor Deeth": The Search for Immortality in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale and J. K. Rowling's *The Deathly Hallows*” (pdf)

ESSAY # 3 DUE

**WEEK 16 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**

**DECEMBER 8th: REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM**

**DECEMBER 15th: FINAL EXAM**