

# Syllabus, Western Civilization 1

Rutgers University, Newark

## 1. Course and Instructor Information

- Semester:** Fall 2019  
**Time:** Tuesdays, 2:30pm to 5:20pm  
**Location:** Smith 241  
**Identifiers:** Unit 21, Subject 510, Course 201, Section 01  
**Credits/Hours:** 3  
**Instructor:** Ray Ojserkis, PhD  
**Contact:** ray.ojserkis@gmail.com  
**Office:** Conklin 326, Tuesdays 5:30pm to 6:00pm, and by appointment

## 2. Course Description

We will survey the evolution of selected civilizations from before the first written accounts until approximately 1700 C.E., emphasizing the development of cultures, religions, economies, empires, languages, and governments.

## 3. Goals

Our goals include

- A. basic knowledge of western history before 1700, especially its broad patterns
- B. familiarity with some common interpretations of western history before 1700
- C. ability to engage critically with others who often do not share the same interpretations of events
- D. familiarity with use of primary sources, especially the connections between the author's goals and his or her arguments and his or her method of argumentation
- E. improved skills in synthesizing and communicating historical information, and constructing sound arguments

## 4. Grading Policy

Your course grade will be determined by weighting the graded components as follows:

Unannounced Reading Quizzes	25%
Debate Notes	Cancels two lowest reading quiz grades.
Midterm Exam	25%
Final (non-cumulative) Exam	25%
Research Essay	25%

We will discuss, and sometimes read sections, of the readings in almost all classes.

Any student who misses four or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will have missed more than a quarter of the class time and will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw from the course to avoid an F.

If you are absent or tardy your score for an exam will be an F unless the absence is excusable.

According to the Rutgers catalog, "The recognized grounds for absence are illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid, recognized religious holidays, and severe inclement weather causing dangerous traveling conditions." Documentation will be required.

## 5. Course Materials

### A. Lecture Handouts (We review these in class.)

For each topic listed in the course schedule there will be a handout in the "Course Documents" section of our Blackboard course. Each handout will have a list of key arguments and terms that we'll discuss. Many also have maps, tables, contemporary newspaper cartoons, and/or primary source readings in addition to those assigned in the links in the schedule.

The handouts are in MS Word, and some students open electronic versions in class and take notes directly in their own copies of the handouts.

### B. Primary Source Documents (You read these at home.)

You will access these through links on the schedule below.

Primary sources are first-hand accounts, often created by participants or witnesses of events, and sometimes created by first-recorders of events. Examples include, but aren't limited to, memoirs, speeches, documents, data, polls, and contemporary newspaper accounts. Secondary sources are sources created by people who didn't participate or witness events, but often have the benefit of perspective, and typically draw from a variety of sources to create a nuanced and complex history that can account for multiple interpretations. Examples include history books and lectures.

We'll try to balance the lectures by reading primary sources in our out-of-class reading.

## 6. Research Essay

You will answer **one** of the following questions:

1. Was the adoption of agriculture mostly beneficial to humans?
2. What were the major contributions of Sumerian civilization?
3. To what extent did Greek civilization grow from civilizations in the Middle East?
4. Why were the Greeks able to defeat two major Persian invasions during the years 492 BCE to 479 BCE?
5. What were the core ideas of the Sophists in classical Greece?
6. To what extent was Polybius correct in his assessment of why the Romans defeated the Carthaginians? Were there important factors that he did not include in his analysis?
7. Should we regard Cicero's contributions to Roman politics as generally positive?
8. What were the successes and failures of Queen Boudicca's revolt against Roman forces?
9. Who was more important for the development and spread of Christianity: Paul or Constantine?
10. Why were some Germanic groups able to defeat the Western Roman Empire in warfare?
11. Why did serfdom become common in Latin Christendom?
12. Why did the church in Rome and the church in Constantinople excommunicate each other in 1054 CE?
13. What were the causes and effects of the Baltic Crusades?
14. What were the causes and effects of the medieval focus on punishing "witchcraft?"
15. Why is William of Ockham famous?
16. To what extent was the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381 inevitable?
17. What effect did gunpowder have on European wars and politics from 1250 to 1400 CE?
18. What were the effects of Vasco Da Gama's journey to India?
19. To what extent did the church in Rome reform itself during the "Catholic Reformation?"
20. How revolutionary was the Scientific Revolution?

Write your essays using MS Word, and email them to me at the address above. I will not accept printed copies of your essay.

I will submit the essay to plagiarism software. If you're not sure what plagiarism is, consider this: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism>. Cite a source every time your essay makes use of an idea, quote, anecdote, study, or fact that you found in someone's work.

I call the essay a "research essay" to emphasize that the quality of your essay is largely dependent upon the quality of your research. Use at least four scholarly articles or published books. The phrase "at least" means you are allowed and encouraged to use more than four sources. The length of the essay should be 1,500 to 2,500 words.

Cite your sources wherever you rely on them, using footnotes, parenthetical notes or end notes. Be very specific when citing a source, using either the Chicago, APA, or MLA format throughout. For details, please consult the [Rutgers Library Guide](#). Cite a source every time you make use of someone's ideas.

## **7. Drop and Withdrawal Deadlines**

The last date for students to drop a course with no penalty is September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and the last date to withdraw from a course with a "W" grade is November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## **8. Academic Integrity and Honor Pledge**

On each examination, and on your research essay, you will be required to sign the following statement:

On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).

## **9. Information for Students with Disabilities**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. For more information, please contact the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219, by phone at [973-353-5375](tel:973-353-5375) or by email at [odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu)

## **10. Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance**

Rutgers faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. Rutgers has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The University strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the University. Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and

harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with a staff member who is confidential and does not have this reporting responsibility, you may contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at (973)-353-1918, or at [run.vpva@rutgers.edu](mailto:run.vpva@rutgers.edu). Learn more about the office here: <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/vpva>

## **11. The Writing Center**

The Writing Center (<http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>), located in Room 126 of Conklin Hall, offers writing tutoring and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers-Newark campus. Their tutors work to help students become more independent readers and writers capable of responding well to the demands of writing within the university. Writing Center services are free for students.

## 12. Schedule

WEEK	DATES	TOPIC	ASSIGNED READING
1	Sep 3	Humans Before Written History	<i>n/a</i>
2	Sep 10	Neolithic Revolution	<a href="#">Patricia Cohen, <i>History That's Written in Beads as Well as Words</i>, NYT, 2011</a> <a href="#">Jared Diamond, <i>The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race</i>, Discover, 1987</a> <i>(Because humans weren't writing yet, our written accounts this week are secondary sources.)</i>
3	Sep 17	Mesopotamia and Hebrews	<a href="#">Advice of Akkadian Father to His Son</a> <a href="#">Hammurabi's Code</a> <i>(Read for concepts. Don't try to memorize.)</i> <a href="#">Abraham Seeks to Convert Terah</a> <a href="#">Wikipedia article containing tale of Abraham &amp; Idol Shop</a>
4	Sep 24	Classical Greece	<a href="#">Herodotus, <i>The Histories</i>, excerpt on Solon and Croesus, 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE</a> <a href="#">The Polity of the Athenians, c. 424 BCE</a> <a href="#">Plato, <i>Crito</i>, excerpt</a>
5	Oct 1	Rome: from Republic to Empire	<a href="#">Tacitus, <i>The End of the Republic</i></a> <a href="#">Flavius Josephus, excerpt on Roman armies from <i>The Jewish War</i>, written first century CE</a> <a href="#">Appian, <i>On The Civil Wars</i>, excerpt: <i>The Gracchi</i></a> <i>(The Appian reading is the longest and most difficult. Allow sufficient time.)</i>
6	Oct 8	Rome: Society, Fall, Rise of Christianity	<a href="#">Laws of the Twelve Tables</a> <a href="#">Tacitus, <i>Germania</i></a> <i>(Read the lengthy laws of the twelve tables as you read Hammurabi's code – for the main concepts, not to memorize laws.)</i>
7	Oct 15	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<i>n/a</i>
8	Oct 22	Medieval Europe	<a href="#">Boniface VIII, <i>Clericis Laicos</i>, 1296</a> <a href="#">de Vitry, <i>Life of the Students at Paris</i></a> <a href="#">Anonimale Chronicle: English Peasants' Revolt, 1381</a>
9	Oct 29	Renaissance <i>(Also, pick debate topics.)</i>	<a href="#">Leon Battista Alberti, <i>On Painting</i>, 1435</a> <a href="#">Vasari, <i>Life of Leonardo Da Vinci</i>, 1550</a> <i>Also, come to class with a suggested debate topic.</i>
10	Nov 5	Oceanic Voyages, Mercantilism, and Global Empires	<a href="#">King Ferdinand's letter to the Tainos, written in 1490s</a> <a href="#">Journal and letters for 1497-99 da Gama voyage</a> <a href="#">Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Chapter 2</a> <a href="#">R. Hakluyt, <i>Discourse on Western Planting</i>, 1584</a>
11	Nov 12	<b>Debates, Part 1</b>	Email your notes by midnight after the debate the day you are debating. The notes must have citations – a list of sources does not constitute citations. Use footnotes each time you make use of an idea or fact that you read.

12	Nov 19	<b>Debates, Part 2</b>	Email your notes by midnight after the debate the day you are debating. The notes must have citations – a list of sources does not constitute citations. Use footnotes each time you make use of an idea or fact that you read.
	Nov 26	<b>Rutgers classes are on a Thursday schedule today.</b>	<i>n/a</i>
13	Dec 3	Reformation and Counter-Reformation	<a href="#">J. Hus, <i>Final Declaration</i>, 1415</a> <a href="#">J. Calvin, <i>Necessity of Reforming the Church</i>, Excerpt: <i>Reformation Required Without Delay</i>, 1543</a> <a href="#">Peace of Westphalia, Excerpts, 1648</a>
14	Dec 10	Scientific Revolution	<a href="#">N. Copernicus, <i>Dedication of the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies</i>, 1543</a> <a href="#">K. Popper, <i>Science As Falsification</i>, 1963</a> ( <i>This is a hard reading. Take your time.</i> )
	Dec 11	<b>Research Essay Due</b> No class: email your essay	<a href="#">Wikipedia, <i>Plagiarism</i></a> <a href="#">Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy</a>
	Dec 17	<b>Final Exam</b> (@ 11:45am in regular classroom)	<i>n/a</i>