

Ancient World Religion and Philosophy

Fall 2018

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Office hours:

Tuesday

And By Appointment – Email me!

Course Description

This course examines some of the most powerful and longstanding issues in global history by focusing on religion and philosophy of the ancient world. We will begin in ancient Mesopotamia with the Epic of Gilgamesh but spend most of our time in the ancient Mediterranean/Middle East and China. Perhaps unsurprisingly, great thinkers from the earliest traditions of Confucianism, Greek paganism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism were concerned with questions that still vex us today. How should we set up our government? How do we know anything at all about the physical world at all, given that our eyes and minds can sometimes deceive us? What is the divine, and what is our relationship to it? Why do our passions (anger, desire, jealousy) get so very inflamed, and what should we do about it? To whom are we responsible?

Course Objectives

- To **analyze and compare religious and philosophical traditions** of the ancient world around several carefully chosen themes.
- To improve **writing** skills
- To investigate the **continued relevance** of ancient ideas in our own lives, especially ideas on democracy, proper government, science, ethics, divinity, the creation and destruction of the world, and the management of our passionate inner selves.

Grades

Biography Presentation/Write up	10%
Class participation	15%
Creation/Apocalypse Poster	10%
Quizzes	10%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	15%
Final Paper	20%
Final Paper Presentation	10%

Texts

Gilgamesh

Hesiod, *Theogony*

Bhagavad Gita

All other readings will be found on Moodle in PDF

Course Schedule

Unit 1 – Gods, Creation, and Apocalypse

Who are the gods? How did they create the world, and how will they end it? What is the nature of the universe, of the divine, and of humanity? In this unit, we will read about how ancient polytheistic and monotheistic religions thought the divine manifested in the world. We will read ancient accounts of many gods in Hesiod's *Theogony* and Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, accounts of the Garden of Eden and the end times from the Old and New Testaments, and one of the very oldest texts available on these topics, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, written almost 5000 years ago.

Project – Poster on creation/apoc myth: Choose a creation OR apocalypse myth from any ancient religion. Create a poster detailing this myth for display on Parents' Day.

Paper – 3-4 pages: Choose one of two prompts on creation/apocalypse or the nature of the divine. Use: Gilgamesh, Hesiod, Ovid, the Old and New Testaments.

Unit 2 – The Origins and Management of Passion

The emotions of humans and gods rage often out of control, and much of ancient religion and philosophy (and indeed modern religion and philosophy) works to define these passions and instruct us on how to manage them. The question of how we ought to act and feel in the world is a major theme of this unit's readings.

Paper – Controlling Passions, 4-5 pages: This paper will compare four of our six religious or philosophical traditions on the **definition** of "passions" and their advice on how to **manage** them.

Unit 3 – How to Govern the People

We live in a democracy in America today, but we certainly aren't the first to do so. Exercise your political mind with Plato, Aristotle, and Confucius as we think hard about what a democracy is, and who ought to be in charge of it. What qualities should a leader have? What should our relationship to the state be like?

Short in-class writing will be given on politics, in order to leave room for the final paper.

Final Paper 7-8 pages– Independent research combines with work we have already done in class to create a new perspective on one of our three topics.

Final Presentation – On your final paper.

Rules and Expectations

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, as per the Student Handbook. If you are not in class to answer when I call your name for attendance, I will mark you absent. Students who appear between attendance being taken and the five-minute mark in class will be remarked tardy, but make sure you remind me.

No Internet Sources in Paper Writing Unless They Have Been Pre-Approved Two Weeks Before the Paper is Due

Is she serious? Dead serious. We will be spending rather a large chunk of time in the library for this class. You will have plenty of time to order interlibrary loan books for your paper and ample opportunity to check out online databases. There will be books placed on reserve for this class. You will work with the others doing your topic to trade books. You can visit with Ms. James-Jenkin in the library, who can help you to find resources.

There is nothing more detrimental to learning the process of research at the moment than the internet itself. It's a wonderful resource to use **after** you have already learned how to research and can evaluate what you find there. So, in these early stages, we will use books instead.

For each unapproved internet source that appears in your paper, you will lose five points on the final grade of that paper.

No Technology

Nothing with a screen shall the instructor find in the hand of a student, except on Library Days. Clicking is the enemy of cogitation, and we'll have none of it.

Bring paper, pens, and printed readings. You may share a single copy among a table if you like. If bringing printed readings is burdensome, take excellent notes and bring those.

No earphones, no phones, no laptops. I will stand for a tablet with the readings on display, but I should be able to see the screen at all times (ie, keep it flat on your desk).

Note Taking

Take notes on lectures and anything your instructor writes on the board during discussions. You will use these notes again in your final paper, and in your in-class writings and quizzes, so they are incredibly important to you. Not taking notes can break your grade. **Bring your notes to class every day.**

Make-up work and Extensions

No make ups, no rewrites, no extra credit, no extensions, unless you have an excused absence or are taking an exam. I do not make exceptions for this rule. Own your mistakes and do better next time.

Late papers will lose a be penalized a half grade per day for up to four days (96 hours from the exact time of the cut off, to be exact). After four days late work will not be accepted.

Turning in Assignments

Turn in papers through Turnitin. You **MUST** receive a receipt from turnitin.com and confirm that your assignment was turned in. If you are unsure, mail it before the deadline to my inbox. This year, I will have no patience for claims that turnitin didn't work, and the late papers will be subject to the late paper policy above.

In order to pass the class, you must turn in all assignments unless an exception has been worked out with the instructor. This sort of exception only occurs in the usual circumstances having to do with illness or excused absences.

Participation

Your grades have a large participation component. Your instructor expects you to come to class -

- 1- Having **done your homework**
- 2- Ready to **discuss** the readings
- 3- Ready to **participate** in class activities
- 4- Ready to actively **take notes** on lectures
- 5- Ready to execute **in-class writings** (bring paper, pens, ALL CLASS NOTES and readings)

Academic Integrity

All of the work you turn in for this course should be your own. Do NOT plagiarize.

Plagiarism defined:

“You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else’s words or ideas but fail to credit that person. . . . You plagiarize even when you do credit the source but use its exact words without using quotation marks or block indentation. . . .You [also] plagiarize when you paraphrase a source so closely that anyone putting your work next to it would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow.”¹

Claiming as your own the work of others, in whole or in part, will result in **referral for disciplinary action**, which can include **dismissal from IMSA**. See the IMSA Student Handbook for specific details and be sure to refer to the Chicago Style Guide for IMSA Students (<http://staff.imsa.edu/socsci/chicagostyle/>).

Basic Requirements for Assignments

For papers

- 1” margins, 12pt Times New Roman
- Double-spaced
- .doc or .docx (MS word, avoid Google Docs)
- Bibliography, along with endnotes or footnotes. Use abbreviations like “Hesiod, 77” for every citation after the first.
- Will include an introduction and conclusion
- USES APPROPRIATE TOPIC SENTENCES

For Presentations

- Speak clearly in full sentences
- Avoid filler words, like “um”
- Chin up (keep your head out of your notes)
- Attempt eye contact with audience, don’t look at your own powerpoint
- Vary your intonation

For In-class Writings

- Follow instructions
- Must **be legible, or the assignment will not be graded.**

¹ Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams in their book *The Craft of Research*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)