

# Ancient World Religion and Philosophy

## Fall 2018

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**Office:** History Department

**Office hours:** I teach 3, 7, 8, and so am usually in my office otherwise. Email me for appointments, or stop by.

### 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	15%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	15%
Final Paper	20%
Final Paper Presentation	5%

## 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:** See moodle for details.

**Paper - Apoc/Creation or Nature of Divine 3-4p:** Choose one of two prompts on creation/apocalypse or the nature of the divine.

### **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 government should do, and who ought to be in charge of it. What qualities should a leader have? What should our relationship to the state be like?

**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 –** See Moodle for details.

# **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 re-marked tardy, but make sure you remind me to change it to a tardy, or we will all be sorry later.

## **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 papers and presentations, so they are incredibly important to you. Last session's material may appear in quizzes. 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 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. 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

## 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.”<sup>1</sup>

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/>).

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<sup>1</sup> 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)

## **Basic Requirements for Assignments**

### **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
- Know that I grade on individual, not group performance. Divide the work so that you do not overlap. If there is trouble with one group member not being willing to commit to stay away from your material, come talk to me.

### **For Papers**

#### **Paragraphs:**

Paragraphs should not be two sentences; neither should they carry on for two pages. Write a concise topic sentence and provide sufficient evidence in the body of the paragraph to prove the “mini-argument” that the topic sentence provides. If a paragraph is too long, then rest assured that your topic sentence is either too vague or trying to do too much. Rewrite it.

#### **Margins:**

These should be set at a consistent 1-inch for ALL four borders. Nothing more, nothing less. Use .doc or .docx format, and keep out of Google docs, which will reformat your paper into a mess. Add your name and the date. Font should be 12pt. Finally, the papers will be double-spaced, unless otherwise requested.

#### **Editing:**

The key to avoiding the above errors is to **PROOFREAD** your papers as closely as possible. This injunction implies that you must write the paper early and either reread it yourself or have someone else do it (both are best). Try reading the paper out-loud from finish to start, sentence by sentence, and the silly grammar issues or hazy word choices will jump out at you immediately. Editing and proofreading is critical to successful papers. **I have little tolerance for spelling and grammar errors, especially when they make a paper unreadable.**

### **Style Requirements**

- **Use appropriate topic sentences, as per class instruction.** Failure to write decent topic sentences will result in grade reductions.
- **Do not speculate. Use evidence.** And then cite it.
- **No cover page required.** Just name, date, title will be fine.

- **Always follow “this” with a noun**, or better yet, don’t use it at all. “This” is a way of making a sentence passive without technically writing in the passive voice. What “this” refers to is usually unclear, both in print and in the mind of the writer.... and therefore the reader becomes confused. Commit to clarity!
- **Limit passive voice.**
  - **Acceptable forms – the “long” passive where the agent is clear**
    - “I was hit by the ball”
    - “The town was destroyed by Mongols.”
    - “The Chinese people are portrayed as triumphant in literature.”
  - **Unacceptable forms – the “short” passive, where the agent is not clear.**
    - “There was an idea that Communism was bad.”
    - “It is known that birds are real.”
    - “It was believed that the smoke caused cancer.”
    - “It was demonstrated the he was lying.”
- **Eliminate “very,” “extremely,” “important,” and “interesting” from your vocabulary.** Don’t tell us stuff is “interesting.” Make us interested.
- **No declarations about “humanity doing x since the beginning of time” or “throughout history.”** History is about people in places doing things. Tell us specifically about those people, places, and things.

### **Citation:**

Use Chicago style. You must have page numbers for each citation. Citation should be single spaced and be in 10pt font. Use footnotes.

### **Example of appropriate repeated citation**

**First citation:** Wille, Sheila. *The uses and abuses of acronyms: a journey into the intentionality of incomprehensibility*. Aurora: IMSA Press, 2017. pp. 34-5

**Subsequent citations:** Wille, *Acronyms*. p. 78. OR Ibid, p. 78.