

**Jonathan Dewald**  
**UGC 111R**  
**World Civilization I**  
**Fall, 2005**

**555 Park Hall**  
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This course examines a handful of societies, spread across the globe, as they developed between about 700 BCE and about 1400. Covering more than 2,000 years, the course is necessarily selective; it examines moments in these societies' development, rather than attempting a complete overview of them. We will approach these societies primarily through studying their literatures, and we'll focus on a series of basic issues that they all confronted: the nature of ethical choice, the relations between individual and society, the role of the supernatural in human affairs, the experience of violence. Each of the societies that we'll study had to deal with these problems, but each solved them in distinctive ways.

The course will give close attention to eight major works, all of them to be purchased in the bookstore. On the other hand, there will be no textbook in the course. Basic information and background to the assigned readings will be presented in lectures. Regular attendance at both lectures and discussion sections will thus be necessary for passing the course. There will be two mid-term examinations and a final examination, each counting for about one-fourth of the total course grade; students will also write two one-page papers on the assigned readings, which together with contributions in section will count for the remaining one-fourth of the total grade.

### **Topics and Assignments**

August 30: Introduction: approaching world civilizations

#### **Part 1: Three Ancient Societies**

September 1-8: Indian society and the problem of individual action

Assigned: The Bhagavad Gita, trans. Juan Mascaró, pp. 3-86 (note: some editions have different pagination; the assignment is to read the BG itself, skipping the introduction)

September 13-15: Chinese society and the ideal of governance

Assigned: Confucius, The Analects, trans. D. C. Lau, pp. 59-66, 101-152

September 20-22: Greek society

Assigned: Homer, The Iliad, trans. Richmond Lattimore, pp. 59-127 (if you have a different edition: the assignment covers Books I-IV. Lattimore's translation includes a glossary, which you may find helpful for sorting out the names of characters and places)

September 27-29: The city state and Greek culture

Assigned: Homer, The Iliad, pp. 330-391, 435-449, 475-496 (Books XVI-XVIII, XXII,

XXIV)

October 4: No class meeting

October 6: **First mid-term examination**

### **Part 2: The Mediterranean World**

October 11-13: The Roman Empire: establishment, functioning, impact

Assigned: Augustine, Confessions, trans. F. J. Sheed, pp. 3-39, 51-62

October 18-20: The rise of Christianity and the collapse of Rome

Assigned: Augustine, Confessions, pp. 76-83, 87-104, 136-147

October 25-27: The rise of Islam

Assigned: The Koran, trans. N. J. Dawood, pp. 11-42, 60-92, 350-380

November 1: **Second mid-term examination**

### **Part 3: Asia during the Medieval Period**

November 3: Medieval China

November 8-10: Medieval Japan

Assigned: Lady Murasaki Shikibu, The Tale of Genji, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker, pp. 1-27, 65-106

November 12-14: The problem of selfhood in Japanese culture: reading The Tale of Genji

Assigned: Murasaki, The Tale of Genji, pp. 146-185, 236-278

### **Part 4: Medieval Europe**

November 22: Western Europe in the early Middle Ages

Assigned: The Song of Roland, trans. W. S. Merwin, pp. 3-119 (the text includes a glossary of names)

November 24: Thanksgiving holiday

November 29-December 6: The later Middle Ages: preserving the sacred in an urban world

Assigned: Dante, The Inferno, trans. Mark Musa, pp. 67-71, 79-83, 89-93, 97-102, 109-113, 305-309, 315-319, 362-366, 379-383 (cantos I-V, XXVI-XXVII, XXXII, XXXIV)

December 8: Conclusions: the distant past and the global present