

# Western Civilization

([www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/westernciv](http://www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/westernciv))

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## Course Description

This course presents an overview of Western civilization, examining events and changes in Western heritage from the point of view of those undergoing them. An underlying theme of the course is the importance of history in shaping the way people see the world today, including students in this class. Everyone has an “historical consciousness,” an understanding of the way the world became what it is today, and the purpose of this course is to introduce students to alternative ways of interpreting history by weighing the merits of differing points of view.

The course is divided into three sections: the Ancient World; the Middle Ages; and the Early Modern Period. We will approach the subject material from several perspectives, including political, social, economic, and cultural, with a number of themes in mind: civilization and barbarism; war and peace; freedom and slavery; religion and ideology; family/gender; and class.

## Course Goals:

- Students will learn that history is not just the memorization of dates and facts, but rather the *interpretation* of the past
- Students will take from the class the skills to critically appraise varying historical arguments and to clearly express their own interpretations
- Students will experience “hands-on” work with primary source material throughout the course and will gain insight on how to interpret history through such sources
- Students will acquire a knowledge of key terms, facts, and events in the early history of the West and thereby gain an informed historical perspective
- Students will gain an understanding of the main principles and values—both the good and the bad—upon which “Western Civilization” is based

## Readings:

- *Giovanni and Lusanna*, Gene Buckner (University of California Press, 1986)
- Optional Text: *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History* by Margaret King
- Online documents and articles identified below

**Course Web Page:** The course web page is at [www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/westernciv](http://www.uncg.edu/~jwjones/westernciv)

The page has course readings, summaries of the notes, links to Internet Resources, and other features relevant to the course.

## Course Activities:

Participation	35%
1 <sup>st</sup> Midterm	15%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Midterm	20%
Final Exam	30%

**Participation:** The 35% participation grade consists of worksheets, quizzes, and Reaction Pieces (1-2 pages double-spaced) to the readings designated below. These are intended to be your reaction to or opinion of the readings, not a summary.

**Exams:** There are two midterms (worth 15% and 20%) and a final (worth 30%). The exams consist of True-False, Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Blank, and Short Answer Questions from the readings as well as Slide IDs. The three exams cover *only* the part of the course for which they are designated (1<sup>st</sup>: Ancient World; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Middle Ages; 3<sup>rd</sup>: Early Modern), so they are *not cumulative*. However, the final exam includes a comprehensive Take Home Essay (worth 10% of the overall grade) that draws on broader issues and themes dealt with over the entire semester.

**Grading:** Grades will be compiled on a point system (**you can keep up with your grades on Blackboard**). For example, if you make a 80 on the 1<sup>st</sup> midterm (12/15) + an 85 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> midterm (17/20) + a total of (32.5/35) on participation + 88 on the final exam (17.6/20) + 90 on the Final Exam Essay (9/10) your final grade = **88** or **B+**

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday, August 14. Introduction: What is “Western Civilization?”

### Part I: The Ancient World

- Reading for August 16: “A Sense of History: Some Components,” by Gerald Schlabach; “Why Study History Through Primary Sources?”

Wednesday, August 16. Primitive Human Societies

- Reading for August 21: “Hammurabi’s Law Code”; assignment due in class

Monday, August 21. The Rise of Civilization & Discussion of Hammurabi’s Law Code

- Reading for August 23: Excerpts from “The Old Testament”

Wednesday, August 23. The Origins of Monotheism: Hebrew Culture & Early History

- Reading for August 28: “The Roots of War” by Thomas Powers; **Worksheet 1** due in class

Monday, August 28. The Origins of War

- Reading for August 30: “The Polity of the Athenians”

Wednesday, August 30. The Greek City States: Sparta & Athens

- Reading for September 6: “Women in Greek Society,” “Euphiletus: A Husband Speaks in His Own Defense,” & “Lysistrata”; **\*\*Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) due in class

Wednesday, September 6. The Classical Era: Women & Sexuality in Greek Society

- Reading for September 11: “Selections on Alexander the Great”; “From the Classical to the Hellenistic World, c. 400-30 BCE”; and “Runaway Slaves in Alexandria: Reward Offered!”

Monday, September 11. The Hellenistic World: Phillip of Macedon & Alexander the Great

- Reading for September 13: Roman Legends

Wednesday, September 13. The Rise of Rome

Monday, September 18. The Rise of Rome (cont'd)

- Reading for September 20: Graffiti on the walls of Pompeii; “A Strike by the Women of Rome” & “Slavery in the Ancient World”; **Worksheet 2** due in class
- Wednesday, September 20. The Roman Empire: the Roles of Women and Slaves

Monday, September 25. **1<sup>st</sup> MIDTERM EXAM**

### **Part II: The Middle Ages**

- Reading for September 27: “Perpetua’s Diary”
- Wednesday, September 27. Jesus of Nazareth & the Rise of Christianity
- Reading for October 2: Excerpts from *Sermons against the Jews* by John Chrysostom
- Monday, October 2. Early Christian Europe & the Rise of anti-Semitism
- Reading for October 4: “The Last Vexation of Mel”; and online documents on Anti-Semitism in Europe; **\*\*Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) to these readings due in class
- Wednesday, October 4. Europe’s Internal “Other”: Jews & anti-Semitism
- Reading for October 11: excerpts from the Quran
- Wednesday, October 11. Europe’s External “Other”: Muhammad & the Rise of Islam
- Reading for October 16: “Islam According to Oprah” by Rod Dreher; and “Terrorism and Islam”; **\*\*Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) to these readings due in class
- Monday, October 16. Europe’s External “Other”: Islam (cont'd)

Wednesday, October 18. The Islamic Faith

Monday, October 23. Fall of Rome & Early Medieval Europe

- Reading for October 25: The Christianization of Russia; Eyewitness Accounts of the Crusader’s Capture of Jerusalem; “The Story of a Story: Legacy of the Crusades” by Muhammad Asad; **Worksheet 3** due in class
- Wednesday, October 25. Medieval Europe: the Christianization of Russia & the Crusades

Monday, October 30. **2<sup>nd</sup> MIDTERM EXAM**

### **Part III: The Early Modern Period**

BEGIN READING *Giovanni & Lusanna*; **\*\*Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) due Monday, Nov. 13

- Reading for November 1: The Famine of 1315
- Wednesday, November 1. The “Black Death”
- Reading for November 6: Documents on the Plague; *The Black Death*; and Reviews of David Herlihy’s *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*

Monday, November 6. The “Black Death” (cont’d) & Peasant Rebellions

Wednesday, November 8. The Italian Renaissance

Monday, November 13. Discussion of *Giovanni and Lusanna*; **\*\*Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) due in class

Wednesday, November 15. The Reformation

- Reading for November 20: “The Jews & Their Lies” by Martin Luther (excerpt #4 under the link for “Readings on the Reformation”)

Monday, November 20. The Reformation (cont’d) & Religious Strife

Monday, November 27. The Witch Craze

- Reading for November 29: Diabolical Seduction: A Witch on Trial; *Malleus Maleficarium* (“The Witches’ Hammer”); and Witchcraft Documents; **Worksheet 4** due in class

Wednesday, November 29. The Witch Craze (cont’d)

- Reading for December 4: “The Truth about the First Thanksgiving” by James Loewen; **\*\*Reaction Piece** (1-2 pages) to this readings due in class

Monday, December 4. Europe’s Conquest of America: Discussion of the Reading

**FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 11 3:30-6:30**