

Western Civilization (First Part)
229 McIver Building; Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30-4:45

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Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00-11:00, or by appointment—I'm available many other times, and I encourage you to come see me if you're having trouble, want to clarify things, or just want to talk

This course is an introduction to some of the major events, people, and themes in Western civilization from its Middle Eastern beginnings through the pivotal seventeenth century. That history is of course so rich that many lifetimes could be devoted to its study; hence we'll need to be selective, and focus on a restricted range of topics. The theme I've chosen as a connecting thread through many of those topics is the issue of *authority*: Where does it lie? What is its source? Why is it ever challenged? How does conflict between competing authorities get resolved? Such questions apply to all kinds of authority, whether political, religious, philosophical, or scientific. Alongside that principal theme, we'll also try to pass in review as many of the generally recognized major episodes in Western history in our time period as feasible, since one purpose of this class is to give students a degree of cultural literacy (as it's been called), a basic familiarity with the major events, people, and themes within the scope of the course. Sometimes that familiarity will be simple name recognition.

I would call your attention, too, to the major themes that Kagan, Ozment, and Turner identified for their textbook (p. xxv):

- The capacity of Western civilization from the time of the Greeks to the present to generate transforming self-criticism.
- The development of political freedom, constitutional government, and the concern for the rule of law and individual rights.
- The shifting relations among religion, society, and the state.
- The development of science and technology and their expanding impact on thought, social institutions, and everyday life.
- The major religious and intellectual currents that have shaped Western culture.

The required text for the course is Donald Kagan, Steven Ozment, and Frank M. Turner, *The Western Heritage*, 7th ed., Vol. 1 (Prentice Hall, 2001), referred to as "Kagan" in the syllabus. Additional required readings, available on E-Reserves, are from Marvin Perry *et al.*, *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics & Society*, 6th ed., Vol. 1 (Houghton Mifflin, 2000), referred to as "Perry," and Thomas H. Greer & Gavin Lewis, *A Brief History of the Western World*, 8th ed. (Wadsworth, 2002), referred to as "Greer." (A separate sheet explains how to use E-Reserves.) The entries of the form "[ca. 9 pp.]"

in the syllabus indicate the approximate number of page-equivalents of reading. (Be aware that the glossary in Kagan is *very* unreliable with regard to pronunciation!)

It is very important to have done the assigned reading *before* the relevant class! You will get much more out of both the text and the lecture if you do so, especially if you then, as you should, review the text after the lecture—to pick out the high points, to clarify the meaning of important people, events, or ideas, and to get an overview of the relative importance of different aspects of the reading. *If you want to learn the material, it is never sufficient to read the text only once!* Note that the syllabus indicates which sections you may *omit* for the purposes of this class. On the other hand, *do* be sure to include the boxed readings in Kagan that aren't explicitly to be omitted. Make a habit of studying the maps and time lines scattered through the text—*i.e.*, really give them your attention!

Remember that the only way to do well in a class like this—which means the only way to begin to learn history—is to read carefully and with attention while you *actively try to understand the details*, even if, in the end, all the details won't matter—*i.e.*, you won't be responsible for them. Even if your goal is to understand the larger issues and not necessarily to remember all the details, *you cannot effectively grasp those larger points without having at least worked through the details*. Most of those details you'll be getting from the readings. Although I will, to be sure, be giving you additional information in class, the main purpose of the lectures is to explain the issues and to draw your attention to what I consider the most important matters. It will *not* be possible for me to go over *everything* of importance to the class in the lectures. You will not do well in this class if you slight either the readings or the lectures. If you miss a class, get someone else's notes. *Feel free to ask questions at any time.*

Aside from presenting a certain number of details and general points, the larger purpose of this class is to encourage you to develop a realistic and insight-producing attitude towards the study of history. For example, although we, as later-comers on the historical stage, know how the story came out, and hence can tailor what we look at in the past in accordance with the story we want to tell about how the past developed towards the present, it is absolutely essential always to keep in mind that *things didn't have to turn out the way they did*. There's no inevitability or long-term goal-directedness to history (as there isn't to Darwinian evolution, either!). It's important to understand the *contingent* nature of history: things might have been otherwise. But we can still (we hope) make sense of what in fact happened.

A closely related point is the realization that neither institutions nor peoples nor anything else has an "essence" that determines the role it will play in history. To cite a prominent and important example, it is fundamentally misguided to try to identify some supposed essential quality to (say) Christianity or Islam which has determined its course throughout history. All such traditions embrace a wide variety of sometimes conflicting possibilities, and the ones that come to the fore at any given time depend on the particular circumstances. In this regard it is more useful to think of religious traditions as providing an array of *cultural resources* that people can pick and choose from according to their needs and purposes than it is to think of them as being an unproblematic "influence" on

those who come into their field of force. The same can be said with regard to (say) the Greeks, the Germans, the Americans, or Western civilization in general. Nor is the subject matter of “Western Civ” something that’s unproblematically “given.” What we decide to include in “history” is ours to decide, and what gets included or excluded has changed over time and in accordance with different people’s different interests. (Note my selection or exclusion of particular sections of the text! And I chose the text.) Having said that, it’s also useful to recognize that, in actual fact, there’s been reasonable consensus for many decades as to what belongs to “Western Civ.” (Try comparing a few texts, and you’ll quickly see what I mean.) Hence—last and definitely not least—one of the chief purposes of this course is to expose students to what legions of historians have decided belongs to our *living* history, the history we continue to tell ourselves about ourselves.

The text as you purchased it should have come shrink-wrapped with two booklets: *Reading Critically about History*, and a *Study Guide and Workbook* to accompany Kagan. (Their inclusion didn’t increase the price of the text!) I won’t be using them formally, but you’re encouraged to make use of them, especially if you’re new to college or college history classes. If that’s the case, I *strongly* urge you to read around in *Reading Critically about History*. A relatively small investment of time here might just pay big dividends in how well you’re able to deal with the mass of material. Don’t think you have to read every word of it: try to identify where you might have a weakness, and see if you can acquire *a few practical strategies* for *actively* reading and processing the material. *If you find yourself overwhelmed, and don’t know what to do, please come see me!*

Although I haven’t made the *Study Guide* a formal part of the syllabus, I’m convinced that you will profit greatly by using it. I suggest you do the following: (1) Read the brief “Commentary” that introduces each chapter; it’s a good summary. (2) Look over the lists of terms under “Definitions” and “Identification”; being guided by what you should be able to identify as important to *this* class, search out the meaning of the terms you’re not completely sure of. (3) *Most importantly*, try to do the “Short-Answer Exercises” *without in the first instance using the text*. Remember that the important thing is that you try to *understand* why the correct answer is correct (and the incorrect answers are incorrect), rather than simply try to memorize the correct answer. My exams typically include questions of all three kinds—multiple-choice, true-false, and completion—so doing the questions in the *Study Guide* will give you valuable practice. As an enticement, I’ll plan on including a few of these short-answer questions on my exams. The “Map Exercises,” while valuable, are more problematic, and your time might be better spent studying the maps in the text—not passively staring at them, but *actively* noticing what’s where. The questions under “For Further Consideration” are also problematic: they’re usually good on their own terms, but frequently address issues that won’t be emphasized in this course. Use them (perhaps) as a rough check as to how well you’re understanding the readings, but be guided more particularly by the issues I’ve identified in the syllabus and lectures.

To that end I’ve regularly included in the syllabus lists of items to *emphasize* or *deemphasize* in the reading selections: read these ahead of time and apportion your energies accordingly. Then after you’ve done the reading, check those lists again, plus the

list of *some important names and words*, to see if you know and understand what's being talked about and emphasized. If any of the names or terms are still at all unclear to you, go back to the text and clarify things. If you *actively exploit* the various *strategies* I've suggested, you should find it much easier to assimilate the material! As with physical exercises, just reading about them won't make you stronger: you have to do them, and keep doing them.

There will be three exams, each worth a third of your raw final grade. The final will be cumulative, though weighted somewhat in favor of the last block of material. I will take attendance (silently, after I've learned your names). More than three absences will be considered excessive; after six absences I may, at my discretion, drop you from the roll. Some adjustment may be made to your raw final grade in accordance with attendance and class participation—up to a full letter grade, though usually much less. In practical terms, unless you have excessive absences, you will not do worse than the calculated raw final grade. *I do not give makeup exams*. I expect students to have read and understood the section of the *Policies for Students* handbook (or the equivalent on-line version) relating to the UNCG Academic Integrity Policy. Submission of written work implies your acceptance of its provisions. Students who miss the first two classes will be dropped from the roll.

Student Learning Goals

By the end of the semester, students will have a knowledge and understanding of:

- Some of the major events, people, and themes in Western civilization.
- In particular, the development of social and political institutions, especially as those have interacted with contemporaneous religious systems.
- The significance of the Western philosophical and scientific tradition, especially as represented by the events of the Scientific Revolution.
- The diverse and interconnected ways in which people have respected or challenged authority in the different spheres of culture (politics, religion, philosophy, science).
- The contingent nature of history and the role of cultural resources

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Exams

January 14: **Introduction**

January 16: **Mesopotamian Civilization**: Kagan, pp. 9-11, 13-19, 26-29, 30-33 (*omit* the boxed readings on pp. 13, 14-15, 18, 31) [*ca.* 9 pp]

emphasize: achievements of Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations; political, social, and religious institutions; development of writing, mathematics, and science (especially astronomy)

deemphasize: dynastic details (e.g., which group conquered whom and ruled when)

some important names and words: Hammurabi; cuneiform; omens

January 21: **Greek Society**: Kagan, pp. 37-46, 48-60, 63-68, 71-76, 81-85 (omit the boxed readings on pp. 44, 45, 59) [ca. 27 pp.]

emphasize: social and political institutions after the Homeric age; contrasts between Sparta and Athens

deemphasize: Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations; details of Persian and Peloponnesian wars

some important names and words: polis (plural poleis; second syllable rhymes with “lice”); tyrants; Solon; Cleisthenes; democracy

January 23: **Early Greek Thought and Culture**: Kagan, pp. 33-34, 60-62, 88-89, 91-93 (omit the boxed readings on pp. 61, 62); Perry, **Pt. A**, pp. 75-82 [ca. 11 pp.]

emphasize: differences between Mesopotamian and Greek religion, society, and culture; significance of the Greek tradition of (natural) philosophy (which lay at the base of later Western science)

deemphasize: details of ideas of Anaximander and Anaximenes

some important names and words: Ionia; Pre-Socratics; Thales of Miletus; Pythagoras; Hippocrates; Xenophanes of Colophon; Sophists; Socrates; dialectics

January 28: **Plato and Aristotle**: Kagan, pp. 93-96; Perry, pp. 82-90 (**Pt. A**), 412-413 (**Pt. C**) [ca. 10 pp.]

emphasize: Plato’s theory of ideas (also called “forms”); differences between Plato’s and Aristotle’s conception of scientific knowledge

deemphasize: Plato’s and Aristotle’s political views; Aristotle’s ethics

some important names and words: episteme (i.e., scientific knowledge; cf. “epistemology”); Plato’s Academy; Aristotle’s Lyceum; Peripatetics; teleology

January 30: buffer day; no new reading

February 4: **Roman Republic**: Kagan, pp. 111-115, 117-145 (omit boxed readings on pp. 124, 127, 129, 137) [ca. 25 pp.]

emphasize: Roman political institutions and how they evolved; gradual expansion of Roman territorial control; Rome’s exposure to Greek culture; the fall of the republic and Caesar’s rise to power; Octavian’s triumph

deemphasize: Etruscans; details of Punic Wars; details of 2nd-century-B.C. politics (the Gracchi; Marius and Sulla)

some important names and words: patricians; plebeians; Julius Caesar; Octavian; Battle of Actium (31 B.C.); magistrates (*e.g.*, consuls, praetors, tribunes, etc.); imperium; Senate, Centuriate Assembly; Carthaginians

February 6: **Roman Empire** : Kagan, pp. 147-160 (*omit* boxed readings on pp. 153, 159) [*ca.* 26 pp.]

emphasize: continuities and discontinuities in the transition from republic to empire; Augustus' consolidation of power; Roman law; expansion of Roman power, culture, and citizenship; reasons for empire's decline; division of the empire

deemphasize: literature; details of succession of emperors; details of barbarian invasions

some important names and words: Augustus; princeps, imperator, Diocletian; Constantine; Edict of Milan (313 A.D.), tetrarchs; Theodosius

February 11: **Hebrews and Christians** : Kagan, pp. 29-30, 166-171, 177-182, 208-211 (*omit* boxed reading on p. 167) [*ca.* 16 pp.]

emphasize: evolution of Jewish religion and its relationship to Christianity; rise and spread of Christianity within the Roman empire; consolidation of Christian belief and authority; split between Rome and Byzantium (Constantinople); papal primacy

some important names and words: Babylonian Captivity (586-539 B.C.); monotheism; Jesus of Nazareth; Paul of Tarsus; Peter; Theodosius; Arianism; Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.); monasticism; Benedict of Nursia (modern-day Norcia, in central Italy); *Rule* ("Regula" in Latin) of St. Benedict (*ca.* 540 A.D.); regular *vs.* secular clergy

February 13: buffer day; no new reading

February 18: review for first exam; no new reading

February 20: FIRST EXAM

February 25: **Devolution of the Roman Empire; Rise of Islam**: Kagan, pp. 195-208, 211-212 (*omit* boxed reading on p. 197) [*ca.* 10 pp.]

emphasize: barbarian invasions; continuities and discontinuities in the "fall of Rome" after 476 A.D.; the Byzantine Empire as successor to the Eastern Roman Empire; differences between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity; preservation of Greek learning by Byzantines; relationship of Islam to Western culture

deemphasize: details of Islamic controversies and territorial expansion

some important names and words: Odoacer (or Odovacar; the text's "Odovacer" is irregular); Theodoric; Arians; Justinian; codification of Roman law in the

Corpus juris civilis (“Body of Civil Law,” consisting of the Code, Novellae, Digest, and Institutes); Mohammed (in the text: “Muhammad”)

February 27: **Early Medieval Europe** : Kagan, pp. 212-226 [*ca.* 12 pp.]

emphasize: conflict between king and powerful local noblemen, between centralized and diffused authority; Charlemagne’s importance; relationship between Papacy and secular authority; power relationships in feudal society
deemphasize: details of Frankish kings and Carolingian kingdoms; manorialism
some important names and words: Clovis; Merovingians; Charlemagne; Holy Roman Empire; Carolingian Renaissance; feudal; vassal/vassalage; fief; benefice

March 4: **High Middle Ages**: Kagan, pp. 229-247, 250-255 (*omit* boxed readings on 245, 253) [*ca.* 20 pp.]

emphasize: beginnings of nation-states (with the exception of Germany); relation between Empire and Papacy; Cluniac reforms; investiture controversy; significance of Crusades; consolidation of Church doctrine; founding of Franciscan and Dominican orders
deemphasize: details of Germanic emperors and Crusades; details of English, French, and German history
some important names and words: investiture; Pope Gregory VII; Emperor Henry IV; Canossa (“to go to Canossa”); Pope Innocent III; Albigensians (Cathars); Fourth Lateran Council (1215); Magna Carta (1215)

March 6: **Medieval Society**: Kagan, pp. 257-259, 262-277, 281 (*omit* boxed readings on pp. 269, 272, 275); Perry, **Pt. B**, pp. 259-273 (*omit* profile on pp. 266-277) [*ca.* 27 pp.]

emphasize: role of clergy; importance of towns and merchants; schools and universities; revival of Roman law; tension between philosophy and theology; issue of faith *vs.* reason
deemphasize: social orders (classes); details of medieval science
some important names and words: sumptuary laws; canon law; Gratian; trivium; quadrivium; Sorbonne (*ca.* 1257); scholasticism; summa; Thomas Aquinas; Condemnation of 1277

March 11 and 13: Spring Break

March 18: **Late Middle Ages**: Kagan, pp. 292-299, 302-313, 314, 335-338 (*omit* boxed reading on p. 335) [*ca.* 16 pp.]

emphasize: impact of Black Death; strengths and weaknesses of the Papacy; consolidation of French, English, and Spanish monarchies; popes *vs.* kings; popes *vs.* councils; political fragmentation of the German “Holy Roman Empire”

deemphasize: details of Hundred Years' War, most of the popes and kings, the various Church councils, and French, Spanish, and English rulers of the 15th century

some important names and words: Joan of Arc; Pope Boniface VIII; papal bull *Unam Sanctam* ("One Holy [Catholic Apostolic Church]," 1302); Marsilius of Padua; benefice; annate; John Wycliffe; John Huss; conciliar movement; Cortes (text's "Cortés" is wrong); gabelle; taille (pronounced "tie")

March 20: buffer day; no new reading; might show some slides relating to the next class if there's time

March 25: **Renaissance**: Kagan, pp. 317-334, 338-344, 348-350 (*omit* boxed readings on pp. 323, 325, 349; *recommended* are also pp. 284-287) [*ca.* 19 pp.]

emphasize: significance of Renaissance; its classical and progressive aspects; revival of Platonism and of Greek learning in general; innovations of Renaissance art; political involvements of the popes; impact of printing

deemphasize: politics of Italian city-states; literature; Italian and French politics
some important names and words: humanism; Cosimo de' Medici; Marsilio Ficino; Donation of Constantine; Michelangelo; Pope Julius II; Donatello; Erasmus

March 27: review for second exam; no new reading

April 1: SECOND EXAM

April 3: **Reformation and Counter-Reformation**: Kagan, pp. 353-360, 362-380 (*omit* boxed readings on 367, 377) [*ca.* 20 pp.]

emphasize: causes and consequences of the Protestant Reformation; lay religious movements (*e.g.*, the Brothers of the Common Life, a.k.a. the Modern Devotion); Luther's challenge to Roman Catholicism; Calvin's impact; Catholic Counter-Reformation; importance of the Council of Trent

deemphasize: Peasants' Revolt; Swiss Reformation; Anabaptists and other radicals; details of the English Reformation

some important names and words: Martin Luther; sale of indulgences; benefice; Emperor Charles V; John Calvin; Peace of Augsburg (1555); doctrine of *cuius regio, eius religio* (literally, "whose territory, his religion"); Henry VIII; Ignatius of Loyola; Jesuits; Council of Trent (1545-1563, hence the adjective "Tridentine" from the Latin name of the city, Tridentum)

April 8: **Age of Religious Wars**: Kagan, pp. 389-415 (*omit* boxed reading on p. 407) [*ca.* 20 pp.]

emphasize: interconnections between religion and politics; debates over source of political authority; significance of Edict of Nantes; significance of Dutch independence; significance of Thirty Years' War

deemphasize: details of French Catholic-Calvinist politics during the Wars of Religion; details of Spanish and English politics; details of Thirty Years' War

some important names and words: Huguenots; Guises; Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572); Estates General; Henry IV; Edict of Nantes (1598); William of Orange; Elizabeth I; Treaty of Westphalia (1648)

April 10: **England and France in the Seventeenth Century**: Kagan, pp. 417-433, 436-446 (*omit* boxed readings on pp. 421, 427, 442) [*ca.* 20 pp.]

emphasize: differences between English and French political developments; importance of political institutions; weaknesses of England's Stuart kings; rise of Parliament's power; significance of English Civil War; consolidation of royal power under Louis XIII and Louis XIV; relationship between church and state

deemphasize: details of English Civil War; details of Louis XIV's military exploits

some important names and words: absolutism; Louis XIV; French *parlements* vs. English Parliament; Puritans; Oliver Cromwell; Glorious Revolution; Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin; the Fronde; Versailles; Jansenists; Blaise Pascal; revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685)

April 15: buffer day; no new reading

April 17: **Scientific Revolution: The Structure of the Heavens**: Kagan, pp. 449-455; Perry, **Pt. C**, pp. 411-420 [*ca.* 13 pp.]

emphasize: the nature of the Copernican challenge to astronomy, physics, religion, and common sense; relative strengths and weaknesses of the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems; Galileo's and Kepler's contributions; nature and significance of the so-called Newtonian Synthesis

deemphasize: Renaissance Neo-Platonism; Hermetic tradition and magic; Galileo's physics

some important names and words: geocentric, heliocentric; Nicolaus Copernicus and his *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543); Tycho Brahe; Johannes Kepler; Galileo Galilei; Isaac Newton and his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (a.k.a. "the *Principia*," 1687); Newtonian Synthesis

April 22: **Scientific Revolution: Philosophical Aspects**: Kagan, 455-464 (*omit* boxed reading on p. 459); Perry, **Pt. C**, pp. 422-424 [*ca.* 10 pp.]

emphasize: Bacon's image of science; Descartes' importance to 17th-century science; Locke's psychology of knowledge (epistemology)

deemphasize: Bacon's "idols"; Hobbes' political philosophy; Giordano Bruno; Spinoza

some important names and words: Francis Bacon; inductivism; René Descartes (hence the adjective “Cartesian” from the Latin form of his name, Renatus Cartesius); deductivism; rationalism; mechanism, mechanical philosophy, corpuscularism (as will be gone over in class); worldview

April 25: **Scientific Revolution: Social and Religious Aspects:** Kagan, pp. 464-467, 468-469, 472-474 (*omit* boxed readings on 466, 468); Perry, **Pt. C**, pp. 424-426 (*omit* profile on p. 425) [*ca.* 6 pp.]

emphasize: role of new scientific institutions; ideological aspects of the new conception of science; nature and significance of Galileo’s conflict with the Catholic Church; faith *vs.* reason in Pascal; relationship between science and religion *ca.* 1700; how science was transformed; the authority of science
some important names and words: Royal Society; Baconianism; Index of Prohibited Books; Blaise Pascal; physico-theology (a.k.a. natural theology)

April 29: buffer day; no new reading

May 1: final reflections; review for final; course evaluation (if not done the previous class)

[May 6: last day of classes; although a Tuesday, Friday’s schedule will be observed]

Wednesday, May 7: Reading Day

Tuesday, May 13: FINAL EXAM, 12:00-3:00