

THE HISTORY OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Helen Steele • HIST 150 • TTh 1100–1215 • Spring 2008

THE BIRTH OF CIVILIZATION IN THE NEAR EAST



KEY CONCEPTS

Agriculture • Civilization • Surplus • City State • Empire • Alphabet • Copper Age • Bronze Age • Iron Age

PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS

1st (Neolithic) Agricultural Revolution • Sumer • Sargon • Cuneiform • Hammurabi • Hittites • Hebrews • Phoenicians • Indo-Europeans • Semites • Persia

9500–5000	1 st Agricultural Revolution: cultivation of grains, domestication of animals and development of irrigation.	1225	ASSYRIAN conquest of Mesopotamia
5000	The formation of the city-states of SUMER	1200	Migration of the Phoenicians to the Mediterranean coast
4000–2500	COPPER AGE. Development of plows, stone and brick architecture, wheeled carts and CUNEIFORM	1200–1100	Invasions of the “Sea Peoples” ravage the Mediterranean and destroy the Hittites End of the Bronze Age. IRON AGE: spread of iron weaponry
3000–2500	Early BRONZE AGE. The development of bronze tools, simple mathematics, calendars and glass	1050	Development of the Phoenician alphabet
2340	Sargon I unites the Sumerian cities as AKKADIAN Empire	1004	David become king of Israel.
2200	The Fall of the Akkadian Empire	900	Expansion of “Neo”-Assyrian Empire
2000–1600	Old BABYLONIAN period.: the development of windmills, iron tools and weaponry.	722	Assyrian conquest of Israel
1800	Early Semitic alphabet developed in Egypt	612	Fall of Nineveh. NEO-BABYLONIAN period
1763	Hammurabi’s Code of Laws	604–562	Rule of Nebuchadnezzar II in Babylon. Beginning of the Hebrew exile.
1600–1100	HITTITE attacks on Mesopotamia	600	Zarathustra, founder of Zoroastrianism
1600–1400	Migration of Abraham and the HEBREWS from Sumer to Canaan then Egypt	586	Babylonians conquer Jerusalem
1250–1200	Hebrew conquest of Canaan	560	Cyrus establishes the PERSIAN EMPIRE
		539	Persia conquers Mesopotamia. The end of the Hebrew exile.

PRE-CLASSICAL & CLASSICAL GREECE

KEY CONCEPTS

Dark Ages • Archaic Period • Polis • Tyranny • Oligarchy • Monarchy • Democracy • Golden Age • Socratic Method • Sophism

PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS

Minoan Culture • Mycenae • Persian War • Battle of Marathon • Pericles • Peloponnesian War • Delian League • Socrates • Plato • Aristotle



2200–1400	MINOAN society in Crete	480	Xerxes of Persia leads the invasion of Greece. Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis
1600–1200	Peak of MYCENAEAN civilization	479	Greek victories ends Persian invasions
1200–1184	Trojan War	478	Athens founds DELIAN LEAGUE
1100–800	Greek DARK AGES	472	Aeschylus begins the tradition of Greek classical tragedy
1000	Greeks begin colonization of the Aegean	459–454	First PELOPONNESIAN WAR
850	The Iliad and Odyssey	457	Pericles begins GOLDEN AGE of Athens
800–500	ARCHAIC PERIOD. Development of CITY-STATES. Lyric poetry and early Greek art.	449	Peace between Athens and Persia. Beginning of the construction of the PARTHENON
776	First Olympic games	432–404	Sporadic outbreaks of PELOPONNESIAN WARS
750	Greek colonization of the Mediterranean	431	Theory of four humors of the body formed by Empedocles
632	Cylon unsuccessfully attempts tyranny at Athens	429	Death of Pericles; plague destroys a third of the population of Athens. Birth of Plato
621	Draco, Athenian lawgiver, issues a code making nearly every offense a capital crime ("draconian")	427	Aristophanes' first play. He presents <i>Lysistrata</i> in 411.
597	Solon establishes OLIGARCHY in Athens	404	Surrender of Athens. Oligarchy of the Thirty set up at Athens
545	Cyrus of PERSIA conquers Ionia	403	Restoration of democracy at Athens
507	Cleisthenes' reform of Athenian DEMOCRACY bring full rights to all free men	399	SOCRATES condemned and executed
499–494	Ionian Revolt against Persia		
490–479	PERSIAN WARS		
490	Battle of Marathon		

395–371	Recurrent violence in Greece leads to the decline of Athenian and Spartan power, the rise of Thebes.	336	Philip assassinated; his son Alexander succeeds him
359	Accession of Philip II of Macedonia	335	Aristotle returns to Athens, opens a Lycaeum; develops a deductive system and scientific method.
347	Plato founds the Academy and formulates <i>The Republic</i> . Death of Plato. Aristotle leaves Athens	330	Democritus develops atomic theory.
342	Aristotle arrives in Macedonia to become tutor to Alexander.	324	Meander writes "new comedy" in a lighter vein than the plays of Aristophanes
338	Philip of Macedon defeats Athenians and Thebans at Battle of Chaeronea.	250	Hellenistic kingdoms.

THE ILIAD

The *Iliad* is an epic poem composed in the 8th or 7th century BC. It describes the events of the Trojan War at the end of the Mycenaean Age, ca. 1200 BC, during which Achaean (Greek) forces led by Agamemnon besiege the city of Troy (Ilion) ruled by Priam. Examining themes of wrath, fate, glory and honor, it particularly contrasts the characters of the heroes Achilles and Hector.

The *Iliad* has traditionally been attributed to **HOMER**. However, study of the vocabulary and style of the poem suggest that there may have been multiple authors; moreover, the poem may have existed for many years in a TRADITIONAL, ORAL form, passed down among poets and reciters before being written down.

- What is the cause of the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon?
- How would you characterize Greek society? How is it organized?
- How would you describe the relationships between men and women in Greek and Trojan society? How much autonomy and influence do the women have on the course of events?
- What role do the gods play in determining the outcome of events?
- Are the gods benevolent? How does a person win their favor?
- Why are the Greeks fighting in this war? What do they hope to accomplish?
- How is Hector different from Achilles?
- Do you think we are supposed to regard Achilles as a hero? Does he have any character flaws?
- Is this poem a possible critique of warfare? Or does it portray war as glorious?
- How would you describe Achilles' attachment to Patroclus? Why does he seem so devastated by Patroclus' death?
- Why are burial rites so important to both the Greeks and Trojans?
- If Agamemnon is such a bad king, is Priam any better? Is he an ideal ruler?
- Why does Zeus let his son Sarpedon die?
- What do you think of Achilles' treatment of Hector's body?
- Is Paris really the cause of this war? How is he portrayed?
- How do you think Helen feels about the war, and about her life with the Trojans?
- What difference does it seem to make that Achilles' mother is a goddess?
- Is it better to die young and famous, or to live to old age?



Pericles' Funeral Oration

I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and seemly that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory. There has never been a time when they did not inhabit this land, which by their valor they will have handed down from generation to generation, and we have received from them a free state. But if they were worthy of praise, still more were our fathers, who added to their inheritance, and after many a struggle transmitted to us their sons this great empire. And we ourselves assembled here today, who are still most of us in the vigor of life, have carried the work of improvement further, and have richly endowed our city with all things, so that she is sufficient for herself both in peace and war. But before I praise the dead, I should like to point out by what principles of action we rose to power, and under what institutions and through what manner of life our empire became great.

Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. Our government does not copy our neighbors', but is an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while there exists equal justice to all and alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty an obstacle, but a man may benefit his country whatever the obscurity of his condition. There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private business we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant.

If then we prefer to meet danger with a light heart but without laborious training, and with a courage which is gained by habit and not enforced by law, are we not greatly the better for it? For we are lovers of the beautiful in our tastes and our strength lies, in our opinion, not in deliberation and discussion, but that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar power of thinking before we act, and of acting, too, whereas other men are courageous from ignorance but hesitate upon reflection. And they are surely to be esteemed the bravest spirits who, having the clearest sense both of the pains and pleasures of life, do not on that account shrink from danger.

For the whole earth is the tomb of famous men; not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions in their own country, but in foreign lands there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone but in the hearts of men. Make them your examples, and, esteeming courage to be freedom and freedom to be happiness, do not weigh too heavily the perils of war.

Wherefore I do not now pity the parents of the dead who stand here; I would rather comfort them. To you who are the sons and brothers of the departed, I see that the struggle to emulate them will be an arduous one. And, if I am to speak of womanly virtues to those of you who will henceforth be widows, let me sum them up in one short admonition: To a woman not to show more weakness than is natural to her sex is a great glory, and not to be talked about for good or for evil among men.

from the *Peloponnesian War* (Book 2.34-46)
by Thucydides (c.460/455-c.399 BC)

LYSISTRATA

Aristophanes (456–386) first presented the comic play *Lysistrata* in 411 BC at a Dionysian festival in Athens. It is a satirical commentary upon the Peloponnesian Wars between the city states of Athens and Sparta. Tired of the recurrent violence, the women of Greece band together to end war.

- What does this play tell us, if anything, about the Athenian attitude towards sex? Were the Athenians lewd? Bawdy? Preoccupied with sex?
- How would you characterize the female attitude towards sex in the play? Is it significantly different than the male attitude?
- Do you think Aristophanes is poking fun at the Spartans in the play, or does he admire them on some level?
- Is this really a play about peace? Are we supposed to take the desire for peace seriously in a comedy?
- Is *Lysistrata* a heroine? Why?
- What do you think of all the puns in the play? What does this tell you about the Athenian sense of humor?
- Are you surprised by the fact that this was a contemporary comedy about a war? Could we get away with a comedy about the war in Iraq, for example? What does this suggest, if anything, about the Athenian view of war?
- Do you think that this play changed anyone's mind about the Peloponnesian war?
- Is Aristophanes a feminist?
- Is there an argument presented for continuing the war with Sparta?
- Do you think there is any relationship between humor or comedy and democracy? What about the relationship between sex and democracy?
- What does this play tell us about the prospects for peace? Is the moral "make love, not war?" Or is the situation a bit more complicated than this?
- What does this play tell us about the role of the theatre in Athens? Do you think playwrights were expected to make political statements? Was art supposed to make a social commentary?



EUTHYPHRO

Plato wrote *Euthyphro* ca. 399 BC: it is one of the earlier of his dialogues. It takes the form of a conversation between Socrates – Plato’s teacher – and Euthyphro in the period before Socrates’ trial for impiety. Socrates attempts to reach a definition of piety by questioning Euthyphro using the SOCRATIC METHOD.

- What is Socrates being accused of? How does he characterize his prosecutor, Melitus?
- How does Socrates characterize the accusations made against him? Does he take them seriously?
- What is Euthyphro’s business at court?
- Why do you think Euthyphro decided to press charges against his father?
- Why do you think Melitus decided to prosecute Socrates?
- Do you think Euthyphro’s father is guilty of homicide?
- Why does Euthyphro believe that his suit against his father is holy?
- Why do Socrates and Euthyphro spend so much time debating the nature of holiness, instead of discussing how Socrates will defend himself against the charges?
- What is your definition of holiness?
- Why does Euthyphro become frustrated by Socrates’ argument?
- What does Socrates see as the weakness in Euthyphro’s definition of holiness? Why does it matter?
- What is divine approval? What makes something divinely approved?
- What are the gods like, according to Socrates?
- How do you feel about Socrates’ argument with Euthyphro? Do you like Socrates? Do you like Euthyphro? Why or why not?
- How would you describe Socrates’ debating skills? Are they effective? Does he ever make his point clear?
- What is Socrates’ definition of holiness? Why is this different? Why is it important?
- When Socrates starts talking about shame and fear, what does this have to do with his argument?
- What does Euthyphro mean when he says that the debate is going round in circles? Who is Daedalus? (Look this up if you need to.)
- After some debate, Euthyphro offers another definition of holiness – what is it now? How does gratification fit into this definition?
- Who wins the debate?
- Why do you think Plato wrote this dialogue?
- What is the point of it all?

APOLOGY & CRITO

Two more of Plato’s dialogues, both *Apology* and *Crito* concern the trial of Socrates and its consequences. The *Apology*, arguably one of the most important of the dialogues, describes the trial itself and includes Socrates’ arguments to the people of Athens. It is one of the only Socratic dialogues that Plato could have heard himself. *Crito* is set in the period after the trial and before Athens executes Socrates. A dialogue between Socrates and his friend Crito, it is a meditation on the nature of justice using the Socratic method.

- How does Socrates characterize his accusers in the *Apology*?
- Why do you think Socrates tells the court that he will speak in a “simple” language, as opposed the “flowery” language of his accusers? Is he being sincere?
- What does Socrates mean when he says that he has been accused of making “the weaker argument defeat the stronger?”
- Who are Socrates accusers?
- Do you think he takes the charges against him seriously?
- Why is it important for Socrates to prove that he never charged a fee for teaching anyone?
- Is Socrates the wisest man in the world, as the oracle at Delphi has said? How does Socrates himself interpret this statement?
- Why is “ignorance” a good thing, as far as Socrates is concerned?

- What does he think of politicians, poets, and skilled craftsmen?
- Why does Socrates come to the conclusion that he would rather be Socrates than anyone else?
- Can people possess wisdom?
- Why do young men follow Socrates around Athens? What is he accused of teaching them?
- How does Socrates defend himself against the charge of corrupting the young? What is his argument?
- Why does it matter whether Socrates' actions were intentional or unintentional, as he insists?
- What difference does it make whether Socrates believes in no god or just the wrong gods? What is Socrates' point?
- Why does Socrates believe it is important to stand his ground without fear of death? What is his definition of a hero?
- Why isn't he afraid of death?
- Why won't Socrates stop practicing philosophy, "not even if I have to die a hundred deaths?"
- How does Socrates feel about Athens?
- Why did Socrates disobey the Thirty Tyrants?
- Why do you think his defense is of no use? Why is he convicted and sentenced to death?
- What does he suggest instead of the death penalty? Why?
- How does he react to his death sentence?
- Why does his friend Crito urge him to escape from prison?
- Why does Crito say that Socrates is betraying his sons by staying in prison?
- How does Socrates refute Crito's argument?
- Do you think Socrates cares about his family?
- What does Socrates mean when he says that it is important to live "honorably and justly?"
- Why do the Laws of Athens require Socrates to accept his death?
- Why does Socrates personify the "Laws" in his dialogue with Crito?
- Why does he care so much about obeying the laws? How is this connected to his ideal of justice?
- Is Socrates a hero?

ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

- 371–362 Thebes defeats Sparta to become the most powerful city in Greece.
- 359–352 Accession of Philip II of MACEDONIA. He begins wars to consolidate and expand Macedonian power.
- 356 Birth of Alexander.
- 342 Aristotle goes to Macedon as tutor to Alexander
- 338 Philip of Macedon defeats Athenians and Thebans to dominate Greece.
- 336 Philip assassinated; Alexander succeeds
- 335 Alexander destroys Thebes
- 335 The CYNIC Diogenes (400-324) reputedly meets Alexander in Corinth
- 335 Accession of Darius III as the king of Persia
- 334–331 Alexander's wars in the Persian Empire

KEY CONCEPTS

Hellenism

PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS

Alexander the Great • Aristotle • Gordian Knot •
Achaemenids • Seleucids • Ptolomies

- 333 Alexander cuts the GORDIAN KNOT and defeats Darius
- 332–331 Alexander travels through Syria to Egypt where he is acclaimed as Pharaoh. Foundation of Alexandria
- 331 Alexander conquers Babylon and Persepolis. End of the Achaemenid Persian Empire.
- 327–325 Alexander's campaigns in India.

323

Alexander dies of typhoid fever

250

Emergence of three major states:

323–276

Successor Wars for control of his empire

PTOLOMAIC Egypt, Macedonia and SELEUCID Persia.



PLUTARCH'S LIFE OF ALEXANDER

- Plutarch introduces his life of Alexander by saying that he is “writing biography, not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the virtues or vices of the men who performed them...” What does he mean by this?
- What do you think of Alexander’s relationship to Philip? How would you characterize his father?
- What do you make of the story about Olympia sleeping with a snake?
- Why is the story of Alexander and the horse Bucephalus so legendary? What is it supposed to tell us about the character of Alexander at a young age?
- How do you think that a 22-year old decides that he is going to conquer the world?
- What is family life like in Macedonia in this period?
- What does Plutarch tell us about Alexander’s relationship with Aristotle?
- Why do you think Alexander wants to defeat Darius? What does he think of Darius?
- Why is Alexander kind to the Persian women? Do you believe this account?
- How does Alexander’s personality change after he conquers Persia?
- Why do you think he decides to wear Persian clothing?
- Does Alexander really believe he is the son of a god?
- Why do you think Alexander becomes increasingly paranoid about his friends conspiring against him?
- How would you describe his philosophy for ruling an empire? Write down 5 words to describe his ruling strategy.
- Do you think he has respect for other cultures?
- Why does he want to conquer India? Is this a sign of impending madness?
- Why is Alexander so preoccupied with diviners and signs and oracles? Are you surprised by his “superstitions?” What do they tell us about his personality? About his culture? About his attitude towards religion?
- Why does he murder Cleitus? Does he really regret this? Is he out of control?
- Why does he kill Callisthenes? Is this a mistake?
- Why does he have so many wives? How would you characterize his relationship to women, including his mother?
- Does Plutarch create him as a hero?
- Why is Alexander so obsessed with Achilles?
- Why do his Macedonian troops rebel against him? What are the limits of Alexander’s power?
- Is his death tragic?
- What do you think he could have accomplished if he had lived longer?