

Lecture 1: Introduction

I - What is the purpose of this course?

- sense of shared culture, even if we don't look alike
- reading and thinking about unfamiliar material
- communication skills
- appreciation of differing views

II - What are the Humanities?

How humans interact with each other; the study of ourselves

Humanities Subjects: Sociology, Religion, Art, History

III - What do we mean by "the West"?

Western Culture is considered to be from the western hemisphere.

The idea of one specific set culture is invented

- old divide between "Occident" and "Orient"
- origins in what is today Iraq, Middle East and North Africa

Western culture begins in the Middle East

- shift of focus eventually to Europe, but this is not a European history course

IV - Themes of the course *these themes are extremely important and will be used as a thread for making insightful connections between assigned readings and information presented in class*

1. Human Nature: What are human beings naturally like?

How should human beings act?

Are humans generally good at heart?

Are humans generally bad at heart? Or are they not limited to one nature at heart?

Can we change or is nature fixed at birth?

2. Human Society: How is government supposed to work?

How is power used?

How do laws work?

Who should have power?

Who should set laws?

3. The Meaning of Life: What are we doing here on Earth? Is there meaning/purpose to this?

How do we figure out the purpose(s)? Where do we go for answers?

Which book do we go to for answers?

Ideas about God: relationship with God, life, death, coping with death, etc.

Is there one God or many?

4. Sex & Gender: Relations between men and women.

Arguments surrounding the topic of sexuality.

What is a "real" man?

What is a "real" woman?

Is sex bad/good? Values associated with sex.

5. Fine Arts: Painting, Sculpting Architecture

Why are there so many paintings of Jesus?

Is there significance in the architecture of churches throughout history?

What does art tell us about the people who made it?

6. Cities: Have had huge impact on people. Are there relationships between development of cities and the development of societies?

V - How should we study past cultures?

- past as foreign country
- advantages of studying the unfamiliar
- need for empathy

Traditions: ideas and practices passed down through generations.

VI - Conclusion: What is "Civilization"?

- **8,000 B.C. civilization appears in the Middle East**
- **Cities- appearance of permanent cities**
- **Written Language- permanent written language system**

Civitas- def: on the banks of a river

Importance of Rivers: Transportation & Agriculture

Lecture 2: The Ancient Near East and Egypt

I - Agriculture and Irrigation

- both were riparian civilizations based on irrigation agriculture
Irrigation- using rivers to grow crops
- concept of "Fertile Crescent"- **semi-circular region where Western civilization begins.**
- Tigris (**North**) and Euphrates (**South**) rivers- **2 major rivers that run through Mesopotamia.**
- Mesopotamia- **today known as Iraq.**