

HIST 368: To the Strongest: The Ancient Near East from the Death of Alexander to the Coming of Rome

Fall Semester 2023

Course Instructor: Dr. John Karavas

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Class Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 13.45 – 15.20

Course Description

In many ways the conquests of Alexander the Great, which brought under Macedonian rule the regions of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, up to the borders with India, had a determinant and profound impact on the future course of the History of the Near East. Through the study of primary sources, both literary and archaeological, this course seeks to explore the long history of interaction between the Greco-Roman world and that of its Near Eastern counterpart and the significant influence this interaction had on the formation and development of a common cultural, religious and political identity, which modern scholars have labeled as "Hellenistic". Within this perspective, our main focus will be on the investigation of particular aspects of Near Eastern civilization: the emergence of new cultural and social institutions, new forms of economic life, and the creation, fusion, and amalgamation of religious institutions (to which this course will give a special emphasis). The main purpose of the course will be to provide significant insight into an often neglected and yet very important and formative era in world history, the Hellenistic period.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to write one research paper, not more than 2.500 words, on subjects/topics relevant to this course. Details will be provided on the first day of classes. Assignments for topics will be decided by lot, one month before the deadline for the submission of essays. Papers must be properly documented and should include an appended bibliography. Credit will be given for originality, i.e. illustrations, maps, etc., personal observation and evidence of independent reading-research. Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own, original work. Any excerpts from the work of others must be clearly identified as a quotation, and a proper citation provided. (Check Student handbook, pg 9).

Students who wish to turn in rough drafts of their essays for consultation are certainly welcomed to do so. Title proposals and general outlines must be handed in at least three weeks before the respective deadline. The deadline for the submission of the final essay is Friday, December 15. No extensions will be granted.

Exams:

Midterm: Tuesday, October 17

Final: TBA

Evaluation and Grading

The mid-term grade will be calculated on the basis of the mid-term exam (70%) and with regard to student's attendance of and participation in classes (30%). The final grade will be an average of the grades assigned for the mid-term exam (25%), the final essay (30%), the grade assigned for the final exam (30%) and of that assigned for class participation and attendance over the course of the semester (15%).

Class Attendance – Absences

Student attendance is mandatory. All absences must be excused by the administration and not the instructor. Each unexcused absence will result in a lowered participation grade. An excessive number of unexcused absences will lead to a failing grade.

Class Schedule

1	Tue Sept 5	<p>General Introduction</p> <p>A brief overview of the history of the Near East after Alexander. Establishing the basic chronological brackets and objectives of this course. The nature of the available evidence and the problems usually associated with its interpretation.</p>
2	Thu Sept 7	<p>Alexander the Great: The Dream, the Vision, the Legacy</p> <p><i>Required reading</i></p> <p>D.B. Nagle, The Cultural Context of Alexander’s Speech at Opis, TAPA 126 (1996), p. 151-172; Worthington, chapter 8.</p>
3	Tue Sept 12	<p>The Break-up of Alexander’s Empire and the Wars of Succession</p> <p><i>Required reading</i></p> <p>Green, 119-134; Shiple, 33-40; Bosworth, 246-278.</p>
4	Tue Sept 19	<p>The Formation of the “Successor” States. The Ptolemies, the Seleucids and the Antigonids</p> <p><i>Required reading</i></p> <p>Walbank, chapter 3; Shiple, 40-59. Moodle session 4</p>
5	Thu Sept 21	<p>The Government of the Successor States. Cases in Study in the development of “Enlightened Despotism”</p> <p><i>Required reading</i></p> <p>Green, 187-200; Walbank chapters 6-7; Shiple, 59-86. Moodle session 5</p>
6	Tue Sept 26	<p>Social and Economic trends. Daily Life in the Hellenistic World.</p> <p><i>Description</i></p> <p>Class Visit to the Athenian Agora.</p> <p><i>Required reading</i></p> <p>Shiple, 86-106; Green, 382-395.</p>

Moodle session 6

7 Thu Sept 28 **Trade, Commerce and Interconnectivity – the Maritime approach**

Description

Class visit to Athenian Trireme at Floisvos.

Required reading

Moodle session 7

8 Tue Oct 3 **Cultural developments. The creation and diffusion of Hellenistic Culture.**

Description

Class visit to the Panathenaic Stadium.

Required reading

Green, 286-312;
Moodle session 8

9 Thu Oct 5 **Language, Literature and Learning in the Hellenistic Age**

Description

Class visit to the Lyceum of Aristotle.

Required reading

Tarn and Griffith, chapter 8;
Walbank, chapter 4;
Shiple, 326-330.
Moodle session 9

10 Tue Oct 10 **The Age of Invention: Hellenistic Science and Technology**

Description

Class visit to the Antikythera Mechanism Exhibition – National Archaeological Museum.

Required reading

Shiple, 330-368;
Moodle session 10

11 Thu Oct 12 **Pushing the Frontiers: Trade and Exploration in the Hellenistic World**

Description

Class Visit to the Maritime Museum.

Required reading

Walbank, chapter 11;
Tarn and Griffith, chapter 7.

12 Tue Oct 17 **MID-TERM EXAM**

13	Thu Oct 19	Excavating Material Culture from the Hellenistic World
		<i>Description</i> Class Visit to the Voula Archaeological Site.
		<i>Required reading</i> Moodle session 13
14	Tue Oct 31	The Religious Developments – An outline
		<i>Description</i> Class Visit to Temple of Olympian Zeus.
		<i>Required reading</i> Shiple, 153-192; Walbank, chapter 12; Moodle session 14
15	Thu Nov 2	Towards a New World Religion: The Greek Pantheon meets the Near Eastern Religions
		<i>Description</i> Class visit to the Egyptian Collection, National Archaeological Museum.
		<i>Required reading</i> Tarn and Griffith, chapter 10; Moodle session 15
16	Tue Nov 14	Kingship, Cult and Court: The Added Dimension of Self Deification
		<i>Description</i> Class Visit to the Acropolis – South Slope.
		<i>Required reading</i> Lund, chapter 6; Class handouts; Moodle session 16
17	Thu Nov 16	At the fringes of Hellenistic religion: Rural, foreign and mystery cults
		<i>Required reading</i> Green, 396-414 and 586-617.
18	Fri Nov 17 (Make-up class)	Exploring the Occult: Magic and Mystery in the Hellenistic World
		<i>Required reading</i> Stewart, chapter 8; Class handouts; Moodle session 18
19	Tue Nov 21	"Jews and Gentiles": Contact and Conflict

Description

Class visit to the Kerameikos.

Required reading

Tarn and Griffith, chapter 6;
Moodle session 19

20 Tue Nov 28

Hellenistic Art – An outline

Description

Class Visit to the National Archaeological Museum.

Required reading

Moodle session 20

21 Thu Nov 30

Hellenistic mosaics – A workshop

22 Fri Dec 1

(Make-up class)

The Hellenistic Queens; Seleucid and Ptolemaic queens

Description

Class visit to the Numismatic Museum.

Required reading

Macurdy, chapters 2 and 3.

23 Tue Dec 5

Women in Hellenistic Society

Required reading

Class Handouts;
Moodle session 23

24 Thu Dec 7

The Fall of the Hellenistic World – A Historical overview. The Coming of Rome.

Description

Visit to the Panathenaic Stadium.

Required reading

Green, 647-682;
Walbank, chapter 13.

N.B.: The course schedule, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and to keep up to date with current research.

Course Bibliography

The standard prescribed textbook for this course is the one by G. Shipley, "The Greek World after Alexander". However, during the course of the semester, students will be expected to become familiar with specific passages or chapters from other relevant works such as:

M.M. Austin, The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest
M. Cary, History of the Greek

World

P. Green, From Alexander to Actium

N. Hammond, The Genius of Alexander the Great

A. Stewart, The Faces of power

W. Tarn, G.T. Griffith, Hellenistic Civilisation

F.W. Walbank, The Hellenistic World

I. Worthington, Alexander the Great (ed.)

In addition, further background or specialist reading material and resources, including passages from ancient sources (in translation) as well as epigraphic texts, are available on the course Moodle page. Detailed instructions on how to go about using them are available at the top section of each session.