

Study guide for the final exam

Bring one or two blue books, any size, to the exam. The final exam is worth 20% of the course grade (200 points out of 1000). The final exam is similar to the midterm, but you have one hour and fifty minutes to complete it. It emphasizes material covered after the midterm (the second batch of theories, Egypt, the Indus region, China, and the Archaic Norte Chico and Initial Period of Peru), but uses concepts from the first part of the course (definitions, theories, ideas such as redistribution), and may include comparisons with Mesopotamia.

The test has three parts. In the first, you answer half a dozen short questions that call for a few phrases or sentences that deal with fairly cut-and-dried topics. In the next, you write three essay answers, from a paragraph to a few pages long. You choose between two questions for each of these. The third section has maps like the ones on the class website, but without the dots and labels. Each has a list of geographical terms that you mark on the map. The map questions cover only places and features labeled on the maps on the website: the world map of “pristine” civilizations; southwest Asia, Anatolia, and the Nile; the Indus region; China; and the places we have covered from the map of the Andes. There are no questions about modern nations.

Suggestions for studying: Review the readings, notes, slides, and other items on the class web page. Identify important points and arguments for each theme, time period, or place. That is, be able to answer questions like "Why must we distinguish Upper from Lower Egypt?", "What happened in the Longshan Horizon?" or "What was notable about Caral?". Even if the exam doesn't ask those questions, you will know that information for other questions. Also, try contrasting different places, periods, or regions. For example, “how was the culture of Upper Egypt in Naqada II similar to, and different from, the Yangshao culture?” or “How was Mohenjo Daro similar to and different from Caral?” Comparisons help you pick out the significant features of each site or period. Some of the items, especially the last few, might be helpful to discuss with classmates as a way to exercise the course material.

Examples of the kinds of questions that might be on the final exam:

1. Contrast the environments and subsistence systems of three regions we have covered. How might these have affected the processes that led to complex societies in each case?
2. Discuss evidence for or against redistribution and the concentration and control of surplus in two cases other than Sumer, and the role of redistribution in increasing social complexity.
3. What was hyperurbanism, how might it have affected the development of social complexity, and in which of the cases that we have looked at does it appear to have been important?
4. Describe and compare the monumental architecture and/or large-scale public works of Egypt before the Old Kingdom, Mature Harrapan society, China up through the Shang dynasty, the Late Archaic sites of the Norte Chico of Peru, and coastal Andean sites of the Initial Period.
5. Discuss the pattern of cultural, military, and political unification in Egypt, and a range of evidence and arguments that provide hints about what happened.
6. In what ways did Harrapan civilization apparently differ from other cases we have considered, and what evidence suggests that this was the case?

7. Know the theories about complex society and their names well enough to answer a question like “Describe and explain Wittfogel’s hydraulic hypothesis” about the following theories:
 - Karl Wittfogel’s “hydraulic hypothesis”
 - V. Gordon Childe’s “social surplus” theory
 - Robert Carneiro’s “circumscription” theory
 - William Sanders and Barbara Price’s “success in competition” theory
 - David Webster’s “war finance” theory
 - Elman Service’s “managerial benefits” theory
 - Allen Johnson and Timothy Earle’s “economics of population growth” theory
 - William Rathje’s “resource-deficient core” theory
 - Elizabeth Brumfiel’s “individual and class strategy” approach
8. Would Rathje’s resource-deficient core theory help to explain the emergence of complex society in Egypt? In the Norte Chico of Peru in the Archaic Period? Why or why not?
 - ... and other combinations of theories and cases.
9. Compare and contrast the complex societies of Early Dynastic Egypt and the Indus region, and the processes that gave rise to them.
 - ... and other combinations of societies we have covered.
10. Was Yangshao society a civilization? Why or why not? Using what definition or characteristics?
 - ... and other combinations of definitions, cases, and periods.
11. What does "institutionalized violence" refer to in Chinese prehistory? What might its role(s) have been in the emergence of complex society there? Discuss how this concept does or does not fit with evidence from two other cases we covered.
12. Discuss the nature and development of social hierarchy in China up through the Shang dynasty, and a range of evidence that suggests it. Could the model suggested by Chinese archaeologists apply to other cases, too? Which ones? What evidence might you look for to check?
13. Discuss how the Norte Chico of Peru challenges traditional ideas about complex society, the evidence that suggests this, and a scenario that has been proposed to explain Late Archaic Supe valley society.
14. Describe and contrast the nature, evidence for, and uses of early writing in Mesopotamia, the Indus region, Egypt, and China. What can we learn about the development of these societies from looking at their writing systems?
15. Do you think that warfare is a necessary feature of the development of complex society? Why or why not, using evidence from the cases we have considered in this course?
16. How do advancements in technology fit into the emergence of civilization, based on the definitions, theories, and cases we have covered in this course?
17. What role(s) do you think that religion and/or beliefs about the supernatural play in the emergence of complex society? Illustrate with examples from two or more cases we covered.