

Emergence of Civilizations  
Anthropology 341.1, Spring 2009  
Tues & Thurs 4:00-5:15  
Stevenson 2065

<http://bruceowen.com/emciv/a341-09s-1.htm>

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## Emergence of Civilizations

Most of us would say that we live in a “civilization”. But what *is* a civilization? Are all civilizations basically the same, or are there fundamentally different kinds? When did civilization start, and where? How did civilization begin, and why? Was there only one path to civilization, or many? How can we know, anyway?

**Objectives:** In this course, you will gain a richer understanding of the “civilized” society we live in today, the processes that led to the beginnings of history, and the similarities and differences among the first civilizations around the world. You will also sharpen your critical thinking and writing skills, because I expect you not only to learn facts and ideas, but also to think, evaluate, synthesize, and write. Specifically, you will

- 1) learn concepts and methods that social scientists use to understand different societies.
- 2) work with theories that help to explain how complex social systems emerged.
- 3) study archaeological and other forms of evidence of increasing social complexity in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus region, China, and the Andes, in their geographic, ecological, and chronological context.
- 4) use the concepts to interpret the evidence, and the evidence to evaluate the theories.
- 5) come to appreciate the differences and commonalities of the conditions in which complex societies developed, the processes of change in each, and the societies themselves.
- 6) develop your reasoning and writing skills by using the evidence to support arguments in brief but properly referenced papers, as well as written exams.

**Roadmap of the course:** We will start by looking at what societies may have been like before “civilization” arose, from foraging bands to the first farming towns. We will pick up some anthropological concepts, think about what we mean by “civilization”, and consider some theories about how and why it came about. Then we will examine some early civilizations, starting with Mesopotamia in some detail, and progressing around the globe with briefer comparative cases. You will evaluate the ideas and the archaeological evidence in three brief written assignments, explaining the evidence and arguments that support your conclusions. By the end, you should know a bit about what actually happened in a few crucial times and places in prehistory, and you should understand some ideas about how and why the changes that led to civilization took place.

This course addresses the specific problem of the initial emergence of civilization. It is not a general introduction to prehistory. We cannot cover every civilization, nor consider the vast spans of time that preceded and followed the emergence of the first civilizations. We also won't focus much on the methods of archaeology itself, but you will get a taste of them as we go.

**GE requirement:** This course satisfies the upper division World History and Civilization (D2) General Education requirement. For more information on the Mission, Goals and Objectives of General Education at SSU, see

<http://www.sonoma.edu/aa/ap/generaleducation.shtml>

**Class web page:** You are responsible for checking the class web page regularly. It will change during the semester, and it takes precedence over information in this syllabus. The assigned readings, lecture notes and slides, homework assignments, due dates, and other information will all be posted there. Note that this is *not* a WebCT page. You can click to the class web page from the SSU “Class web pages” list, or go to:

<http://bruceowen.com/emciv/a341-09s-1.htm>

**Class User ID and password:** Due to copyright issues, you need a class user ID and password to access some material on the class web page. These are *not* the same ID and password that you use for other SSU functions. I will provide them in class. If you forget them, ask or email me.

**Schedule of readings, assignments, etc:** The schedule of readings, assignments, due dates, and tests is posted on the class web page. Please read the selections *before* the class session. Readings range from none to 34 pages per class meeting, averaging around 20. You don't need to memorize all the details. Instead, read to understand the main points and overall picture, to round out examples discussed in class, and to find facts for your assignments. Most class sessions begin with a short quiz on that day's readings.

**Textbook and online readings:** This course has one textbook, plus extensive online readings, maps, charts, and other material posted on the class website. I suggest that you print the online items, so you can write notes in the margins, highlight, and refer to them in class. The book is

Wenke, Robert J., and Deborah I. Olszewski

2007 *Patterns in Prehistory: Humankind's First Three Million Years*. Fifth edition. Oxford University Press, USA. ISBN 0-19-516928-X (Paperback)

New and used copies are available at North Light Books & Cafe, 550 East Cotati Ave., next to Oliver's Market in the shopping complex on East Cotati Ave. (707 792-4300). North Light is a locally-owned small business with lower prices and better service than the campus bookstore.

**Lecture notes and slides:** My lecture notes and Powerpoint slides used in class will be posted on the web page. The notes will generally be posted before the class, while the slides will be posted after the class. The notes are useful for studying and finding information for the assignments, but they are no substitute for attending class and doing the reading. Some students print the lecture notes before class and add their own notes to them during the class discussion.

**Assignments and their weights in grading:**

15% **Reading quizzes** (about 0.7% each). Three multiple-choices questions about the reading at the start of most class sessions.

15% **First essay.** A two to three page essay, plus bibliography, in which you argue whether or not Çatal Hüyük fits one of the provided definitions of a city, using and properly citing evidence from the course material and optionally information from additional sources. The

emphases are on clear reasoning, use of evidence to support your conclusions, and practicing academic handling of references. Details will be posted on the class website.

15% **Second essay.** A similar three to four page essay, plus bibliography, in which you use a definition of civilization and archaeological evidence to determine in what culture and period civilization first emerged in Mesopotamia. Again, details will be posted on the website.

15% **Third essay.** Another three to four page essay, plus bibliography, in which you evaluate to what extent a theory about the emergence of civilization was true in your choice of regions covered in this class. Details will be posted on the website.

20% **In-class midterm.** Short-answer and essay questions, and maps on which you mark important places and regions. The map questions are drawn only from the standardized maps posted on the class web page.

20% **Final exam.** Similar to the midterm, emphasizing the cases covered in the second part of the course, but using many foundational concepts from the first part.

**Grading scheme:** This course is graded on a curve, with the minimum score for a B- set near the median, and the grading ranges adjusted to reflect the performance of the class.

**Submitting assignments:** The written assignments must be submitted BOTH on paper, AND as a file attached to an email message to me. I will return the paper copy with comments and a grade written on it. The paper copy is due in class on the day indicated on the syllabus. The computer file OF THE IDENTICAL PAPER is due by midnight of that day. I must have BOTH versions to give you credit. Details on submitting files will be included in the assignment information.

**Late assignment policy:** I will accept assignments up to one week late with a 15% grading penalty. I will consider an assignment to be on time if EITHER the hard copy OR the computer file reaches me by the deadline. I must eventually receive both in order to give you credit.

**Drafts:** I encourage you to submit drafts of the assignments so that I can comment on them and suggest directions for the final version. Email is fastest, but I will also look at paper drafts.

**Email:** I usually reply to emails within 24 hours. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, assume that I did not get your message and try again.

**Invitation:** If you want help, or would just like to talk about anthropology, assignments, preparing for tests, archaeology, or anything else, please drop by during my office hours, arrange to see me at some other time, or contact me by email. I am here to help you master the material.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is using someone else's words, information, or ideas *without giving that person credit*. This includes copying from your peers, websites, or other public sources, even brief phrases, on tests, papers, or any other work. Plagiarism is immoral and dishonest. It is easy to avoid: just indicate all of your sources. Plagiarism results in penalties up to an F for the course. I have failed numerous students for plagiarism. University policy requires me to report plagiarism, and the University may impose sanctions up to expulsion. A more complete explanation, including advice on how to use material without plagiarizing, is posted on the class website. University polices about plagiarism and cheating are available through the University Policies link below. Format guidelines for citations in the essays will also be posted.

**Disability accommodations:** If you have a disability and you think you may require accommodations, please register with the campus office of Disability Services for Students (DSS), located in Salazar Hall - Room 1049, Phone: (707) 664-2677, TTY/TDD: (707) 664-2958. DSS will provide you with written confirmation of your verified disability and authorize recommended accommodations. You must present this authorization to me before I can make any accommodations. If you have a letter from DSS indicating that you are entitled to academic accommodations, please bring it to me so we can discuss arrangements. If you think you may require assistance evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, please let me know what type of assistance you think you may need.

**University policies:** There are important University policies that you should be aware of, such as the add/drop policy; cheating and plagiarism policy, grade appeal procedures, accommodations for students with disabilities and the diversity vision statement. You can see them at:

<http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/studentinfo.shtml>

**Final exam:** Thursday, May 21, 5:00-6:50, in our regular classroom, Stevenson 2065.