

## **SGBI 451: Ancient to Early Modern World**

Fall 2021

MWF 8:00-9:05am

Seybert Classroom

Professor: Adam Kotsko, akotsko@noctrl.edu

Office: Seybert 102 (floor below advisors)

Office Hours: 9:15-10:35 MWF

### **Course Description**

The Integrative Studies sequence is the capstone of the Shimer curriculum, representing a historical survey reaching from the earliest surviving human documents to our present situation. While many such narrative sequences could be constructed, ours will take the form of a critical assessment of what has been known as the “Western tradition.” Our starting point will be the claim that this “tradition”—which is itself a relatively recent historical construct—is not a smooth narrative of inevitable progress but instead a story filled with cultural rivalry, conflict, conquest, and cultural appropriation. Among our guiding themes will be the nature of the city, which carries with it a whole range of questions relating to the shape of political life and the sources of political legitimacy.

Our materials for the fall term will cover representative materials from the Mesopotamian, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Christian, and Islamic traditions, and we will also devote attention to important contemporary reflections on each historical period. Historically, many students have found this material to be the most challenging in the Integrative Studies sequence, as it reflects worldviews and values that are often foreign to and even directly at odds with contemporary expectations. The Shimer faculty believes that an immersive experience of such materials is a valuable exercise that Shimer seniors are particularly well-prepared for. The coursework you have completed so far has equipped you with intellectual tools that will enable you to grasp the course materials on their own terms, to carry out a responsible critical assessment, and to bring texts into dialogue from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate fundamental similarities, differences, borrowings, and conflicts among major global traditions from ancient to medieval times.
- Offer historical accounts for developments within and between social, political, cultural and intellectual aspects of these traditions.
- Relate contemporary ideas and issues to those presented in historical texts with attention to continuities and discontinuities between them.
- Consistently demonstrate a high level of intellectual rigor and generosity in the discussion of challenging and widely varied materials.

### **Required Course Readings**

*New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha*. ISBN 9780190276072.

*The Epic of Gilgamesh*. ISBN 9780140441000.

*Inanna: The Queen of Heaven*. ISBN 0060908548.

Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*. ISBN 9780804761604.  
James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. ISBN 9780300182910.  
Homer, *The Iliad* (trans. Fagles). ISBN 9780140275360.  
Simone Weil and Rachel Bephaloff, *War and the Iliad*. ISBN 9781590171455.  
Aeschylus, *The Oresteia* (trans. Green and Doniger). ISBN 9780226007724.  
Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. ISBN 9780140440393.  
Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* ISBN 9780674013735  
Sappho, *Sappho* (trans. Barnard). ISBN 9780520272934.  
Virgil, *The Aeneid* (trans. Fagles). ISBN 9780143105138.  
Augustine, *City of God*. ISBN 9780140448948.  
M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (trans.), *The Qur'an*. ISBN 9780199535958.  
Lenn Evan Goodman (trans.), *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale*. ISBN 9780226303109.  
Husain Haddawy (trans.), *The Arabian Nights*. ISBN 9780393331660.  
Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (trans.), *The Laiis of Marie de France*. ISBN 9780140447590.  
Mark Musa (trans.), *The Portable Dante*. ISBN 9780142437544.  
Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*. ISBN 0674171039.

Additional readings are available on Blackboard and marked as follows: (\*\*)

### Student Assessment

Each student's grade will be based 60% on class participation and 40% on written presentations.

*Class participation* presupposes careful and thorough preparation and serious intellectual involvement in class discussion. Students should come to class not only having read the text through, but having underlined, taken notes, and scanned over the marked text at least one additional time after the initial reading. On the basis of such preparation, students should be prepared for an intensive, text-focused discussion.

My expectation for class participation is that every member of class will be able to contribute with remarks and citations that are on-topic and reflect solid preparation for class. A student who meets that baseline will receive a grade in the **B range** for their participation portion. Students whose contribution is notably lacking—for instance, those who speak very little, who give no evidence of having done the reading carefully, who consistently change the topic in a disruptive way, or whose primary contributions are jokes or personal anecdotes—will receive a participation grade in the **C or D range**. Students who distinguish themselves through some particular service—such as consistently contributing new topics that shape the discussion, serving as a resource for navigating the text, or making a special effort to draw in quieter classmates—will qualify themselves for a participation grade in the **A range**.

The baseline condition for class participation is of course physical presence in class. Absences not only affect the individual student, but the entire group, and the same is true of habitual lateness. Punctual attendance should be regarded as mandatory. Lateness will count against a student's participation for that session, and in extreme cases will be treated as the equivalent of an absence. An increasing number of absences carries with it increasing consequences, which are as follows:

1-2 absences No grade penalty, in recognition of our shared human frailties. (If students miss fewer than two classes, however, then in cases where a student is at the threshold between two grades, the professor will go with the higher one.)

3-5 absences A half letter grade is deducted from the student's final grade for each absence; this penalty may be lifted by doing an absence make-up for each missed class.

6-8 absences For each absence, the student *must* complete an absence make-up (described below) to avoid failing the course, and a half letter grade penalty is imposed on the student's final grade which *cannot* be made up.

9 absences Automatic failure of the course.

In order to make up for an absence, students must write a paper summarizing and reflecting on the day's reading (2 *full* pages, double spaced) or schedule a meeting of at least 15 minutes to discuss the reading with the professor. Absence make-ups must be completed **within two weeks** of the absence being made up.

*Written presentations* will take two forms: a *protocol* and a *contextualization paper*. Students will be required to do two protocols (25% of writing grade each) and one contextualization paper (50% of writing grade). All written presentations will receive a letter grade. At least one paper must be presented prior to midterm (Friday, October 15).

A *protocol* is a brief paper (between 4 and 5 *full* pages double-spaced) that distills and expands upon our discussion in order to help us keep the most salient points from both the reading and our collective deliberations in mind as we move on to our next reading. Students will sign up to cover a class day of their choice and must send their completed protocol to the professor *and their fellow students* in advance of the following class day, when it will be orally presented at the beginning of the first session. *Please do not waste time and paper printing copies to share with the class*; your fellow students can decide for themselves whether they desire a hard copy. If you cannot attend class on the day of your presentation, you are still responsible to submit it on time; another class member will then read it on your behalf.

The professor will make available an online sign-up sheet. You may switch protocol dates up to 24 hours prior to the beginning of the class in which they are to be presented, with the permission of the instructor (and, if applicable, the student with whom you are switching). You may make up *one* missed protocol by signing up for another open slot (provided any remain); all subsequent missed protocols will result in an F.

The baseline assumption for a protocol is that it accurately and fairly reflect key points from the course materials and discussion, in such a way that a student who was absent would have a good idea of what went on in class that day; a paper that achieves this goal competently will receive a grade in the **B range**, while papers that fall noticeably short of this goal will receive a lower grade. The best protocol will be one that manages to gather together materials from the readings and discussion into an original argument of their own, not merely reflecting but building upon what happened in class; a paper that achieves this higher goal will receive a grade in the **A range**. In no case is the student expected simply to summarize the discussion or address every

point raised in class; the student may respond directly to specific claims, ask questions based on the discussion, or even point us toward important topics that we missed.

A *contextualization paper* is a brief paper (between 4 and 5 *full* pages double-spaced) that provides relevant **historical background** on the basis of independent library research. A contextualization paper should be guided by a question that the student has about a reading and its historical reception or influence.

Students may sign up for their contextualization paper in advance, but they may prefer to wait until a particularly compelling question arises in class discussion. In either case, the contextualization paper must be submitted via e-mail to the professor and all students *within three class days* of the last class session in which we discussed the text on which the student plans to write (hence a paper focused on Book 1 of the *Iliad*, for instance, would need to be completed within three class days of the last session in which we discussed *any* portion of the *Iliad*). Multiple students may write on the same reading as long as they are not using the same secondary sources. If there is no protocol on the day a contextualization paper is to be presented, it will be presented at the beginning of the first class session of the day; if there is also a protocol, it may be read either before the protocol or at the beginning of the second session of the day, as the author and their classmates prefer.

The baseline assumption is that a contextual paper will engage significantly with *at least one peer-reviewed scholarly journal article or book chapter*. (An unassigned chapter from one of the secondary works used in class could count as the latter.) The paper should accurately summarize the overall argument of the article or chapter, highlight the points most relevant to the student's guiding question, and provide at least some reflection on how the knowledge gleaned through this research might influence our view of the text in question; a paper that achieves these goals will receive a grade in the **B range**. A paper that achieves the same goals while drawing on the editorial matter provided as part of a course text (e.g., editorial introduction, footnotes, etc.) will receive a grade in the **C or D range**. The best contextualization paper will achieve the same goals as a B paper while drawing on more than one secondary source and/or engage in a detailed critical assessment of the secondary source(s) with extensive citation from the primary course text; a paper that achieves this goal will receive a grade in the **A range**. All contextualization papers must include a full bibliography of *all* sources cited (including primary course texts) in a standard documentation style; failure to include this will result in an F.

Distracting copy-editing errors, sloppy citations, and usage of unusually large font sizes or margins will result in a grade penalty independently of the quality of the paper's content. Papers that receive a D or F may be rewritten; all rewrites must be submitted no later than the beginning of the third class session after the initial presentation. All papers must be **emailed to the professor and one's fellow students** prior to class time. Please do not waste time and paper printing copies unless absolutely necessary.

#### **Note on Institutional Policies**

Please note that the college-wide policy on plagiarism holds for this class and that student assignments may be run through plagiarism-detection software at the professor's discretion. Plagiarism is a very serious academic and ethical offence that can lead to failure of the

assignment or course—or, after multiple instances, expulsion from college. Please consult the Student Handbook for more details of the plagiarism policy. All other institutional policies apply equally, including those related to accommodations for students with learning disabilities or differences and Title IX protections. More details on those policies are available in the Student Handbook, and students are encouraged to approach the professor with any questions or concerns they may have.

### Class and Reading Schedule

Wednesday	August 25	<i>Gilgamesh</i> (whole text)
Friday	August 27	<i>Innana</i> , p. xii-49; Bible: Song of Songs
Monday	August 30	<i>Innana</i> , pp. 51-111
Wednesday	September 1	Bible: Exodus 1-20, 24, 32-34; Deuteronomy 9-11
Friday	September 3	“Ancient Legal Codes” (**); Deuteronomy 12-15, 19-23
Monday	September 6	<b>NO CLASS—Labor Day</b>
Wednesday	September 8	Bible: Leviticus 17-26; Douglas, “The Abominations of Leviticus” (**)
Friday	September 10	Assmann, <i>Price of Monotheism</i> , intro, ch. 1
Monday	September 13	Assmann, <i>Price of Monotheism</i> , chs. 2 and 5, conclusion
Wednesday	September 15	Scott, <i>Against the Grain</i> , Introduction, chaps. 1, 2
Friday	September 17	Scott, <i>Against the Grain</i> , chaps. 5-6
Monday	September 20	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> , Books 1-3
Wednesday	September 22	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> , Books 5, 6, 9
Friday	September 24	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> , Books 12, 14, 16, 18
Monday	September 27	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> , Books 19, 22, 24
Wednesday	September 29	Simone Weil, “The Iliad or The Poem of Force” (in <i>War and the Iliad</i> )
Friday	October 1	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , selections from Book 2 (363A-366D; pp. 54-58, 376E-end; pp. 69-76), Book 3 (386A-392C; pp. 77-84), Book 10 (595A-601B; pp. 294-301, 604E-608B; pp. 306-309, 614b-end; pp. 315-322) [Note: Page numbers come from Sachs translation used in SGBS 102.]
Monday	October 4	Aeschylus, <i>Agamemnon</i> (in <i>Oresteia</i> )
Wednesday	October 6	Aeschylus, <i>Libation Bearers</i> (in <i>Oresteia</i> )
Friday	October 8	Aeschylus, <i>Eumenides</i> (in <i>Oresteia</i> )
Monday	October 11	Thucydides, <i>Peloponnesian War</i> , Book 1, §§1-56, 66-88 (pp. 35-68, 72-87)

Wednesday	October 13	Thucydides, <i>Peloponnesian War</i> , Book 2, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration” and “The Plague” (pp. 143-156); Book 3, “The Mytilenian Debate” (pp. 212-223); Book V, “The Melian Dialogue” (pp. 400-408)
Friday	October 15	Hadot, <i>What is Ancient Philosophy?</i> Introduction, Part I (chaps. 1-4)
Monday	October 18	<b>Fall Break—NO CLASS</b> Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , Books 1-2, 4 Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , Books 6, 7 (lines 1-551), 8
Wednesday	October 20	
Friday	October 22	
Monday	October 25	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> , Books 10 (lines 427-631), 11-12
Wednesday	October 27	Bible: The Gospel according to Luke
Friday	October 29	Bible: Acts of the Apostles
Monday	November 1	“Acts of Paul and Thecla” (**); Perpetua, "Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity" (**)
Wednesday	November 3	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book 14, chs. 1-15, 27-28
Friday	November 5	Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book 19, chs. 4-17, 21, 24-28
Monday	November 8	Qur'an, Sura 2
Wednesday	November 10	Qu’ran, Suras 17, 3 (order given is chronological)
Friday	November 12	Ibn Tufayl, <i>Hayy Ibn Yaqzan</i> , pp. 95-166
Monday	November 15	<i>Arabian Nights</i> , pp. xi-xiv, 9-80
Wednesday	November 17	<i>The Lais of Marie de France</i> : Guigemar, Bisclavret, Lanval, Yonec, Laüstic, Milun (others optional)
Friday	November 19	Dante, <i>Divine Comedy: Inferno</i> , Cantos 1-11
Monday	November 22	<b>NO CLASS—Professor travelling for conference</b>
Wednesday	November 25	<b>NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break</b>
Friday	November 27	<b>NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break</b>
Monday	November 29	Dante, <i>Divine Comedy: Inferno</i> , Cantos 12-23
Wednesday	December 1	Dante, <i>Divine Comedy: Inferno</i> , Cantos 24-34
Friday	December 3	Dante, <i>Divine Comedy: Purgatory</i> , Cantos 1-2, 9-12, 16-18, 27, 30 ( <i>Note</i> : for this and subsequent Dante reading, read summaries for skipped cantos)
Monday	December 6	Dante, <i>Divine Comedy: Paradise</i> , Cantos 1, 6-7, 10, 13, 17, 23, 30-33
Wednesday	December 8	Kuhn, <i>Copernican Revolution</i> , chs. 4-5
Friday	December 10	Kuhn, <i>Copernican Revolution</i> , chs. 6-7
Thursday	December 16	<b>All late work due by 12 noon</b>