

**WORLD PREHISTORY (SOCA 359)**  
**FALL 2006**  
**WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY**

Instructor: Dr. Amy J. Hirshman

Office Phone: 304-293-5801 x3214

Office: 301 Knapp Hall

Email: [ahirshma@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:ahirshma@mix.wvu.edu)

(When using email, indicate that you are in SOCA 359 in the subject line; I do not text message, so please do not assume I know all of the abbreviations.)

Lectures: MWF 1:30-2:20 pm; 112 Armstrong Hall

Office Hours: MWF 2:30 – 3:30 pm and by appointment

**Course Description and Objectives:**

“World Prehistory” and the “Rise of Civilizations” evoke romantic notions of dusty ruins, ancient palaces, and, often, of people living in harmony with nature and one another. At once evocative and comforting, “civilization” is often thought of as one the highest achievements of humanity: a “blessing” bestowed upon us from the peoples of the past. We will evaluate this “blessing” from the perspective of the past and find that in reality, the good is mixed with the bad.

In this class we will define and describe “civilizations,” social complexity, and related concepts using anthropological, archaeological, and historical insights. We will consider the different theoretical positions used to understand, describe, and explain the emergence of social complexity. In order to assess these ideas, we will consider the roots of social complexity, the earliest case studies of social complexity, and the collapse of early complex social systems.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, I expect students to be able to:

- 1) Define and describe the concept of ‘civilization,’ social complexity, and associated terms;
- 2) Identify and discuss key theories on the emergence of social complexity;
- 3) Identify and compare the 6 core regions of the world where “civilization” first emerged;
- 4) Evaluate archaeological evidence for the emergence of social complexity
- 5) Find scholarly journal articles and be able to abstract them for current and future research applications.

**Required Textbook:**

Wenke, Robert J. and Deborah I. Olszewski. 2007. *Patterns in Prehistory: Humankind’s First Three Million Years*. Oxford University Press, New York. ISBN: 0-19-516928-X

Additionally, two articles will be available in/through the Downtown Library:

Painter, Robert. 1989. The archaeology of equality and inequality. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18:369-99.

Cowgill, George L. 1988. Onward and upward with collapse. In *The Collapse of Ancient States and Civilizations*, edited by N. Yoffee and G. L. Cowgill, pp. 244-276. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

**Required Supplies:**

- 2 new blue books
- Several sheets of clean plain or notebook paper

**Grading:**

Your final grade will be based on a combination of exams, in-class assignments, and attendance, as follows:

Exams (1 x 100) + (1 x 150) points=	250	(48%)
Article abstracts 10 x 25 points=	250	(48%)
Class Participation 10 points=	10	( 2%)
<u>Attendance 10 points=</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>( 2%)</u>
Total	520 points	(100%)

**Examinations:** Each examination will consist of essay questions. The questions for each exam will be based on material from both your readings and class meetings. **Each student is required to bring a new, clean bluebook to each exam.** Once the first exam has been completed and turned in by a student, no new exams will be passed out to latecomers. No student will be allowed to leave the room once the exam is passed out and allowed to return; once you leave the room you are considered to have finished the exam.

**Make-up examination policy:** Students absent from regularly scheduled examinations because of authorized University activities will have the opportunity to take them at an alternate time. Such make-up exams will be of comparable difficulty to the original examination. Make-up examinations will be held on Fridays from 2:30 to 4:30 pm in the division of Sociology and Anthropology (307 Knapp Hall). You must take your make-up exam within one week of your missed exam (e.g., the following Friday). You must show your Student ID and sign in to take the make-up exam. *At the instructor's discretion*, an alternate make-up may be allowed. Alternates make-up examinations are very rare. Failure to take the make-up examination in accordance with these guidelines will result in a 0 score for that exam.

Make-up examinations for students who miss examinations for reasons other than authorized University activities are extremely rare and will be **provided only in the case of extreme and rare events**. The make-up guidelines detailed above will also be applied to the *very few (if any)* students who fall into this category.

**Article abstracts:** A key skill in academic research is being able to distinguish scholarly work, and then to be able identify and summarize the argument and supporting data in published scholarly work. In this class we will be given two articles (one at the beginning and one at the end of class) to read and abstract. These articles will be on reserve in the Additionally, each student will be asked to identify, locate, read, and abstract three articles of interest and importance to their civilization area of interest as well as one article for each of the other civilizations (*for a total of 10 abstracts*). One of the three for your area of interest *may* be an article from the bibliography provided in the textbook (and may also be an older article). The other articles must be in addition to the bibliography in the textbook and be scholarly in their scope. Due dates are noted on the syllabus schedule. A detailed assignment handout will be posted on MIX as well as a grading rubric. *Late abstracts will be accepted for up to one additional class period only and will automatically have 3 points deducted.* Please note that while you are tracking articles for each civilization, you can also comparatively track topics of interest in multiple civilizations.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend every class and are responsible for all class assignments, lectures, notes, films, and exams whether they are in class or not. Anthropology is a discipline that requires evaluative thinking, not simply rote memorization; therefore the instructor presumes students who attend class are learning more than those students who do not. I believe that attendance is important for your overall comprehension; taking attendance helps me learn your names. Attendance will be taken at the start or end of every class. Six or fewer absences from class will result in the addition of 10 points to a student score. More absences will result in the loss of all attendance points.

**Class Participation:** "Class participation" is (unfortunately) a somewhat subjective grade. There will be a few class activities that may involve individual or group mini-projects or response papers. These items will not count toward your final grade, per se, but they will allow all of us to assess our collective

teaching and learned efforts. For your class participation grade, students will be graded on the following criteria:

- 10 points=consistent attendance, promptly turned abstract assignments, positive contributions to small and large group discussions, thoughtful participation on in-class assignments;
- 5 points=inconsistent attendance, late abstract assignments, inconsistent or poor contributions to small and large groups, careless participation on in-class assignments;
- 0 points=rarely in attendance, consistently late abstract assignments, poor or no contributions to small and large groups; sloppy to negative participation on in-class assignments.

**Challenging Assigned Grades:** All assigned grades on student work may be challenged. The challenge must be written (preferably typed) and made **within** one week of the return of the assignment or exam to the class as a whole. The challenge must include: the question or issue, the graded answer, your answer, and a persuasive argument as to why you believe your answer is correct. (Please note that stating you are “two points away” from the grade you desire is not a persuasive argument!). Please note that the reexamination of graded materials may result in either a higher or lower grade.

**Final Grades:** The following scale will be used to determine final grades:

- A = 90% - 100% = 468 – 520 points
- B = 80% - 89% = 416 – 467 points
- C = 70% - 79% = 364 – 415 points
- D = 60% - 69% = 312 – 363 points
- F = 59% and below = 311 points and below

**Withdrawals:** **The student, not the instructor, is solely responsible to initiate and complete a withdrawal from this course.** The instructor will not provide a “W” grade for non-attendance. You will receive the grade earned, which may be an F.

### **Academic Integrity:**

Each student is expected to submit work that is original and solely the product of the student or the group of students given the assignment. Plagiarism, cheating, falsification of data, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated.

### **Social Justice Statement:**

“West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services. (293-6700)”

### **Additional Information:**

Important information for students regarding West Virginia University’s policies and procedures concerning academic discipline, academic integrity, the student code of conduct, and disciplinary measure instructors can take is located in your Student Handbook. I urge you to familiarize yourself with this information.

**Instructor's absence or college closure:**

In the unforeseen event of the instructor's absence or the cancellation of classes by West Virginia University, the class schedule may be amended to accommodate all necessary course material. This may include the pushing back of assignments to the next class period, such as reading assignments and papers. However, exams and quizzes may still be held in the case of instructor absence. All changes will be announced in class and via email: do not assume!

**Lecture and Reading Schedule:**

*This schedule may be amended according to our needs in keeping with the goals of this course. You should come to class prepared, having read the assignment for that day. "W/O" refers to the Wenke and Olszewski textbook.*

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
M	8/21	Introduction	
W	8/23	Key Concepts	
F	8/25	Archaeology	W/O 1
M	8/28	Archaeology	W/O 2
W	8/30	Theoretical constructs	W/O7
F	9/1	Library: Meet in Room 136--	Downtown Library, Lower Level
M	9/4	No school	
W	9/6	Theoretical constructs	
F	9/8	Domestication	W/O 6
M	9/11	Domestication	
W	9/13	Domestication	
F	9/15	Mesopotamia	W/O 8; Sumer summaries due
M	9/18	Mesopotamia	
W	9/20	Mesopotamia	
F	9/22	Mesopotamia	
M	9/25	Mesopotamia	
W	9/27	Mesopotamia	
F	9/29	Exam #1	
M	10/2	Egypt	W/O 9; Egypt summaries due
W	10/4	Egypt	
F	10/6	Egypt	
M	10/9	Egypt	
W	10/11	Indus	W/O 10; Indus summaries due
F	10/13	Indus	
M	10/16	Sumer-Egypt-Harappan	
W	10/18	Sumer-Egypt-Harappan	
F	10/20	China	W/O 11; China summaries due
M	10/23	China	
W	10/25	China	
F	10/27	Mesoamerica	W/O 13; Mesoamerican summaries due
M	10/30	Mesoamerica	
W	11/1	Mesoamerica	
F	11/3	Mesoamerica	
M	11/6	Mesoamerica	
W	11/8	Mesoamerica	

F	11/10	Mesoamerica	
M	11/13	Mesoamerica	
W	11/15	Mesoamerica	
F	11/17	Tarascan Case Study	
M	11/27	The Andes	W/O 14; Andean summaries due
W	11/29	The Andes	
F	12/1	The Andes	
M	12/4	Elites, ecology, political power	W/O 16
W	12/6	Evolution/collapse	
F	12/8	Evolution/collapse	
T	12/12	Exam #3; 3:00 PM	