

HPSC0067 Science in the Ancient World

Course Syllabus

2023-24 session | Prof. Andrew Gregory | andrew.gregory@ucl.ac.uk

This course examines what the ancients (Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans) did in terms of healing practices, the observation of the heavens, technology and the conceptualisation of nature. It looks at what the ancients thought they were doing from their own perspective as far as possible. The course will be based around Prof. Gregory's books, Plato's Philosophy of Science, Ancient Greek Cosmogony, The Presocratics and the Supernatural, Anaximander: A Re-Assessment and Early Greek Philosophies of Nature.

Course Information

Basic course information

Course website:	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=41335
Moodle Website:	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=41335
Assessment:	1 x 1000 word critique, 1 x 2000 word essay
Timetable:	https://timetable.ucl.ac.uk/tt/homePage.do
Prerequisites:	None
Required texts:	None
Course tutor(s):	Prof. Andrew Gregory
Contact:	0207 679 2490
Web:	http://www.ucl.ac.uk/silva/sts/staff/gregory
Office location:	1.1 22 Gordon Square

Schedule

UCL Week	Topic	Date	Activity
6	Historiographies of Ancient Science	08/01/23	See Moodle
7	Egyptian and Babylonian Healing Practices	15/01/23	See Moodle
8	Magic, Religion and Early Greek Thought	22/01/23	See Moodle
9	Anaximander	29/01/23	See Moodle
10	Theories of Matter	05/02/23	See Moodle
11			
12	Early Greek Philosophies of Nature	19/02/23	See Moodle
13	Ancient Philosophies of Science	26/02/23	See Moodle
14	The Greek Cosmos	04/03/23	See Moodle
15	Alchemy and Astrology in the Ancient World	11/01/23	See Moodle
16	Ancient Mathematics and Music	18/01/23	See Moodle

Assessments

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit	Deadline for Tutors to provide Feedback
	Essay 1,000 words	28 February 2024	1000	
	Essay 2,000 words	22 April 2024	2000	

Assignments

- 1 – Critique of paper or chapter on ancient science.
- 2 – Essay on ancient science from essay list

Specific Criteria for Assessment for this Module:

The following are the main criteria on which your essay will be marked. There are no set numbers/ percentages associated with these criteria but we will give you qualitative feedback on each of these criteria. These are the criteria for an advanced undergraduate ancient science essay. Note that the emphases on these criteria change as we move to higher level essays. In higher level essays, there is less emphasis on referencing/ bibliography as we simply expect you to have got this right. There is much more emphasis on independent critique and historiography.

Referencing/ Bibliography

You need to get into the habit of referencing properly. You must reference all quotes and all references/ summaries of books, etc. Pick one system for referencing and stick to it. You need to supply a bibliography of all works referenced. You must supply author, title, date, place of publication and publisher.

Answers question?

Increasingly important in higher level essays and critical in exams. Read the question carefully, answer it specifically, do not give irrelevant material or answer other questions.

Introduction

You should give an introduction to your essay in no more than one paragraph. Introduce your topic and your line of argument, no more. Good introductions are concise and precise.

Clarity

We place great emphasis on clarity of argument and expression. Avoid ambiguity and vagueness. Try to keep your line of argument clear. It often helps clarity to divide the main body of the essay into sections.

Organisation

Is the essay organized into an introduction, main body and conclusion? Does each part flow naturally into the next one? Is the evidence in a logical order?

Argumentation

Is the main argument of the essay clear, coherent and persuasive? Is it properly supported by the evidence available? Appropriate and persuasive historical examples used?

Use of literature/use of quotation?

Does the essay make appropriate use of the literature, does it engage with the literature and does it use an appropriate number of sources? Does the essay quote the literature in an appropriate manner?

Conclusion

Your essay should have a conclusion which is clearly marked as such (new paragraph, 'In conclusion...'). It should be substantial in summing up what you have argued and exploring the implications of what you have argued. In higher level history essays, good substantial conclusions become increasingly more important.

Reading/ use of sources

How well have the readings and other resources been used? Does the essay reflect them accurately? Is the essay overly dependent on one source?

Independent critique?

Does the essay offer some independent critique or thought on the question or does it merely report what is in the literature? This criterion becomes increasingly more important for higher level history essays.

General Historiography?

How aware is the essay of assumptions and methods used to construct a history or to evaluate it? Is the essay aware of nuances/ critiques of the question asked?

Ancient Science Historiography?

How aware is the essay of specific historiography for ancient science? As appropriate, is the essay aware of issues of religion, art and magic and how they relate to science in the ancient world? Of issues about the nature of natural law and the use of mathematics in the ancient world.

Primary literature.

Does the essay make appropriate use of primary material? Please note that for this course it is NOT required that you engage with the primary material in the original language! You should though show evidence, where appropriate, of having examined the primary material in translation.

Aims & objectives**Aims:**

This course aims to examine the practices of several ancient cultures in areas such as healing, theory of matter, the origins of our world and the study of the heavens. How we should understand these ancient practices, and in what sense we should consider them to be sciences will be central concerns of the course. The ancient practices of alchemy and astrology will also be examined, as will the general relation of magic and science in the ancient world. Issues of the relation of religion and science in these various cultures will also be explored.

Objectives:

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Reading list - See Moodle Site

Best General Introductions - See Moodle site

Lecture Readings - See Moodle site