



HPSC0082

Title: Science in Antiquity

Syllabus

Session	2023-24
Web site	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=37549
Moodle site	https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=37549
Timetable	www.ucl.ac.uk/timetable

Description

This course examines the activities of the ancients in attempting to understand, predict and control the world around them. The main focus is the Greek 'investigation concerning nature' and its philosophical, religious and social context. We look at the study of the heavens, including theories of how the world came into being, medicine, mathematics and technology. We also look at how the Greeks thought of disciplines such as astrology and alchemy and how their activities related to magic. While the main focus is the Greeks, we also look at the Babylonian, Roman, Chinese and Arabic cultures, their medicine, technology and how they conceived of the world around them.

Key Information

Assessment	%100	3000 word essay
Prerequisites	None	
Required texts	None	

Module tutors

Module tutor	Prof. Andrew Gregory
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Web	http://www.ucl.ac.uk/silva/sts/staff/gregory
Office location	22 Gordon Square, Room 1.1
Office hours:	Wednesdays 1-2, Thursdays 1-2 and by appointment

Assistant	None
Contact	
Office location	
Office hours:	

Module plan

Schedule

	UCL Wk	Date	Topic	Activity
1		05/10/23	Introduction. Babylonian & Egyptian Science	Read (see Moodle site)
2		12/10/23	Ancient Medicine	Read (see Moodle site)
3		19/10/23	The Early Greeks: Magic, Religion and the Natural World	Read (see Moodle site)
4		26/10/23	Anaximander	Read (see Moodle site)
5		2/11/23	Early Greek Philosophies of Nature	Read (see Moodle site)
			Reading Week	no lectures
6		16/11/23	Ancient Theories of Matter	Read (see Moodle site)
7		23/11/23	Ancient Philosophies of Science	Read (see Moodle site)
8		30/11/23	The Ancient Cosmos	Read (see Moodle site)
9		7/12/23	Chinese and Arabic Science	Read (see Moodle site)
10		4/12/23	Alchemy & Astrology	Read (see Moodle site)

Reading list

Please see the Moodle site:

<https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=37549>

Assessment

Summary

	Description	Deadline	Word limit
1	Essay	10/01/24	3,000

Aims and 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

By the end of this module students should be able to:

Engage with an enhanced understanding of science in the ancient world and several themes which run through the history of science, such as the relation of science and religion, the relation of science and magic, how we construct models of the origins of the world and how we construct models of the universe.