

ANCIENT CITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
Classical Studies 2500B (Section 650)
The University of Western Ontario
Winter 2026
Asynchronous online with in-person exams



Site of Palmyra, Syria (Ron Van Oers © UNESCO)

Course Information

Ancient Cities is an introductory survey of the urban centers of the ancient Mediterranean, western Asian and Egyptian world. The course focuses on the archaeological remains of some of the earliest and most impressive cities and civilizations in human history, such as Babylon, Thebes, Mycenae, Athens, and Rome. Throughout the course, we will investigate the earliest signs of urban organization in the archaeological record and track the evolution of the physical layout and social organization of urban life through 10,000 years of history in Western Asia, Egypt and the Mediterranean. The course ends with an in-depth look at the urban centres of Greece and Rome.

Please note that this is an ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS course with an **IN-PERSON midterm test and final examination.**

Please also note that there are two instructors officially listed for this course: Maria Glanfield and Dr. Elizabeth Greene. **Maria Glanfield** will be the **primary instructor** and the **main point of contact** for any inquiries regarding the organization, content, and grading of the course.

Prerequisite(s): None

Antirequisite(s): The former CS 2902A/B (if taken in 2011-12, 2012-13)

Class Overview

Date: January 5 – April 9, 2026

Time: Asynchronous

Location: Online — we will use OWL Brightspace for class content and Zoom for office hours and optional meetings

Instructor Information

My name is Maria Glanfield and I will be your instructor for this course. Please call me Maria. I am a PhD student in the Department of Classical Studies. I have been attending Western as a classical studies student since my undergraduate degree, and I even took this course as a student myself! My research focuses on Roman archaeology, especially that of the Roman imperial provinces in western Europe and western Asia, and 3D imaging techniques in archaeology. I took part in the Vindolanda Field School at Western in 2019 and immediately fell in love with Vindolanda, a Roman military fort near Hadrian's wall in northern England. I have been working with the archaeological material at Vindolanda since then, and much of my 3D imaging work involves 3D scanning the amazing Roman shoes, leather, and writing tablets found there. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like to discuss anything archaeology related!

Primary Instructor: Maria Glanfield (She/Her)

Email: mglanfie@uwo.ca

In-Person Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30 pm or by appointment

Online Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30-1:30 pm or by appointment

Secondary Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Greene (She/Her)

Email: egreene2@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Office Hour: TBA

Course Description & Goals:

In the first few weeks of the course, the earliest known villages (ca. 12,500 BCE) early proto-cities (ca. 8000 BCE) and cities (ca. 4000 BCE onwards) in Mesopotamia, Western Asia, and Egypt will serve as case studies for detecting the rise of urbanization and social organization in the region. We will consider such questions as: 1) How can we discuss the social organization of an urban center when we find large walls and towers in the archaeological record? 2) What is the meaning of the presence of an authoritative figure found in artistic representations? 3) How do we evaluate the central placement of a religious precinct in an archaeological site? We will consider how these spaces were built, who became politically important in these early communities, and how we can deduce social organization from the archaeological record.

The primary focus of the course will trace the evolution of urbanization with major emphasis on the well-known cities of the Greek and Roman worlds. We begin with the early civilizations of

the Minoans and Mycenaeans on Crete and the Greek mainland (ca. 3000-1200 BCE) and will look at the colossal palaces and city walls of Knossos, Mycenae, and Troy, and their impressive wall paintings, and rich tombs and grave goods. We will consider what all this material means for our understanding of the organization of the city at this time. Tracing the rise of cities in Greece (“the Polis”) takes us through some of the most impressive archaeological sites in the Mediterranean, investigating the important political and religious centers at Athens, Pergamon, and Alexandria (ca. 750 BCE onwards), among others.

The last part of the course investigates Italy and the Roman world. Readings on the early civilizations in Italy (Villanovans, Etruscans, ca. 1000-500 BCE) will be the background to understanding the swift rise of Rome and its eventual conquest of the entire Mediterranean (ca. 500 BCE – 200 CE). The Roman Republic and Empire will be discussed considering new approaches to urban development, use of borrowed urban characteristics, and the use of the city as a backdrop for displaying power, wealth, and status. We will consider the varied approaches the Romans took in order to conquer well-developed cultures around the Mediterranean, considering closely how the city of Rome itself became the center of a large empire and how its rulers incorporated material culture borrowed from these conquered peoples.

During this course, students will develop an understanding of the general processes behind different trajectories of urbanization and collapse, as well as the different archaeological and historical settings of ancient cities in western Asia and the Mediterranean region in particular. Student should be able to critically assess concepts such as ‘city’ or ‘urban’ and recognize the strengths and limitations of the archaeological data.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Understand basic archaeological terms and concepts of dating and assessing archaeological evidence.
2. Understand the basic historical timeline and the physical structures of civilizations in the ancient Mediterranean, Western Asia, and Egypt.
3. Develop a fundamental understanding of the use of primary evidence (archaeological, textual, artistic) in the reconstruction of ancient societies, including both its potential and limits.
4. Develop an introductory knowledge about how the cities in the Mediterranean, Western Asia, and Egypt compared to other cities around the world during similar periods, including East Asia, Africa, and South America.
5. Identify characteristics of specific ancient cities by looking at an archaeological site plan or images of its defining archaeological features.
6. Identify how the archaeological evidence of urbanization in the Mediterranean, western Asia, and Egypt allows archaeologists to reconstruct the social organization of urban centers in antiquity.
7. Articulate how the architecture of a city reflects its social and political organization and how this urban environment was used as a backdrop for political means.
8. Appreciate different expressions of group and individual identities through the urban characteristics (e.g. monuments, buildings, street layout) of a city.
9. Gain historical perspective by appreciating that civilizations and cities are situated within their own historical circumstance, as well as within the broader continuum of history.

Course Schedule:

WEEK/DATE	SUBJECT	READING(S)	ASSIGNMENT(S)
Week 1 Jan. 5-9	Introduction to Archaeology and the Ancient Mediterranean/Western Asia	Introduction (pgs. 1-10)	
Week 2 Jan. 12-16	Neolithic Towns and Villages	Chapter 1 (pgs. 15-31)	Quiz 1: Covers material from weeks 1 and 2
Week 3 Jan. 19-23	Mesopotamian cities (Bronze Age)	Chapter 3 (pgs. 59-73)	
Week 4 Jan. 26-30	Egyptian Cities (Middle to New Kingdom)	Chapter 6 (pgs. 107-123)	Quiz 2: Covers material from weeks 3 and 4
Week 5 Feb. 2-6	Minoan cities (Greek Bronze Age)	Chapter 7 (pgs. 129-138)	
Week 6 Feb. 9-13	Mycenaean Cities & Troy (Late Bronze Age)	Chapter 7 (pgs. 141-149)	Quiz 3: Covers material from weeks 5 and 6
Reading Week (No classes) Feb. 16-20			
Week 7 Feb. 23-27	Greek Iron Age Cities & Babylon and Persepolis (Iron Age)	Chapter 10 (pgs. 197-207) Chapter 12 (227-235)	Midterm Test: Covers material from weeks 1-6
Week 8 Mar. 2-6	Athens (Classical Period)	Chapter 16 (pgs. 281-298)	
Week 9 Mar. 9-13	Hellenistic cities	Chapter 17 (pgs. 312-315) Chapter 18 (pgs. 317-330)	Quiz 4: Covers material from weeks 7-9
Week 10 Mar. 16-20	Rome (Archaic & Republican Periods)	Chapter 21 (pgs. 378-388) Chapter 22 (398-399, 403-408)	
Week 11 Mar. 23-27	Rome (Imperial period)	Chapter 23 (pgs. 410-423)	Quiz 5: Covers material from weeks 10 and 11
Week 12 Mar. 30-Apr. 3	Pompeii	Chapter 24 (pgs. 424-440)	

Week 13 Apr. 6-9	The Roman Provinces	Chapter 26 (pgs. 482-491, 496-499, 502-505, 510-511)	Quiz 6: Covers material from weeks 12 and 13
Final Examination Period Apr. 12-30			FINAL EXAM Scheduled by Registrar

Course Materials

Required Text:

- 1) Gates, Charles and Andrew Goldman. 2024. *Ancient Cities: The Archaeology of Urban Life in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, Greece, and Rome*, **Third edition**. London: Routledge.

*This a new edition of the textbook (**3rd edition**). Please make sure that you are reading the correct edition as the corresponding readings will be different from older versions.

The textbook is available as an e-book through Western libraries, accessible with this link: https://oculuwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045960123005163. Limited paperback copies will also be available for purchase at the Western bookstore for those who prefer a physical copy. Both the paperback and e-book versions of the textbook can be purchased online through the publisher's website, linked below.

Textbook publisher's website:

(Paperback) <https://www.routledge.com/Ancient-Cities-The-Archaeology-of-Urban-Life-in-the-Ancient-Near-East-and-Egypt-Greece-and-Rome/Gates-Goldman/p/book/9780367232214?srsltid=AfmBOor2UNVLSAi3d6ERVDoVfdbBmi0Z7ULezh6csK0x0IVaAadnEgKp>.

(E-book) <https://www.routledge.com/Ancient-Cities-The-Archaeology-of-Urban-Life-in-the-Ancient-Near-East-and-Egypt-Greece-and-Rome/Gates-Goldman/p/book/9780367232214?srsltid=AfmBOor2UNVLSAi3d6ERVDoVfdbBmi0Z7ULezh6csK0x0IVaAadnEgKp>.

Any additional course reading material (articles, blogs, websites, etc.) will be posted to the class OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices of any kind (including but not limited to cell phones, smart watches, audio devices, or tablets) are strictly prohibited during all assessments. For online quizzes, students should only use the OWL Brightspace interface with no access to study materials, online search engines or AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT).

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of AI tools (such as ChatGPT or similar) is not permitted during online quizzes or in-person examinations in this course.

Outside of these assessments, students are permitted to use AI tools as a supplementary aid for studying, information gathering, or exploring topics of interest. These tools can be used appropriately to enhance student learning experiences. However, students are encouraged to critically evaluate the accuracy and relevance of any AI-generated content and consistently exercise independent thinking and analysis. Students are strongly encouraged to make use of other sources, such as books, journal articles, magazines, and educational websites and blogs. If you would like to explore a certain topic from this course further, please feel free to reach out to me and I can help direct you to relevant sources.

Methods of Evaluation

Grading Scheme and Assessment Dates

The overall course grade will be calculated as listed below:

Bi-weekly Quizzes (5/6)	30%	Online (Weeks 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, and 13)
Midterm Test	30%	In-Person (Week 7 - February 23-27)
Final Exam	40%	In-Person (Scheduled by the registrar)

Quizzes

There are 6 bi-weekly online quizzes in this course. These will be held in weeks 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, and 13, and be available on OWL from Monday at 8am until Friday at 8PM during those weeks. Each quiz will cover material from the previous two weeks of the course, with the exception of quiz 4, which will cover weeks 7-9. The quiz with the lowest grade will be dropped, with each of the remaining 5 quizzes comprising 6% of the final grade, for a total of 30%. Students will have a window of roughly five days within which to start each quiz, but once started there will be a time limit for completion. Please ensure you have a good internet connection and sufficient time to complete the quiz once started. Further information on the quizzes can be found on OWL.

Midterm Test

The midterm test will be held **in-person** and scheduled during the week of February 23-27, 2025 (Week 7 on our course schedule). The exam will cover all material from weeks 1 to 6 and no study aids or electronic devices will be allowed. Further information on the midterm test can be found on OWL.

Final Exam

The final exam will be held **in-person** and scheduled by the registrar during the final examination period. The exam will be **cumulative** and no study aids or electronic devices will be allowed. Further information on the midterm test can be found on OWL.

Formal Documentation Designation statement

Midterm Test: Please note that this assessment is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: a makeup-exam, scheduled by the instructor.

Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams).

When a student receives academic considerations or academic accommodations which overlap with the built-in flexibility of the assessment, the longest period of accommodation will determine the deadline. The built-in flexibility of the assessment should not be taken to extend any considerations or accommodations.

General information about missed coursework

Students must familiarize themselves with the *University Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs* posted on the Academic Calendar:
<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/academicconsiderationSep24.pdf>

This policy does not apply to requests for academic consideration submitted for **attempted or completed work**, whether online or in person. The policy also does not apply to students experiencing longer-term impacts on their academic responsibilities. These students should consult: [Accessible Education](#).

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

<https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academicconsiderations/>

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

All academic consideration requests must include supporting documentation; however, recognizing that formal documentation may not be available in some extenuating circumstances, the policy allows students to make one Academic Consideration request **without supporting documentation** in this course. However, the following assessments are excluded from this, and therefore always require formal supporting documentation:

- The **Midterm Test** scheduled during Week 7 (Feb 23-27).
- The **Final Exam** scheduled during the official examination period (Defined by policy).

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

Flexible Completion

Quizzes: This course has 6 quizzes, and the 5 quizzes with the highest marks are counted towards your final grade. Should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request Academic Consideration for the first missed quiz.

Non-Flexible Completion

When a student misses the **Midterm Test** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write a make-up examination, scheduled by the course instructor.

When a student misses the **Final Exam** and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar ([Special Examinations](#)), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

Additional Statements

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/scholasticdisciplineundergrad.pdf>.

Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the [policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but **not later than two weeks** prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Religious Accommodation requests for final exams should be submitted via the Student Absence Portal.

Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.” <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

Support Services

Academic Advising

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/facultyacademiccounselling.html>

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.