

DEVELOPMENT OF WORLD CIVILIZATION
(ANT 3141 | Section 216F, 3 credits)

Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Michael Heckenberger, Anthropology

T | Period 5-6 (11:45 - 1:40 AM), Turlington B310

R | Period 6 (12:50 – 1:40), Turlington B310

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday (1:45 to 3:15 pm).

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Course Description (From UF catalog): Discussion of archeological evidence for the development of civilization in its regional variants from the earliest beginning to the dawn of written history. Analyzes causes of cultural development in Old and New World Centers. **Prerequisite:** [ANT 2000](#) or [ANT 2140](#) or sophomore standing or above.

I. Course Summary

This is a survey course of the major world traditions and periods of pre-Industrial urban civilization from the earliest examples to recent times. It is organized in seminar format, based on introductory PowerPoint lectures (1-2 periods) and one period devoted to discussion of two primary texts, *The Dawn of Everything* and *Incredible Archaeology* (see below). The course considers the origin and development of preindustrial urban civilizations across the globe, how they are portrayed and compared in Western scholarship, and the influences that affected their trajectories, including collapse, such as environment, climate, commerce, and religion. Specific topics include the domestication of plants and animals, the consequences of agriculture, architecture and technology, politics and state formation, ideology and other key aspects of the transition and variation of urban life in the ancient world. It promotes the approach of anthropological archaeology, including Western and Indigenous histories. Throughout the course, you will gain knowledge to understand the processes and debates surrounding the emergence and variation of human civilization in the pre-modern (non-Western) examples from across the globe. This provides the point of departure to consider broader global forces and change, including climate, imperialism, pandemics, the Industrial Revolution, twentieth century globalization, and the future of human civilization.

II. Required Readings

Required Texts:

David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2021.

Paul Bahn, ed. *Incredible Archaeology: Inspiring Places from Our Human Past*. Smithsonian Books, Washington, DC., 2020.

Additional required readings with assignments are listed below and posted on Canvas, as are all links to videos and other web-materials assigned throughout the semester.

III. Course Description:

This class examines the development of preindustrial urban civilizations from the initial transition to settled town life, agricultural food production and subsequent urbanism in various parts of the world. It uses case studies from most major world areas to reflect on general characteristics of urban civilizations, including their form, social groups and relations, symbolic meaning, and historical ecology. Using the diverse case materials, the course will examine the nature of urban civilization and civil society, specifically asking: What forms do cities take, in terms of space and architecture, and the movement of human bodies and social groups? What is the ecology upon which urban societies grow and how is nature “domesticated” by human interventions? How do these societies compare across time and space? What does the diversity through time and space of cities – not only their rise and normal functioning but also decline, conflict, and dysfunction – tell us about what it means to be human or urban?

The course considers the development of scholarly thinking regarding the emergence and growth of urbanism in the ancient world, emphasizing socio-historical diversity and the conflicting views regarding non-Western peoples. The case studies begin with the earliest urban traditions of southwestern Asia, Egypt, Pakistan and India, and China. The Mediterranean and Europe are considered, notably Greece and Rome, and discussed in terms of classical definitions of preindustrial urbanism and the rise of imperialism and globalization. Against this backdrop, other non-Western cases in Africa, SE Asia, and the Pacific are then explored to consider the alternative form and content of pre-modern, non-Western cities in these less well-known regions of the global south. Native American low density urban civilizations and their precursors are the final examples of preindustrial complex societies. In some cases, these conform to Old World definitions of agricultural and urban “revolutions,” such as in the Andes and Mesoamerica, but others, such as North America and lowland South America

present novel cases that challenge us to expand our conceptual toolkit to recognize alternative pathways of ancient civilization, like those in Africa, SE Asia and the Pacific discussed previously, as well as alternatives to modernity. Finally, these Native American civilizations will be the point of departure to consider changes in society and nature as these are tied to questions of climate, population growth, pandemics and social equality, including how these impact descendant communities and society at large.

IV. Learning Aims/Outcomes:

- Gain a broad introduction to human complex societies and civilization from their first appearance to the eve of the modern world system in all major regions of the world through an anthropological lens.
- Improve their competence in international and social studies, particularly through in-depth archaeological and historical analysis.
- Examine the development of the institutional structures, socio-cultural practices and values, and political economies across premodern polities and regions, including the agency of diverse social groups and in everyday life of common people.
- Consider ethnicity, class, and gender across this survey of global premodern civilizations, including classical “Old World” civilizations and less known cases of the rise of cities and civilizations in the Global South and Americas.

V. Course Weekly Outline & Assignments

Introduction:

Week 1 (Jan 13/15): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan 20/22): The Rise of Cities and Civilization: A Global Perspective.

Reading Comment: Graeber & Wengrow (G&W, Chapter 1; skim Ch. 2-3)

Video 1 Comment: Orientalism & Civilization.

Part 1: Classical “Old World” Civilizations

Week 3 (Jan 27/29): Mesopotamia

Reading comment: G&W-4, *Incredible Archaeology* readings (tba)

Week 4 (Feb 3/5): Egypt

Reading comment: G&W-5, *Incredible Archaeology* readings (tba)

Video 2 comment: Egypt in time of Rameses II comment

Week 5 (Feb 10/12): Indus and South Asia

Reading comment: G&W-6, *Incredible Archaeology* readings (tba)

*Activity 1-*Problem Statement

Week 6 (Feb 17/19): Far Eastern Asia: China

Reading comment: G&W-7, Incredible Archaeology readings (tba)

Week 7 (Feb 24/26): The Mediterranean

Activity 2: Project Abstract (Mid-semester in-class topic summary).

Part 2: The Global South

Week 8 (Mar 3/5): SE Asia and the Pacific

Reading comment: G&W-8, Incredible Archaeology readings (tba)

Week 9 (Mar 10/12): Sub-Saharan Africa

Reading comment: G&W-10, Incredible Archaeology readings (tba)

Video 3 comment: Ghana and Mali Empires

Activity 3: Project Outline

Week 10 (Mar 17/19): Spring Break

Week 11 (Mar 24/26): Mesoamerica

Reading comment: G&W-11, Incredible Archaeology readings (tba)

Activity 4: PowerPoint presentation draft (due 4/12).

Week 12 (Mar 31/Apr 2): Native North America

Reading comment: G&W-9, Incredible Archaeology readings (tba)

Video 4 comment: Pauketat lecture on Cahokia and religion

Week 13 (Apr 7/9): Andes/Amazonia

Reading comment: G&W-12, Incredible Archaeology readings (tba)

Video 5 comment: Lost Cities of the Amazon

Activity 5: PowerPoint presentations.

Final Presentations and Conclusions:

Week 14-15 (Apr 14/16 and Apr 21): Final Presentations

VI. Evaluation

Attendance (10 points) and participation (10 points) is expected in classroom discussion, including conducting reading and video assignments on time. Attendance is required. Four unexcused absences are permitted, after which points may be deducted from the final grade (2 points per additional unexcused absence).

Reading Commentaries (24 points): each week a brief comment on reading assignments is required, which can be on chapters from *The Dawn of Everything*, sites mentioned in *Incredible Archaeology*. Eight commentaries (student's selection) are each worth 3 points each; however, they are not graded assignments and points are deducted only for late submission beyond a 3-day grace period). These are generally due on Wednesdays for Thursday classroom discussion.

Video Commentaries (24 points): There are 4 comments required on videos 2-5 (6 points each). These should be between 100-250 words and are generally due on Wednesdays for Thursday classroom discussion. Again, these are not graded but points may be deducted from overly late submissions (after 3-day grace period).

Project (32 points): A final PowerPoint project will be developed by each student and presented in class with benchmark assignments for comment required. The project is divided into five assigned activities building toward the final PowerPoint presentation during the final full week of classes. A mid-semester summary of presentation topics will be given by each student at the end of Part 1.

Note: Late assignments without an excuse may be reduced by up to 5% per day late after a 3-day grace period without penalty on four assignments. All unexcused late work will not be accepted a week after the due date without agreement with the instructor.

Evaluation Summary:

1. Attendance and Participation: 20%
2. Reading Questionnaires (8 x 3 points): 24%
3. Video Comments (5 x 4 pts): 24%
4. Project: 32%
 - Assignment 1: Problem Statement (2 pts)
 - Assignment 2: Abstract (4 pts)
 - Assignment 3: Outline of presentation main slides with two sources (4 pts)
 - Assignment 4: Draft PowerPoint slides (draft for comment; no points)
 - Assignment 5: Final PowerPoint Presentation (22 points)

Overall Grades assigned as (total of 100 points):

A	95-100%	C	73-76.9%
A-	90-94.9%	C-	70-72.9%
B+	87-89.9%	D+	67-69.9%
B	83-86.9%	D	63-66.9%
B-	80-82.9%	D-	60-62.9%
C+	77-79.9%	E	0-59.9%

Please note that policies for calculating grade point averages. See <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html> for details. Also note that a grade of C- does not count for credit in major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule, or college basic distribution credit (for further information regarding minus grades go to: <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>).

Academic Honesty, Student Responsibilities, Student Conduct Code: Students are required to do their own work on exams. The penalty for cheating is to receive no points for that exam and the incident will be reported to the Student Honor Court. The student is responsible to review the UF Student Responsibilities Guidelines, available online.

Students with Disabilities: Students requesting accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who then must provide this documentation to the instructor.

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/). (The direct link is <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>.)

Additional Comments and Resources:

Religious observances: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#religiousholidaystext>

The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays. The following guidelines apply:

- Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.
- Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

Procedure for conflict resolution

Any issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Prof. John Krigbaum (krigbaum@ufl.edu, (352) 294-7540), Chair of Anthropology. Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>[Links to an external](#)

[site.; 352-392-1308](#)) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>[Links to an external site.; 352-392-1261](#)).

Communication practices for the course

- You are responsible for materials posted on E-Learning (Canvas) at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>, including required readings, announcements, details on assignments, and other supplementary material. Canvas technical support available at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/student-help-faqs/>.
- The instructor may use email to make general class announcements or to contact you directly about your work.
- The instructor may communicate with you regarding your assignments through Submission Comments.

Library Resources

- **Library Resources:** The [UF Libraries](#) provide access to numerous resources and services that will help you succeed in this course. Access thousands of [online databases, books, and articles](#) or visit one of the [branch locations](#) for additional [resources, services, and study spaces](#). Further, as this class requires students to complete a bibliography, research paper, or project, both the [Anthropology Library Guide](#) and the [Anthropology Assignment Guide](#) may be of assistance. You can also contact the [Anthropology Librarian](#) directly for help with developing your research topic/question, searching for sources, and evaluating information. And you can also [Ask A Librarian](#) for help by email, chat, text, or phone: **Ginessa Mahar** (Anthropology Librarian): gjmahar@ufl.edu, office: Library West Room 500

Useful [Health and Wellness](#) Resources:

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress. <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352- 392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services. <https://counseling.ufl.edu>
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.
- *University Police Department:* Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352- 733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW

Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352- 273-4450.