

N.B.: Ownership and copyright of this syllabus remain with the original author, who has kindly shared this document for posting by the AAH's Committee on Teaching.



SYLLABUS ARCHIVE

Course and Instructor Information:

Alexander(s) the Great

Prof. Jeremy LaBuff

Assistant Professor, Northern Arizona University

Helpful Context:

Course first designed in Spring 2016

Average enrollment: 20

This is an undergraduate course primarily intended for majors.

It is taught completely in-person.

This course was designed to fulfill the junior-level writing requirement for history majors

Reflections of the Instructor:

Q: What do you consider to be particular strengths of this course?

A: The attention to the multiple cultural legacies of Alexander

Q: In what ways do you think the course could still use improvements/adjustments?

A: Because of the strong emphasis on writing, it was difficult to balance readings and paper drafting, workshoping, etc. A regular seminar would not face this issue, however.

Q: How generally have students responded to the course? Have there been any patterns in student feedback?

A: Students enjoyed it but struggled with the Stoneman readings.



Department of History
HIS 300W: Alexander(s) the Great
Spring 2016
3 credits
TTh 11:10-12:25

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy LaBuff
Contact Info: Jeremy.labuff@nau.edu
Availability (Office Hours): ---

Academic Catalogue Description: Covers various regional and thematic topics in the history of Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the United States. Also includes specific instruction in historical writing. This course fulfills NAU's junior-level writing requirement. May be repeated for up to 6 units of credit. Course fee required.

Real Course description

This course will use the figure of Alexander of Macedon as a lens to comparatively study how cultures throughout the world and across time have used a common past in similar and different ways. Students will investigate how Alexander serves as an important hero (or anti-hero) for Greeks, Romans, modern academics, Persians, Jews, Arabs, Indians, Europeans, and Africans, and they will seek to understand why he is the focus of current debates about Greco-Macedonian national identities and the history of sexuality. Alongside this thematic focus, students will also develop their historical writing skills through weekly assignments which will collectively form a revised portfolio.

Course Purpose: This course aims to develop junior-level historical writing skills for majors through a variety of analytical written assignments on various aspects of Alexander's history and reception. Such skills include but are not limited to: grammar, style, argumentation, use of sources, and engagement with sources.

| Student Learning Outcomes | Method of Assessment |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a facility with all aspects of English grammar in academic writing• Demonstrate an engrained capacity for connecting ideas into a fluid argument in writing• Recognize both the underlying assumptions, methodologies, and theories in other historians' work to critique and build on this work, and how historians position themselves in the historiographies on Alexander | Weekly Essays Weekly Essays Weekly Essays Participation |

| | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute in clear prose to scholarly debates with original interpretation of primary sources and knowledge literacy of Alexander’s life and reception history, and by articulating findings through written and oral expression • Conduct self-critical and substantial revisions of written work • Develop historical consciousness of how local and global histories of Alexander inform one another; recognize the diversity of human experience as seen in the interconnections and relationships among various individuals and groups formed around remembering Alexander | Participation Weekly Essays Final Portfolio Participation |
|--|--|

Grading System & Assessment: The breakdown of graded assignments is as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Participation: | | 100 points |
| Weekly Essays | 12 x 50 = | 600 points |
| Final Portfolio | | 300 points |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 1000 points |

Participation: As this class will involve very little lecture, your involvement will be crucial to our exploration of the major issues raised in the readings and the challenges faced by writing about these issues. Participation will be evaluated as follows:

- “A”:
regular attendance and active participation in at least 2/3 of the class sessions.
- “B”:
regular attendance and active participation in more than half of the class sessions.
- “C”:
regular attendance and active participation in more than ten class sessions.
- “D”:
regular attendance and active participation in more than 5 class sessions.
- “F”:
poor attendance and little or no participation in class.

**Failure to adequately complete additional grammatical exercises in areas of weakness (diagnostic test) will negatively impact your participation grade.

Weekly Essays: Each week, students will write a short paper based on the readings and discussion on Tuesday. They should bring drafts of this paper (in print or electronically) to class on Thursday to edit, although they are also encouraged to not wait until after Tuesday to prepare for each essay (brainstorming, notes, draft).

Papers are then due by midnight each Thursday, to be submitted in BBLearn. **Specific instructions for each paper can be found in the Course Schedule below.** In addition to these instructions, each paper will also be graded in terms of the following criteria:

- grammatical correctness
- assertion of main argument/thesis and reference to this throughout
- a main claim for each paragraph and support of this throughout the paragraph
- Engagement with evidence (previously read or cited within current reading)

Final Portfolio: At the end of the semester, students will have make substantial revisions to each of their weekly essays based on the various strategies learned over the course of the semester. Students are encouraged to begin these revisions as soon as they get feedback from me (usually the following week), rather than waiting until the end of the semester to revise everything. In addition, they must combine at least **three** of these essays into a single, unified paper. The portfolio will be due **May 12th at 12pm** and a grading rubric will be distributed.

Structure/Approach: This course will involve very little lecture, but instead will use readings to discuss different kinds of written response to historical evidence and commentary. In general, Tuesdays will be devoted to clarifying and analyzing readings on Alexander, while Thursdays will be more focused on “workshopping” weekly written assignments. Students can expect out-of-class work to average 40-50 pages of reading and 2 pages of written work each week.

Readings and Materials

- J. Romm, *Alexander the Great: Selections from Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius*. Hackett Publishing.
- R. Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*. Yale University Press.
- G. Graf & C. Birkenstein, *They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, W.W. Norton (TSIS)

****Trouble paying for books?** Check out the Emergency Loan Program:

<http://nau.edu/LEADS-Center/Textbook-Loan-Program/>

-Other readings will be posted in the course website (BBL)

Policies

-Attendance: Student presence and participation is vital to the success of the sessions for all involved. **More than 5 unexcused absences will result in a 0 Participation Grade.** Partial attendance (arriving late or leaving early) will also result in deductions from the Participation Grade.

-Late Work: Essays and the Final Portfolio will be deducted by 1 letter grade per day late. Essays more than a week late will not be accepted. **Late essays also forfeit the right to instructor feedback.**

-Make-Up Work: If you miss a class for legitimate reasons as defined by the university, you can still obtain participation credit for that session if:

- for anticipated absences, notifying the instructor with documentation at least 5 days in advance
 - for unanticipated absences, notifying the instructor with documentation (where possible) as soon as possible.
 - Meeting with the instructor within 1 week of a return to campus
- You are responsible for knowing all university policies:
<http://www4.nau.edu/avpaa/policy1.html>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 19-21: Introduction & Early Life

Read/Discuss: **Romm** Chapter 1

Jan 26-28: The Conquest of Persia: Phase 1

Read/Discuss: **Romm** xviii-xxi(top) + Chapters 3 & 4

Write: 1-page episode response: why does this matter?

Must include:

- 2 uses of semicolon
- 1 use of colon
- proper comma usage
- participial phrase
- 3 complex sentences

Feb 2-4: Conquest of Persia (Phase II) and India

Read/Discuss: **Romm** Chapter 5; 6b+e; 7a+d; 8b+d+e (to 170)

Write: 2pp. episode(s) response: why does this matter?

Must include:

- a main point
- at least 2 contrasting transitions/clauses
- at least 2 comparative/sequential transitions/clauses
- at least 1 causal transition/clause
- at least one summary transition/clause

Feb 9-11: Hellenistic and Roman Alexanders

Read/Discuss: **BBL scans

TSIS Chapter 1

Write: 2pp summary of Stewart and/or Meeus

- Use templates to report on views referenced
- Identification of claims in response to these views
- Your own evaluation of authors' argument.

Feb 16-18: Remembering Alexander's Birth

Read/Discuss: **Stoneman Introduction + Chapter 1

- Write: **TSIS** Chapters 2 & 3
2 pp. summative reaction to Stoneman
- Establish a position on both chapters' arguments
 - Use templates to summarize in support of this position
 - practice incorporating quotations OR edit Stoneman's use of quotation

Feb 23-25: Persian Alexander

- **Read/Discuss:** **Stoneman** Chapter 2
TSIS Chapter 4
- Write: 2 pp. response to Stoneman
- Agree, disagree, or do both
 - Use templates to explain your position

Mar 1-3: Jewish & Arab Alexanders

- **Read/Discuss:** **Stoneman** Chapter 3 + pp. 107-114, 121-27
TSIS Chapter 5
- Write: 1 p. distinguishing S's views from his sources
- Identify and discuss how he does so (> 2 examples)
- 1 p. using templates to add your view(s)

Mar 8-10: Indian Alexander

- **Read/Discuss:** **Stoneman** Chapters 4 & 5
TSIS Chapter 6
- Write: 2 pp. planting a naysayer to Stoneman
- provide a naysayer to at least 1 argument where it does not exist, using templates
 - respond to objection(s) as Stoneman might

Mar 22-24: Immortality, Apocalypse, Death

- **Read/Discuss:** **Stoneman** Chapters 8-11
TSIS Chapter 7
- Write: 2 pp. on why reading matters
- Connect reading to Stoneman's purpose for writing book (in Intro), identifying templates
 - If you think his answer to "so what?" is insufficient, provide your own argument, using templates

Mar 29-31: Alexander & Women

- **Read/Discuss:** **Stoneman** Chapter 7+ **BBL** scan
TSIS Chapter 8-9
- Write: 2+ pp. evaluation of Stoneman
- Use > 2 strategies from ch. 8 to clarify your argument
 - Rewrite 1 of your paragraphs with informal language

Apr 5-7: Byzantine & Modern Greek/Macedonian Alexander

****Read/Discuss:** Stoneman Chapter 12 +

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/14/alexander-great-macedonia-warrior-horse>
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/10/alexander-the-great-macedonia-greece>

TSIS Chapter 10

Write: 2 pp. opinion-piece on modern conflict re: Alexander

- Offer and argue for solution to conflict (can criticize Macedonian and/or Greek positions)
- Use templates to offer metacommentary to clarify your solution

Apr 12-14: The Scholar's Alexander

****Read/Discuss:** **BBL** scans of Borza, Brunt, Tarn & (Badian or Hammond)

TSIS Chapter 12

Write: 2 pp. response to Tuesday discussion

- Take notes on what others say in class
- Respond to student comments for >1 article
- Use templates to acknowledge “they say” before responding

Apr 19-21: African Alexander

Read/Discuss: **BBL** scans of Asirvatham and Tronson
TSIS Chapter 14

Write: 2 pp. Deciphering the conversation

- Choose one article to write on
- Identify argument(s) that author is responding to
- Identify author's response
- (optional) contribute to the conversation

Apr 26-28: Gay Alexander

Read/Discuss: **BBL** scan of Ogden, Guardian article
TSIS Chapter 11

Write: Choose one essay from before spring break and revise following suggestions in Chapter 11

May 3-5: Preparing to Revise Portfolio

Read/Discuss: **TSIS Chapter 17**

Bring: At least 3 essays that you think can be combined into a larger unified paper.