

# Ancient and Medieval History

Course Syllabus

2011-2012 School Year

Grades 9 and 10

Instructor: Coart Ramey

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## Course Goals

*The student will be able to . . .*

1. Better explain how the world works.
2. Illustrate from history how humans are capable of amazing greatness and horrible evil.
3. Critically evaluate historical sources.
4. Compare American morality, society, and technology to the ancient and medieval worlds.
5. Identify key nations, persons, events, and sociological concepts from the ancient and medieval worlds.

## Overview by unit

Units are approximately six weeks long and overlap the four quarters. Cumulative exams will be given each quarter but coincide with ends of units only in the second and fourth quarters.

### *Unit One: The Ancient Near East and Egypt*

The course begins with the nature and method of ancient history. Sources are mostly from archeology. There is little distinction between literature and history in the earliest times.

Students consider the difference between the earliest history as the Bible presents it and as secular history has reconstructed it. Students must explain *why* history presents things differently from the Bible. They must know precisely what the Bible says and how different believers have interpreted it.

The Ancient Near East begins with Sumer and continues through the great empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, some two thousand years. We cover the highlights of these great ages, drawing connections to famous literature and to the Bible.

Egypt is a small unit to itself, with vastly more preserved from earliest times than any other civilization. We survey Egypt by topics, such as religion and architecture.

### *Unit Two: Greece*

Greek history begins with the Trojan War and runs through the Peloponnesian War, then to Alexander the Great and through his death to his successors' states. Greece merits its own unit because of the extraordinary influence it has had on Western civilization in the centuries since.

Topics include Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, science, society, warfare, and religion.

### *Unit Three: Rome*

Greece is second only to Rome in the extent of its influence, and Rome had much more time in which to leave its mark. We pick up with Rome's rough early history, its legacy of warfare and conquest, to its development of high culture and perhaps the longest and widest peace in human history so far.

Topics include Roman life, components of Roman culture, architecture and engineering, the Roman army, government and politics, famous emperors, and the rise of the Christian Church.

### *Unit Four: China and Japan*

Although this unit is compressed because our chief interest must be in our own Western history, the sheer scale and depth of China outweighs it by far. Chinese civilization begins not long after Sumer and continues unbroken to the present day, some five thousand years. We will look at the beauty and horror of Chinese history, the art, medicine, technology, and government of a mighty people.

Japan is a world unto itself, smaller and younger than China but wholly distinct. We will take time to learn a few major features of Japanese culture, such as the culture of the samurai, Japan's history with the West, and the industrialization of Japan.

### *Unit Five: The Islamic World and Byzantium*

Despite its importance to us today, few Americans know anything of the history of Islam. At a time when most northern Europeans were scarcely civilized, Muslims lived in a vast and largely unified nation of many ethnic groups with a highly advanced culture. It was also much more peaceful than the lands of their Christian contemporaries.

At the same time, the Eastern Roman Empire had survived the disintegration of the Western Empire (caused by the same uncivil northern Europeans) and preserved the thousand-year-old Roman world for another five hundred years. Called by us the Byzantine Empire, this complex, Greek-speaking nation endowed us with our rich Greco-Roman past.

### *Unit Six: Medieval Europe*

Our final unit takes us to the time of knights and castles, lords and serfs, feuding kings and cunning queens, monks and monasteries. From the fragments of the Roman Empire, diverse new nations formed and laid the foundation of modern Europe. How that happened is the real beginning of modern history and American history.

## Projects

Students will complete one major project for each six-week unit. These projects will make up about one quarter of a student's grade. Each one is unique, tailored to the student or group of students responsible for it.

*General description of projects*

**Project 1** will be an individual research presentation on how a concept from the ancient near east or Egypt illuminates some part of the Bible. Each student must present an artistic visual aid, such as a poster or small model. Computer art is not allowed for this one. The student will describe the concept and explain how it casts light on something from the Bible

*Examples:* Egyptian religion and the Exodus, the Code of Hammurabi and the Law of Moses

**Project 2** will be a small-group construction project. In teams of two or three, students will build something with moving parts that was used in the Greek or Roman worlds.

*Examples:* catapult, water screw, trireme

**Project 3** will be a small-group instructional presentation of a concept from the Roman world. Student groups may present to a younger class, possibly the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade (or other depending on the content.) A computer aid is required, such as a PowerPoint show or a video.

\*This project is ideal for integration with another class, such as the theater class.

*Examples:* Roman life in Pompeii, The early Church and Rome, the Roman Army

**Project 4** will be an individual project on Chinese poetry, painting, or calligraphy that conveys something about one of the three main Chinese “religions”—Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Some 2D art is required, though of course it does not have to be original work!

*Examples:* Sayings of Confucius in calligraphy, Taoist poems.

**Project 5** will be a small-group research/persuasion project on the achievements of Islam during its Golden Age. Presented in the form of a commercial advertisement, this project must try to persuade an adult audience of the historical merits of Islam.

*Example:* Try to get the audience to approve a school-wide Islam Awareness Day by describing the place of women in Muslim Spain, which was much better than that of women in Christian Europe.

**Project 6** will be a whole-class video presentation set during the European Middle Ages. Everyone

has to be involved some way, such as writing, acting, or set up. Students will be in charge from planning throughout production. The goal is to present something that artistically challenges the viewer to evaluate the morality of Medieval Europe. Possible source material includes Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

## Assessments

Daily grades, such as quizzes and discussion grades, will make up about a third of the total grade.

Tests and exams make up another third. There are two tests for each unit. Exams come at the end of each quarter, are cumulative, and do not necessarily come at the end of units.

The six projects are the final third of each student's grade.