



Course Syllabus

Introduction to Religion in America

EUH 1000/ CRN: 85518/ Fall 2026

A Session (8/17/26 – 12/10/26)

Credit Hours: 3

Pre-requisites: None

Contact Information

Instructor

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Office Hours: 9 am to 11 am Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 11 am to 12:30 pm Tuesday and Thursday; 1 pm to 2 pm Tuesday.

Response Time: 48 hours

Division Chair

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Course Information

Important Note

For any syllabus posted prior to the beginning of the term, the instructor reserves the right to make minor changes prior to or during the term. The instructor will notify students via e-mail or Canvas announcement when changes are made in the requirements and/or grading of the course.

Catalog Description:

The course explores the major political, economic, social, religious, and cultural aspects of Western Civilization from antiquity through the Early Modern Period. Topics include Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, the Islamic Empire, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the Commercial Revolution. (Students are advised to take either WOH2012/2022 or EUH1000/1001.)

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student, through a variety of assessments will:

- Demonstrate a broad knowledge of Western Civilization from the ancient world to the Early Modern Period.
- Analyze the political, social, religious, economic, and cultural systems and concepts as they evolved in Western Civilization.
- Demonstrate the concept of historical continuity and change.
- Demonstrate critical thinking ability through analyzing source material.

Course Perspectives and Goals

In *The Landscape of History*, John Lewis Gaddis argues that studying history is like mapping a landscape—by selecting, simplifying, and interpreting evidence, historians create a coherent representation of the past that helps us understand change, recognize patterns, and navigate the complexities of the present and future.

History is a disciplined, imaginative reconstruction of the past, and while it cannot recreate the past exactly, it allows us to understand how and why things happened by combining empirical evidence with interpretive insight.

Gaddis argues that historians work much like cartographers: they simplify and select from an overwhelming amount of detail to create a “map” that makes the past comprehensible. This process is not distortion, but necessary for clarity—just as a map omits most features to reveal the relationships that matter for navigation.

Why study history

History is the only discipline that systematically studies change—how societies, ideas, and power structures evolve. By comparing different periods and places, we can identify recurring patterns, causal relationships, and contingencies. Historical thinking gives us distance from our own moment in time, which helps in evaluating contemporary events without being trapped in the “tyranny of the present.” History isn’t just data collection—it requires interpreting evidence, weighing probabilities, and reconstructing a coherent narrative from fragmentary records. While history cannot “predict” the future, it can illuminate possibilities and limits, guiding decision-making.

Course Goals

- 1. Develop a broad, coherent understanding of Western Civilization from antiquity through the Early Modern Period.**

Students will identify and contextualize major civilizations, events, and ideas in Western history, demonstrating chronological awareness and an understanding of historical relationships across time.

- 2. Analyze the development and interaction of political, social, religious, economic, and cultural systems.**

Students will examine how institutions and belief systems evolved within and across societies, recognizing both internal dynamics and external influences.

- 3. Apply the concept of historical continuity and change to interpret the past.**

Students will distinguish between long-term structures and transformative moments, assessing causes, consequences, and patterns across historical periods.

- 4. Demonstrate critical thinking through the analysis of primary and secondary historical sources.**

Students will interpret evidence in context, evaluate perspective and credibility, and use source material to support historical arguments.

- 5. Use historical perspective to evaluate complex problems beyond their immediate historical context.**

Students will employ historical reasoning—comparison, contextualization, and synthesis—to gain distance from the present and better understand the possibilities and limitations shaping human societies.

Course Materials & Resources:

**The required text for this course is: (eBook)Cultures of the West Vol 1 Backman
ISBN: 9780197668436 Copyright: 24 Publisher: Oxford Edition: 4Binding: DIGITAL CONTENT**

Required

Provided By Vital Source.

Cultures of the West, Volume 1 by Clifford R. Backman provides a balanced introduction to the history of Western civilization from its ancient foundations through the early modern era. The text examines political, social, economic, religious, intellectual, and cultural developments, helping students understand the complexity and diversity of the Western experience. By integrating historical narrative with primary source readings, the book encourages students to evaluate multiple perspectives, analyze historical change over time, and consider the achievements, conflicts, and challenges that have shaped Western societies. This balanced approach allows students to develop a deeper understanding of the people, ideas, institutions, and events that continue to influence the modern world.

Delivery Method:

This is a web-based course. All online courses at GCSC utilize the Canvas Learning System. Students should read all information presented in the Canvas course site and should periodically check for updates—at least every 48 hours.

Remember: Western Civilization I (online) is an independent, self-study course which requires a great deal of self-motivation and discipline from each student. This is a semester length course focusing on the developments of the Western Tradition. This course is not one in which students may work at their own pace. Each week there are learning modules, assignments, online lectures, online discussions, and/or online exams with due dates. Refer to the schedule within this syllabus and within Canvas for more information.

Attendance and Make-Up Policies for this Course

Attendance Policy:

Although physical class meetings are not part of this course, participation in all interactive learning activities is required. Students “attend” class by engaging with the lecture and reading material and viewing documentaries through note taking.

Make-Up Work Policy:

I accept late work, with points deducted for each day late: typically 1 to 2 points a day depending upon the type of assignment – exams and papers will have higher points deductions than small discussion postings or analyses.

AI Policy for this Course

Limited Assistive Use Only

Students may use basic assistive technologies for spelling, grammar, and formatting (e.g., PaperRater or SpellCheckPLUS); however, the use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI function, etc.) for generating, rewriting, or enhancing content is not permitted. All work must reflect the student's original ideas and writing. Representing work created by AI as one's own is a violation of academic integrity and may result in penalties, including a zero on the assignment and additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the college's academic integrity policy.

Student Expectations

Communication and feedback within the course will occur through various channels: Canvas Inbox, Canvas Announcements, Canvas Discussions, or Zoom, assignment feedback, and/or instructor office hours.

Additionally, as a student at Gulf Coast State College, you are expected to:

- **Adhere to Course Guidelines:** Follow the instructions within the course syllabus along with any additional instructions provided by the instructor. Be certain you understand the course objectives, grading criteria, and academic policies.
- **Maintain Regular Contact:** Keep in touch with your instructor via your GCSC email or other designated communication channels. Regular contact helps clarify doubts, share ideas, and foster a collaborative learning environment.
- **Active Participation:** Engage actively in the course and submit assignments on time. Your active participation is crucial for your academic success and contributes to a deeper learning experience.

As your instructor, my commitment to you is to:

- **Provide Timely Feedback:** I will review and provide feedback on your assignments and submissions promptly. My goal is to help you understand your strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Respond Via Canvas Inbox:** I will respond to your emails or messages within 48 hours **(excluding weekends)** unless otherwise noted. I understand the importance of clear and timely communication in addressing your questions and concerns.
- **Post Regular Announcements:** Announcements will be posted to keep you updated and help you manage your time. These reminders will include important dates, upcoming assignments, and any changes to the course schedule.
- **Maintain Weekly Office Hours:** I will maintain regular weekly office hours, but I can also be available by appointment. This is to ensure I'm available for any questions or concerns that may come up during the week.

Course Requirements:

Students enrolled in this course will be required to:

1. Study lecture notes (written and oral). Write notes from these materials. Study Primary Source Readings provided in each content module and answer questions related to those primary source documents.
2. Complete assigned readings in a timely manner.
3. Complete eight small assessments – discussion, analysis -- that will cover lecture and reading material; this is your participation grade.
4. Take and pass four exams, one of which is your comprehensive final. The exams are short answer and essay. You will be expected to use primary source material in your essay as your supporting evidence. I do not drop exam grades nor do I replace exam grades with the final. I do accept late work with points deducted.
5. Black Death History Project. This semester we will be exploring the Black Death, known as the Great Mortality of 1348-1350, as a special depth project in historical analysis. There is a module on Canvas devoted to this project. There you will find sources (primary and secondary) on the black death – photocopied in a collection of 5 pdf files. Each student will produce two products from this study: 1) primary source analysis of 8 documents and 2) one history essay, three pages in length, answering the prompt. Refer to the Black Death module for guidance and to the module on How to Read and Write Like an Historian.

Assignments/Assessment Instruments

I. Exams

- The four exams will be comprised of short answers, identifications, essays.
- The exams will be delivered online via Canvas.

- The exams will be open access, 24/7, about five days before the due date. Students are required to use lecture material, textbook readings, and primary source materials on each exam. No outside material is allowed.
- Students are not allowed to discuss the exam once it is opened. Any plagiarism, use of Generative AI, or other outside source material will render the exam void.
- See the exam instructions within each Canvas dropbox for further instructions.

Examinations comprise 60% of your overall grade.

II. Small Assessments

These eight assessments, either discussion board postings or one-page analyses -- will cover lecture and reading material. This is your best place to practice working with primary sources, learning how to incorporate historical evidence into your responses.

These small assessments count as your participation grade, comprising 15% of your overall grade

III. Black Death History Project

This semester we will be exploring the Black Death, known as the Great Mortality of 1348-1350, as a special depth project in historical analysis. There is a module on Canvas devoted to this project. There you will find primary sources, in several pdf files that cover different aspects of the Great Mortality such as geographical origins, symptoms and transmission, medical responses, social and economic responses, religious responses and artistic responses. Each student will produce two products from this study: 1) primary source analysis of 8 documents and 2) one history essay, three pages in length, answering the prompt. Refer to the Black Death module for guidance and to the module on How to Read and Write Like an Historian.

The Black Death project comprises 25% of your overall grade.

Course Schedule

Week 1: In which we meet the discipline of history and discover what it means to be a historian.

This is all Module 1 Material. But you can start reading your textbook: prologue and Chapter 1

Week 2: In which we move through the Neolithic Age to Bronze Age and gasp at the ancients as they bring civilization into being with “laws, gods, and heroes” in the river valleys of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Module 2 Lectures and Primary Source readings, like the Code of Hammurabi. Textbook chapter 1.

Week 3: In which we move through Bronze Age to the Iron Age, and meet Legends: Odysseus, Hector, Achilles, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Cyrus the Great and others as we explore the Greeks, Hebrews, and Persians.

Module 3 Lectures and Primary Sources readings like selections from Exodus, Amos and Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible and selections from Homer. Textbook chapter 2.

Week 4: In which we explore Classical Age Greece, meet Pericles, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Athens as the School of Hellas.

Lectures and Primary Sources readings like selections from the Funeral Oration of Pericles, the politics of Aristotle. Textbook Chapter 4, focus on Classical Age.

Exam 1: Covers Modules 1-4, textbook chapters 1-4

Week 5: Hellenistic World, in which we meet Alexander the Great. Enough said.

Module 5 Lectures and Primary Source material like selections from the Stoics. Textbook Chapter 4, focus on Hellenistic world

Week 6: In which we build the Roman Republic, meet the Legend Cincinnatus, who provides us with the model of a true man in the Republic, and meet the great Hannibal who challenges Rome's reach.

Module 6 Lectures and Primary Source Readings like Cincinnatus Saves Rome. Textbook chapter 5.

Week 7: In which we collapse the Republic, build the Empire, take the measure of Augustus, and meet the development of Christianity within that context.

Module 7 Lectures and Primary Source Readings like the Achievements of Augustus, Gospel of St. Matthew. Textbook chapter 6 and 7

Week 8: In which we collapse Rome, see the rise of the world of Beowulf, witness the fortitude of Byzantium through the lens of Justinian, and catch our breath at the surprising growth and strength of an Arab world unified by Islam and Muhammad's vision.

Module 8 Lectures and Primary Source Readings like Gregory of Tours, selections from the Qur'an. Textbook chapters 8 and 9.

Exam 2 Covers Modules 5 through 8, textbook chapters 4-9

Week 9: In which we immerse ourselves in the developing world of feudalism, discover the powerful impact of monasticism as well as meet St. Benedict, who had a vision for a new life, and Charlemagne, the man who needs no introduction.

Module 9 Lectures and Primary Source Readings like excerpts from Einhard's the Life of Charlemagne. Textbook chapter 10

Week 10: In which we build castles and cathedrals, and glory in the rise of towns.

Module 10 Lecture and Primary Source Readings like a "Town and Gown Riot" and selections from Magna Carta. Textbook chapter 10 and 11

Week 11: In which we are laid low: Black Death.

Module 11 Lectures and Black Death Module. Textbook chapter 11

Black Death Primary Source Analysis Due at the end of week 11.

Week 12: In which we continue to experience the terrible, calamitous 14th century: Black Death, Hundred Years' War, Kidnapped Papacy.

Module 12 Lectures and Black Death Module. Textbook chapter 11.

Exam 3

Week 13: In which the angels sing, heaven is brought down to earth and we have Renaissance.

Module 13 Lectures and Primary Source Readings like "Oration on the Dignity of Man," and Machiavelli's The Prince. Textbook chapter 12

Week 14: In which we have some questions about Christian doctrine and organization. And we meet Martin Luther the man who began the Reformation.

Black Death History Essay due at the end of week 14.

Week 15: In which we build boats, canons, and create more reliable maps. We learn so many new things in this Age of Discovery and develop a new economic system. Expansion. Expansion. Intellectual. Geographical.

Week 16: In which we experience the bloody, fanatical Wars of Religion that gave shape and texture to modern Europe and the West in general.

Final Exam. Focuses on last quarter material but does include a comprehensive essay question.

Due Tuesday, by midnight, of finals week.

Grading

Grading Scale

All grades will be posted in the student grade book in Canvas and will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%
C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
F	59% and below

Incomplete Grades

Grades of Incomplete in any course can only be assigned to students who have an emergency arise during the last two weeks of the course. To receive an Incomplete, students must:

- Submit a written request to the instructor prior to the last face-to-face class meeting. For online courses, a written Incomplete request must be received no later than the week before the Final Exam period begins.
- Have completed no less than sixty percent of the course requirements and be passing the course at the time the request for an Incomplete is submitted.

Important Note: The Incomplete option provides 30 days from the date grades are due to make up any missing work; if all remaining work is not submitted during this period, the grade will automatically change to an "F."

General GCSC Course Policies

Accessibility Statement

Gulf Coast State College supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the student. Please visit [GCSC's Student Accessibility Resource \(SAR\) webpage](#) to learn more. For information regarding the registration process, email sar@gulfcoast.edu or call 850-747-3243.

GCSC Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance and participation are significant factors that help to promote success in college. Students are expected to attend all class meetings of all courses for which they are registered.

You are expected to know the instructor's specific attendance policy as stated in the syllabus for each course. In the event of absence, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible to indicate the reason and to inquire whether make-up work is possible. (Make-up work is offered solely at the discretion of your professor.)

If your absences in a class become excessive, as stated in the course syllabus, your professor can withdraw you from a course for excessive absences without your permission.

Instructors will monitor attendance at the beginning of each semester. If you are not in attendance during this period, you may be withdrawn from the course. You will be financially responsible for the course and a "W or NS" will appear on your transcript. Withdrawal from a course may also have implications for financial aid.

Withdrawal Policy

Two withdrawals are permitted per credit course. After that, a grade will be assigned. Please be concerned about withdrawals. When admitting students into certain programs, universities may calculate withdrawals as grades. It is your responsibility to verify the effects of enrollment and/or withdrawal upon your financial assistance (financial aid, scholarships, grants, etc.). There are two kinds of withdrawals---student and administrative.

- **Student Withdrawal (W1)** - Students wishing to withdraw must complete the online Student Withdrawal Form before the scheduled withdrawal deadline as published in the College catalog. Student withdrawals initiated prior to the scheduled withdrawal deadline will be recorded as a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.
- **Administrative Withdrawal (W2)** – A faculty member may withdraw a student up to the published withdrawal deadline for violation of the class attendance policy in which case

the student will receive a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.

Students cannot withdraw from developmental studies courses (college-preparatory classes) after the drop/add period without written permission from their instructor and/or their academic advisor.

Academic Integrity

Honest participation in academic endeavors fosters an environment in which optimal learning can take place and is consistent with the college's mission. Academic misconduct, including cheating or plagiarism, is destructive to the spirit of an educational environment. GCSC professors report every instance of student academic misconduct to the college for inclusion on the student's records.

Most course syllabi include an academic honesty policy and the consequences for violating this policy. Familiarize yourself with course policies regarding authorized or unauthorized use of AI to avoid the pitfalls of academic dishonesty.

The following definitions will apply:

"Cheating" includes but is not limited to use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; the acquisition without permission of tests or other academic materials belonging to a member of the College's faculty.

"Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment as well as the purchase of papers or projects. It can also include overuse of an editing program like Grammarly or submitting work written by an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generator like ChatGPT. Make certain to consult your course syllabi for your instructor's guidelines of AI material.

"Self-plagiarism" occurs when a student submits the same or considerably similar document to fulfill requirements in different classes. For example, if a student submits a term paper in Religion they originally wrote for an English class, this is self-plagiarism. Once a paper receives a grade in one class, it cannot be submitted again for another class.

"Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)" is technology that uses machine learning to create new content, such as text, images or code, based on user input. These systems are trained on vast amounts of data, including large language models and image or code generators. Common examples include ChatGPT, GitHub, Copilot, Google Gemini, Perplexity, and the Grammarly AI function.

Sanctions for incidences of academic misconduct, depending on the severity of the incidence and/or its repetition, may range from receiving an F grade (or 0) for the test, assignment, or activity, to failure of the course, to suspension or dismissal from the college.

Classroom Recording

In accordance with federal and state privacy laws, students may record class lectures for their own personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the college, or as evidence in internal or external legal proceedings. Students may not publish or upload the recordings or any components thereof without the knowledge and written permission of the faculty member.

Failure to obtain permission to publish could lead to the students' having to pay damages, attorney fees, and court costs. For more information about what can be recorded, please see the guidelines in the GCSC Student Handbook.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of generative AI tools in academic work requires clear guidelines to maintain academic integrity. Please review the policy selected for this course regarding the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI features, and similar platforms for assignments, research, and other coursework.

See the student handbook for further information. Students with questions about acceptable use should consult their instructor.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Gulf Coast State College does not discriminate against any person in its programs, activities, policies or procedures on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, marital status, religion, age, gender, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, or veteran status.

All questions or inquiries regarding compliance with laws relating to non-discrimination and all complaints regarding sexual misconduct or discrimination may be directed to Amanda Reed, Executive Director of Human Resources/Title II/504/Title IX Coordinator and Employment Equity Officer, Gulf Coast State College, 5230 W. US Highway 98, Panama City, FL 32401; 850-769-1551, ext. 3516. Rules, policies, fees, and courses described in this catalog are subject to change without notice.

Student Support Resources

Gulf Coast State College is committed to providing you with the resources you need for success as a student and beyond. View all the [academic and student support resources](#) provided at GCSC on the [Student Services web page](#).

Course Technology & Support

To successfully participate in this online course, students must have basic computer and digital information literacy skills and meet the following technology requirements:

- Computer: Up-to-date web browser that supports the Canvas learning management system; please refer to the system requirements for compatibility and information on using the Canvas app on mobile devices.
- Internet Speed: Minimum bandwidth of 8 Mbps upload/download speed to effectively engage in online activities and access multimedia.
- Office 365 software: Available for [free download](#) through GCSC Information Technology Services (ITS).
- If you need technical support, contact the [ITS Help Desk](#), available 24/7 at (850) 913-3303.