

‘ANCIENT SOCIETIES’, SUS1HS401/H01, MONSOON SEMESTER, 2017

COURSE COORDINATOR: GEETANJALI TYAGI

BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

The modern humans, biologically referred to as *homo sapiens* are traced to around 40,000 years ago. During these forty thousand years of existence modern humans spent around three-fourth of this time as wandering groups dependent on hunting and gathering of their food for survival. The human settlements came into existence with humans learning and acquiring skills of domesticating animals and plants, leading to agriculture. Starting with agriculture and settled life human groups developed into elaborate societies and complex systems. They have not followed a predictable, well-defined path. This movement has not been even and unilateral in all parts of the world. Various cultures and societies have grown through different trajectories. At any given point of time humans have been found to live at various social, political, economic, cultural and technological stages of development.

From this long human past we have chosen the ancient period as the subject matter of this course. In terms of chronology we will confine ourselves to the history up to the period of first millennium A.D. This vast period can be divided into two major parts. The earlier period which is referred to as pre-history where we have no written records or literary sources. The second is historical period for which in addition to other sources we have literary evidence also.

In view of the vast canvas and long period, it would not be possible to undertake the study of every social group and society in this course. We have, therefore, chosen what we think are representative cultures, societies, regions, civilizations, religions and social, political and economic systems for understanding the growth of human civilization in the given period.

THEMES OUTLINE :

1. Sources of study of Pre-history and Ancient history (archaeological and anthropological material, artefacts, objects, coins, written material and literary sources).
2. Hunting-gathering groups (tool making, the making of fire, social groups).
3. Transition to agriculture (domestication of animals, and plants, nomadic pastoralism, pottery, tools and implements, settled life, Neolithic revolution).
4. Rise of Civilization- Pre-history to history: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indus and Chinese Civilizations): social structures, polity, language, writing and communication, art and religion, trade and commerce etc.
5. Civilizations to Age of Empires (Roman World, Greek World, Persian Empire): polity, society, slavery, economy, philosophy, language and literature, science and technology.
6. Mesoamerica: Mayans, Aztecs and others
7. Africa (Sub Saharan Africa especially Neolithic and early farming people and groups of Central, Eastern and Southern Africa.

MODE OF LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT: In this course, we shall try and examine the history of human evolution, various processes facilitating strategies of survival and the

making of civilizations through our understanding based on the study of varied kind of source material – archaeological, anthropological, numismatics, written material and literary sources among others.

Assessment Pattern (MS, 2017):

By the fourth week of the course: take home assignment + class presentations/group discussions = 30% of total course grade.

By the tenth week of the course: take home assignment = 30% of total course grade.

End Semester exam = 40% of total course grade

Reading list (The readings listed in the bold would remain the essential readings for this course whereas the others would remain significant supplementary readings specific to themes)

1. **Amar Farooqui, *Early Social Formations*, 2001.**
2. **Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*, London, 1978.**
3. **V. Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History*, Harmondsworth, 1942 (several reprints).**
4. **V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself*.**
5. **UNESCO, *History of Humanity, Volumes I-III*, London, 1994-1996.**
6. **Burn and Ralph, *World Civilizations*.**
7. Maurice Daumas, *A History of Technology and Innovation*, Volume I, New York, 1969.
8. Brian Fagan, *People of the Earth: An Introduction to World Prehistory*, Sixth Edition, Illinois, 1989.
9. Richard Leakey, *The Origin of Humankind*, London, 1996.
10. D. Dudley, *Roman Society*, Harmondsworth, 1970.
11. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, London, 1991.
12. P.M. Holt et al (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam, Volume I: The Central Islamic Lands*, Cambridge, 1970.
13. M. I. Finley, *Ancient Greece*, Penguin, 1987.
14. Bruce Trigger, *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*, CUP, 1983.