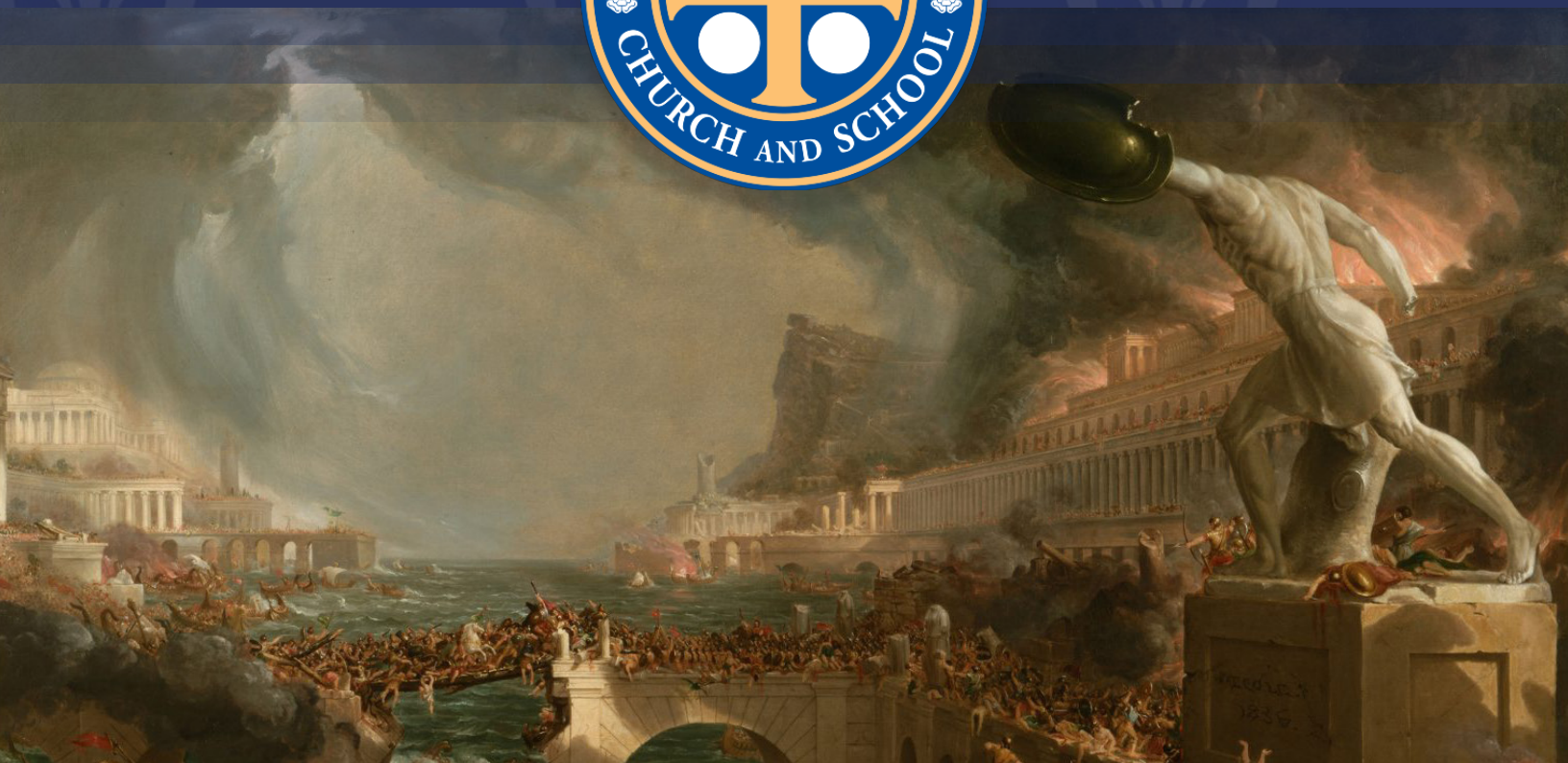
Western Civilization I Curriculum

Grade 09



Course Overview

Course Description

Western Civilization I is a journey into the deep foundations of our culture, exploring the ancient civilizations that shaped the moral, spiritual, and political soul of the West. From the burial rites of prehistoric man to the fall of Rome, students will encounter the enduring questions of justice, virtue, truth, and the meaning of life—questions answered imperfectly by pagan wisdom and ultimately fulfilled in the light of Christ. This course traces the gradual preparation for the Gospel in the great civilizations of the ancient world. Through the stories of Gilgamesh and Odysseus, the laws of Hammurabi and Solon, the empires of Egypt and Rome, students will recognize the image of God in every age, and the divine drama unfolding in history. Emphasizing the unity of faith and reason, myth and philosophy, poetry and politics, Western Civilization I forms students in historical judgment, moral imagination, and a profound sense of their inheritance.

Why We Teach It...

We teach Western Civilization I to help students discover that history is not a list of dead facts, but the story of the human soul in time. In the myths, laws, and longings of the ancient world, we see the image of God shining through even before the fullness of revelation. By studying these civilizations, students learn to recognize truth beyond their own age, to love what is good though it is old, and to see that the Incarnation was not an interruption in history—but its fulfillment.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the presence of natural revelation in ancient myths, laws, and rituals, and explain how pre-Christian cultures glimpsed eternal truths through reason and imagination.

Course Objectives | Continued...

- Trace the theme of incarnation, sacrifice, and resurrection in ancient literature, religion, and art as a preparation for the Gospel.
- Analyze the moral and political foundations of early civilizations, including their concepts of justice, kingship, freedom, and virtue.
- Interpret primary source texts with attention to theological meaning, historical context, and literary form.
- Evaluate the legacy of the ancient world through a Catholic lens, discerning the providential unfolding of history in light of Christ.
- Demonstrate historical judgment and rhetorical skill through writing, discussion, and oral presentation.
- Articulate the meaning and significance of key texts, figures, and movements within the broader narrative of Western tradition.
- Cultivate a love for truth, beauty, and goodness by contemplating the wisdom and wonder of the ancient world.

Source Material

Humani Generis, Pope Pius XII
G.K. Chesterton, The Everlasting Man
Fr. Robert Spitzer, New Proofs for the Existence of God (excerpts)
Christopher Dawson, The Rise of Ishtar (excerpt)
Noam Chomsky, selections on universal grammar
Homer, The Odyssey
Virgil, The Aeneid
Augustine, The City of God
Herodotus, Histories
Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War
Plato, Euthyphro, Apology, Republic (Books 1–2), Timaeus

Source Materials | Continued...

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (Books 1–2)
Plutarch, Lives (Solon, Themistocles, Pericles, Lysander, Alcibiades, Alexander, Romulus, Cato the Elder, Julius Caesar, Augustus)
Hesiod, Theogony and Works and Days
Epic of Gilgamesh
Enuma Elish (Babylonian creation myth)
Dialogue of Pessimism
Sumerian Farming Guide
Hammurabi's Code
Middle Assyrian Law Code
Lament for Sumer and Urim
Treaty of Kadesh

Central Themes

- Man is made in the image of God, and all human history reflects the drama of that dignity.
- The desire for truth, beauty, and justice is written on the human heart and echoed in every age.
- Even before Christ, the ancient world bore witness to the light of reason and the longing for redemption.
- Myth, philosophy, and law reveal the soul of a civilization and its search for meaning.
- The rise and fall of empires reflect both the glory and the frailty of man without grace.
- Virtue, sacrifice, and the common good form the moral foundations of a just society.
- Art, architecture, and story are not ornamental—but theological. Freedom is not autonomy, but harmony with divine order.

Key Concepts

Imago Dei
Natural Revelation
Incarnation, Sacrifice, and Resurrection
Myth and Meaning
Law and Justice
Divine Kingship
Freedom and Order
Virtue (Pietas, Courage, Prudence, Temperance)
Cosmic Harmony
Creation Myths
Epic Poetry
Philosophy (Socratic Method, Virtue Ethics)
Democracy and Republic
Empire and Conquest
Hubris and Humility
The City of Man and the City of God
The Soul and the Afterlife
Civic Duty
Providence and History
The Longing for Home

On Writing

All written work in this course integrates Our Lady's Writing Curriculum, a program rooted in the tradition of the classical oration and the progymnasmata—the ancient exercises that trained students in the art of eloquence, clarity, and persuasion. Students will be guided through structured stages of composition, learning to narrate, describe, argue, and exhort with both precision and grace.

Writing is not treated as a mere skill, but as a moral and intellectual discipline—a means of pursuing truth and communicating it rightly. In keeping with the classical model, students will imitate excellent forms, internalize timeless principles, and ultimately express their own judgments with charity, courage, and rhetorical power.

Assessments

Summative: 45%

- Unit Exams
- Midterm Exam
- Essays
- Recitations

Formative: 35%

- Key Dates, Events, & Figures Quiz
- Maps Quiz
- Artifacts
- Weekly Writing Assignments
- Expository Essays

Conscientiousness 20%

- Professionalism
- Homework
- Classwork

Scope & Sequence

Unit 1 | Image, Origins, & Echoes of God — 5 Weeks

Week 1-5

Overview

This unit explores the origins of civilization through the Catholic understanding of man as Imago Dei—the image of God. Students will examine the transition from nomadic life to settlement, the rise of agriculture and symbolic expression, and the emergence of early religious consciousness. Through philosophy, archaeology, and theology, they will consider how even prehistoric man bore witness to spiritual longing, artistic vision, and rational order. The earliest myths, tombs, and temples are not primitive curiosities, but signs of a soul made for eternity.

Theme

From the cave to the altar, from burial to worship, man reveals himself as a rational and religious being—set apart by his capacity for wonder, memory, and desire for God.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 70,000 BC – Evidence of symbolic thought and early burial (e.g., Shanidar Cave); c. 40,000 BC – Paleolithic cave paintings (Sulawesi, Chauvet, Lascaux); c. 10,000 BC – Agricultural revolution and Neolithic settlements begin; c. 9500 BC – Göbekli Tepe constructed in southeastern Anatolia; c. 3000 BC – Megalithic sites (e.g., Stonehenge) constructed across Europe

Sources: *Humani Generis, Pope Pius XII; G.K. Chesterton, The Everlasting Man, "The Man in the Cave"; Fr. Robert Spitzer, New Proofs for the Existence of God (excerpts on the soul); Christopher Dawson, The Rise of Ishtar (excerpt)*

Unit 2 | Mesopatamia: Law & Chaos

4 Weeks

Week 6-9

Overview

This unit explores how Mesopotamian civilization sought to impose order on a world of chaos through myth, kingship, and law. From the ziggurats of Sumer to the laments of Babylon, students will trace a people's fragile attempt to anchor justice in the heavens while wrestling with mortality on earth.

Theme

In Mesopotamia, man first grasped for eternal order through human power—but found that even kings and empires cannot hold back the flood.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 3200 BC – Cuneiform writing
c. 2100 BC – Epic of Gilgamesh
c. 1754 BC – Code of Hammurabi
c. 1200 BC – Middle Assyrian Law Code
c. 1100 BC – Poem of Erra and Ishum

Sumer;Akkad; Babylon; Assyria ; Ziggurat; Lamassu; Hammurabi; Gilgamesh; Sargon; Marduk; Enuma Elish
Lament for Sumer and Urim

Sources: *Epic of Gilgamesh; Enuma Elish; Hammurabi's Code; Middle Assyrian Law Code; Sumerian Farming Guide; Dialogue of Pessimism; Lament for Sumer and Urim; Poem of Erra and Ishum; Herodotus, Histories Book 1, Sections 178–200*

Unit 3 | Egypt: Order & Power

5 Weeks

Week 10-14

Overview

This unit investigates how ancient Egypt conceived of freedom not as autonomy, but as harmony with divine order. Through sacred kingship, monumental tombs, and ritual precision, Egyptians pursued eternal stability. Students will explore whether this vision led to true freedom—or to a gilded bondage beneath the weight of cosmic control.

Theme

To the Egyptians, freedom was found not in rebellion, but in alignment with the gods, the cosmos, and the truth.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 3100 BC – Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt
c. 2600–2500 BC – Pyramids of Giza
c. 1353–1336 BC – Reign of Akhenaten
c. 1274 BC – Battle of Kadesh
c. 1250 BC – Composition of the Book of the Dead

Ma'at; Pharaoh; Afterlife; Obelisk; Pyramid; Hykso;Akhenaten; Aten; Ramses II; Plato; Herodotus; Story of Sinuhe; Amarna Letters

Sources: *Egyptian Creation Myth; Book of the Dead; Hymn to the Aten; Story of Sinuhe; Amarna Letters; Plato, Timaeus (17a–27a); Herodotus, Histories 2.1–2.182; Battle of Kadesh reliefs and treaty inscriptions*

Unit 4 | The Odyssey: The Journey Home — 4 Weeks

Week 15-18

Overview

This unit investigates how ancient Egypt conceived of This unit explores Homer's Odyssey as both a cultural monument and a spiritual parable. Odysseus's journey from exile to homecoming is studied as a pagan prefiguration of the Christian pilgrimage—marked by trial, temptation, loss, and restoration. Through poetic justice and divine intervention, the epic reveals a world governed by both fate and moral choice.

Theme

To be human is to wander, to struggle, and to long for home—not merely a place, but a peace only found in virtue and love.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 1200 BC – Fall of Troy (traditional date)
c. 750 BC – The Odyssey composed by Homer
c. 700 BC – Rise of Greek city-states (poleis)

Xenia; Hubris; Kleos; Nostos; Telemachus; Penelope
Athena; Poseidon; Cyclops; Sirens; Calypso; Ithaca
Homer; Zeus; Odysseus

Sources: *Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fagles (Books 1–5, 9–12, 16, 19, 22–23); Bernard Knox, Introduction to The Odyssey; Herodotus, Histories 2.53 (on Homer and religion)*

Unit 5 | Greece & Persia: The Soul of Man 3 Weeks

Week 19-21

Overview

This unit examines the Persian Wars as a turning point in the ancient world, when a small confederation of Greek city-states defended their freedom against overwhelming imperial power. In the clash between Persia and Greece, students encounter not only battles, but philosophies of government, virtue, and human dignity. The courage at Thermopylae and the victories at Marathon and Salamis became foundational myths of the West—echoing a deeper question: what is worth dying for?

Theme

Freedom without virtue is fragile. The defense of liberty demands not only strength, but sacrifice and justice.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 776 BC – First Olympic Games
c. 594 BC – Solon's reforms in Athens
c. 508 BC – Democratic reforms of Cleisthenes
490 BC – Battle of Marathon
480 BC – Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis
479 BC – Battle of Plataea

Arete; Hubris; Dike; Democracy; Hoplon; Phalanx
Athens; Sparta; Themistocles; Leonidas; Solon; Darius; Xerxes; Zoroaster

Sources: *Herodotus, Histories (Selections: 1.131–140; 3.16–38; 5.66–5.97; 7.8–7.239; 8.33–39; Plutarch, Lives of Solon and Themistocles; Avesta (Zoroastrian texts: Fargard 1; Yasna 30, 35–37, 43, 45); Kreeft on Zoroaster and the Persian worldview*

Unit 6 | Greece: The Golden Age

4 Weeks

Week 22-25

Overview

This unit explores the Pentekontaetia—the fifty years between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars—as an age of cultural brilliance and philosophical awakening. In Periclean Athens, temples rose, tragedies were performed, and philosophy was born. Students examine how beauty, rhetoric, and political power flourished side by side—and how the pursuit of truth stood in tension with the seductions of glory. Through the lives of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, students discover ideas that would echo into Christian thought and shape the moral architecture of the West.

Theme

A civilization's greatness lies not in power or splendor—but in its love of wisdom, pursuit of justice, and formation of the soul.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

461–429 BC – Age of Pericles
447–432 BC – Construction of the Parthenon
c. 469–399 BC – Life of Socrates
c. 428–348 BC – Life of Plato
c. 384–322 BC – Life of Aristotle

Parthenon; Areopagus; Sophistry; Logos; Dialectic; Agora; Polis; Pericles; Socrates; Plato; Aristotle; Aspasia; Aeschylus; Euripides

Sources: *Plato, Euthyphro, Apology, Republic (Books 1–2), Timaeus (27a–end); Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (Books 1–2); Plutarch, Life of Pericles; Peter Kreeft on Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Sophists; Primary descriptions of the Parthenon and Acropolis architecture*

Unit 7 | Athens: Pride & Fall

2 Weeks

Week 26-27

Overview

This unit explores the Peloponnesian War not only as a military conflict between Athens and Sparta, but as a moral tragedy. Students will analyze how ambition, betrayal, and relativism unraveled the ideals of the Golden Age. Through the writings of Thucydides and Plutarch, they will encounter figures like Alcibiades and Lysander—brilliant, reckless, and tragic—and reflect on the fragility of a civilization that forgets justice and humility.

Theme

When a people forget truth and virtue, no amount of power, wealth, or culture can save them from collapse.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

431–404 BC – The Peloponnesian War
c. 429 BC – Death of Pericles
415–413 BC – Sicilian Expedition
416 BC – Melian Dialogue
404 BC – Fall of Athens

Thucydides; Alcibiades; Lysander; Pericles; Plague of Athens; Demagoguery; Hubris; Moral Relativism; Melos; Sparta; Athens

Sources: *Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War; (Selections: Pericles' Funeral Oration, the Plague, the Melian Dialogue, the Sicilian Expedition); Plutarch, Lives of Alcibiades and Lysander*

Week 28

Overview

This unit examines the rise of Alexander the Great as both a military triumph and a moral enigma. Students will trace his conquests across the known world, while questioning the soul behind the sword. Through Plutarch's vivid biography, they will consider whether greatness without virtue is true greatness at all—and whether empire unifies or dissolves what it touches.

Theme

To conquer the world is not the same as ruling oneself. Ambition without wisdom cannot build what will last.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

356–323 BC – Life of Alexander the Great
334 BC – Battle of Granicus
333 BC – Battle of Issus
331 BC – Battle of Gaugamela
323 BC – Death of Alexander in Babylon

Hellenism; Phalanx; Oracle of Siwah; Divinization; Cultural Syncretism; Darius III; Hephaestion; Philip II; Roxana; Plutarch; Babylon; Alexandria

Sources: *Plutarch, Life of Alexander; Selections from Herodotus (contextual references to Persian customs and geography)*

Week 29-32

Overview

This unit traces the rise of the Roman Republic, from legendary kings to citizen-soldiers and statesmen. Students will examine how Roman ideals of duty, discipline, and sacrifice shaped a civilization devoted to law and liberty—but also vulnerable to pride and ambition. Through biography and law, myth and military expansion, students will confront the paradox at Rome's heart: that the Republic which conquered the world could not always govern itself.

Theme

A republic can only endure if its citizens love virtue more than victory—and the common good more than personal glory.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 753 BC – Legendary founding of Rome
c. 509 BC – Overthrow of the kings; founding of the Republic
c. 451–450 BC – Twelve Tables codified
c. 396 BC – Sack of Veii; rise of Roman expansion
c. 390 BC – Sack of Rome by Gauls
c. 264–146 BC – Punic Wars (overviewed as context)

Res Publica; Mos Maiorus; Civic Virtue; Consul; Senate; Tribune; Twelve Tables' Romulus; Camillus; Cato the Elder; Coriolanus; Fabius Maximus; Plutarch

Sources: *Plutarch, Lives of Romulus, Cato the Elder, Camillus, Coriolanus, Fabius Maximus; Roman Law: The Twelve Tables (excerpts)*

Unit 10 | The Aeneid: The Roman Ideal

4 Weeks

Week 33-36

Overview

This unit studies Virgil's Aeneid as both imperial epic and spiritual parable. Commissioned to glorify Rome, the poem reveals a deeper meditation on duty, sorrow, and the cost of greatness. Through Aeneas's suffering and sacrifice, students encounter the tension between worldly empire and eternal hope, and consider whether Rome's destiny was a divine preparation—or a tragic substitute—for the Kingdom of God.

Theme

The longing for home cannot be fulfilled by empire. Only in sacrifice and obedience to a higher call does the soul find peace.

Key Terms, Events, & Figures

c. 70–19 BC – Life of Virgil
c. 31 BC – Battle of Actium
c. 27 BC – Beginning of Augustus' reign
c. 19 BC – Aeneid completed posthumously

Pietas; Fatum; Gravitas; Palladium; Underworld; Troy; Latium; Dido; Aeneas; Anchises; Turnus; Augustus; Virgil

Sources: *Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. Robert Fagles (Books 1–4, 6, 7–8, 10)*

Course Catechism

This section is structured as a series of questions and answers—intended to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and a love of tradition in the soul of the reader. Drawing from classical education, Christian orthodoxy, and the accumulated insights of Western civilization, this catechism aims to form not only the mind but the moral imagination.

Each question is crafted to provoke contemplation, and each answer is more than mere information—it is a small liturgy of truth, designed to be memorized, internalized, and lived. In the tradition of ancient catechisms, this section assumes that learning is not just for passing tests, but for becoming someone.

Section I | Image, Origins, & Echoes of God

Q: What sets man apart from the animals?
A: *Man alone possesses reason, language, moral conscience, and the longing for God.*

Q: What is Imago Dei?
A: *It is the truth that man is made in the image and likeness of God, possessing intellect, will, and immortal soul.*

Q: What is natural revelation?
A: *It is the knowledge of God discernible through creation and reason, even apart from divine Scripture.*

Q: What does prehistoric burial reveal about early man?
A: *That he believed in life after death and treated the body with reverence.*

Q: Where is Göbekli Tepe, and why is it significant?
A: *In modern-day Turkey; it is the oldest known temple complex, built by pre-agricultural peoples.*

Q: What are cave paintings, and what do they signify?
A: *Early symbolic art—such as in Lascaux or Sulawesi—revealing aesthetic sense, memory, and religious imagination.*

Q: What did Pope Pius XII affirm in Humani Generis?
A: *That evolution may describe the body, but the soul is directly created by God.*

Q: What did Chesterton call the man in the cave?
A: *Not a brute, but an artist, priest, and seeker of truth.*

Q: What role does language play in human uniqueness?
A: *It reflects rational order; Noam Chomsky's universal grammar suggests an innate, immaterial faculty.*

Q: What is the meaning of early human artifacts?
A: *That man is not merely functional—but made to wonder, remember, and worship.*

Section II | Mesopotamia: Law & Chaos

Q: Where was Mesopotamia?
A: *Between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in modern Iraq and Syria.*

Q: What was the first known form of writing?
A: *Cuneiform, developed by the Sumerians c. 3200 BC.*

Q: What was the Epic of Gilgamesh?
A: *The world's oldest surviving epic, exploring kingship, mortality, and divine judgment.*

Q: Who issued the first known written legal code?
A: *Hammurabi of Babylon, around 1754 BC.*

Q: What was the Enuma Elish?
A: *The Babylonian creation myth, depicting order emerging from violence among gods.*

Q: What was a ziggurat?
A: *A stepped temple tower symbolizing the connection between heaven and earth.*

Q: What did the Mesopotamians fear most?
A: *Chaos—the collapse of divine and social order.*

Q: What were the laments of Sumer and Urim?
A: *Poems mourning the fall of cities and the silence of the gods.*

Q: What was the "Dialogue of Pessimism"?
A: *A satirical reflection on the futility of action, revealing doubt in divine justice.*

Q: What was the role of the king in Mesopotamian belief?
A: *He was a mediator between the gods and the people, ensuring cosmic and civic order.*

Section III | Egypt: Order & Power

Q: What river gave life to ancient Egypt?
A: *The Nile, which flooded predictably and sustained agriculture.*

Q: What was ma'at?
A: *The Egyptian principle of divine order, truth, and cosmic harmony.*

Q: How did the Egyptians view freedom?
A: *As obedience to divine order—not as personal autonomy.*

Q: What was the role of the pharaoh?
A: *He was both king and god, the guarantor of ma'at and mediator between gods and men.*

Q: What was the Book of the Dead?
A: *A collection of spells and prayers to guide the soul through the afterlife.*

Q: Who was Akhenaten?
A: *A pharaoh who temporarily replaced Egypt's polytheism with the worship of Aten, the sun disc.*

Q: What was the Battle of Kadesh?
A: *A major conflict between Egypt and the Hittites c. 1274 BC—one of the earliest recorded peace treaties.*

Q: What did Herodotus say about Egypt?
A: *That it was "the gift of the Nile"—a land shaped by river and ritual.*

Q: What were the pyramids built for?
A: *As tombs for pharaohs, reflecting their divine status and belief in eternal life.*

Q: What is the Story of Sinuhe?
A: *A literary tale of exile and return, echoing themes of providence and reconciliation.*

Section IV | The Odyssey: The Journey Home

Q: Who wrote The Odyssey?
A: *Homer, a Greek poet of the 8th century BC.*

Q: Who is the hero of The Odyssey?
A: *Odysseus, king of Ithaca, who journeys home after the Trojan War.*

Q: What does the word nostos mean?
A: *Return or homecoming—the central theme of the epic.*

Q: What are the Cyclops and Sirens symbols of?
A: *Temptation, irrationality, and the dangers of lawlessness.*

Q: Who is Penelope, and what does she represent?
A: *Odysseus's wife; the image of covenant fidelity and spiritual patience.*

Q: What is xenia?
A: *The Greek code of hospitality, a sacred duty binding host and guest.*

Q: What role does Athena play?
A: *She is the goddess of wisdom who protects and guides Odysseus.*

Q: What is hubris?
A: *Pride against the gods—a sin punished severely in Greek thought.*

Q: How is justice portrayed in The Odyssey?
A: *As restoration—evil is punished, the house is cleansed, the rightful king returns.*

Q: How does Odysseus's journey mirror the Christian life?
A: *It is a pilgrimage of exile, temptation, repentance, and final homecoming.*

Section V | Greece & Persia: The Soul of Man

Q: Who were the main adversaries in the Persian Wars?
A: *The Greek city-states, especially Athens and Sparta, vs. the Persian Empire.*

Q: What happened at Marathon in 490 BC?
A: *The Athenians defeated the Persians against overwhelming odds.*

Q: What is the significance of Thermopylae?
A: *A heroic last stand by 300 Spartans and allies against the Persian army in 480 BC.*

Q: What was Themistocles' greatest victory?
A: *The naval battle of Salamis, which turned the war in favor of the Greeks.*

Q: Who were Darius and Xerxes?
A: *Kings of Persia who led invasions against Greece.*

Q: What does arete mean?
A: *Excellence or virtue—the goal of every Greek citizen.*

Q: What does Herodotus teach about history?
A: *That it is a record of human deeds and divine justice.*

Q: What is the Melian Dialogue a foretaste of?
A: *The collapse of moral reasoning under imperial power.*

Q: What did Zoroastrianism teach?
A: *That good and evil are in cosmic conflict, and man must choose.*

Q: What was the Persian Wars' legacy?
A: *The defense of liberty, the rise of Athens, and the shaping of Western identity.*

Q: Who was Pericles?
A: *Athenian statesman who led during the city's Golden Age.*

Q: What was built under Pericles' leadership?
A: *The Parthenon, a temple to Athena symbolizing Athenian glory.*

Q: What was the polis?
A: *The Greek city-state—a community of citizens pursuing virtue and justice.*

Q: Who were the Sophists?
A: *Teachers who prioritized persuasion over truth.*

Q: What did Socrates teach?
A: *That the unexamined life is not worth living.*

Q: What is the Socratic method?
A: *Asking questions to seek truth through dialogue.*

Q: What did Plato seek in the Republic?
A: *A just society rooted in the harmony of soul, reason, and law.*

Q: What is logos?
A: *Reason, word, and order—central to Greek and Christian thought.*

Q: What did Aristotle teach in the Nicomachean Ethics?
A: *That happiness is found in a life of virtue, reason, and friendship.*

Q: What is the danger of glory without virtue?
A: *It leads to pride, injustice, and ruin.*

Section VII | Athens: Pride & Fall

Q: What was the Peloponnesian War?
A: *A brutal civil war between Athens and Sparta from 431 to 404 BC.*

Q: Who wrote its history?
A: *Thucydides, who witnessed and analyzed the war's causes and effects.*

Q: What caused the war?
A: *Fear, pride, and growing Athenian power.*

Q: What was Pericles' Funeral Oration?
A: *A speech praising Athenian democracy and sacrifice.*

Q: What was the Plague of Athens?
A: *A devastating illness that killed Pericles and demoralized the city.*

Q: Who was Alcibiades?
A: *A brilliant but unstable Athenian general who betrayed multiple sides.*

Q: What was the Sicilian Expedition?
A: *A disastrous Athenian invasion that marked their decline.*

Q: What does the Melian Dialogue reveal?
A: *The rejection of justice in favor of power.*

Q: What did Sparta represent?
A: *Military discipline, order, and tradition.*

Q: What lesson does Thucydides leave us?
A: *That a society without moral vision is doomed, no matter its strength.*

Section VIII | Alexander the Great: Glory & Conquest

Q: Who was Alexander the Great?
A: *The Macedonian king who conquered the known world by the age of thirty and spread Hellenistic culture across three continents.*

Q: Who was his tutor in youth?
A: *Aristotle, who taught him philosophy, ethics, and the ideals of virtue and order.*

Q: When did Alexander begin his campaigns?
A: *In 334 BC, when he crossed into Asia to confront the Persian Empire.*

Q: What were his major battles?
A: *Granicus (334 BC), Issus (333 BC), and Gaugamela (331 BC).*

Q: What was the cultural legacy of Alexander's empire?
A: *The spread of Greek language, philosophy, and urban life across Egypt, Mesopotamia, and as far as India—known as Hellenism.*

Q: What did Alexander seek at the Oracle of Siwah?
A: *Confirmation of his divine status and mission as son of Zeus-Ammon.*

Q: What city became the intellectual center of the Hellenistic world?
A: *Alexandria in Egypt, with its famous library and schools.*

Q: When and where did Alexander die?
A: *In 323 BC, in Babylon, at the age of thirty-two.*

Q: How did Plutarch describe Alexander's character?
A: *As a man of brilliance and greatness, whose flaws grew with his conquests.*

Q: Why is Alexander important for Christian history?
A: *He united the world in a common language and infrastructure—preparing the stage for the universal spread of the Gospel.*

Section IX | Rome: Pax et Bellum

Q: According to tradition, when was Rome founded?
A: *In 753 BC, by Romulus, who became its first king.*

Q: When did the Roman Republic begin?
A: *In 509 BC, after the overthrow of the last Roman king, Tarquin the Proud.*

Q: What was the res publica?
A: *The Roman Republic, meaning "public thing"—a government of shared power between consuls, Senate, and citizen assemblies.*

Q: What were the Twelve Tables?
A: *Rome's first codified laws, written in 451–450 BC to ensure legal transparency and protect citizens' rights.*

Q: What was the Roman ideal of virtus?
A: *Courage, discipline, and honor in service to the republic.*

Q: Who was Cato the Elder?
A: *A Roman senator known for his austerity, traditionalism, and hatred of corruption.*

Q: What was the role of the Roman Senate?
A: *To advise magistrates and guide policy through wisdom and tradition.*

Q: Who were Rome's external enemies during the Republic?
A: *The Etruscans, Gauls, Samnites, and later, Carthage and the Hellenistic kingdoms.*

Q: What threat did internal ambition pose to the Republic?
A: *As Rome expanded, personal glory and wealth began to rival civic duty, undermining republican virtue.*

Q: What question haunted the Roman Republic?
A: *Can a state built on conquest remain faithful to liberty and law?*

Section X | The Aeneid: The Roman Ideal

Q: Who wrote The Aeneid, and why?
A: *Virgil wrote The Aeneid between 29 and 19 BC to glorify Rome's founding and to legitimize Augustus's rule.*

Q: Who is Aeneas?
A: *A Trojan prince and the epic's hero, destined by the gods to found the Roman race.*

Q: What does pietas mean in Roman thought?
A: *Duty to the gods, one's family, and one's nation—Aeneas's defining virtue.*

Q: What event opens the epic?
A: *Aeneas fleeing the burning city of Troy after its destruction by the Greeks.*

Q: What does Aeneas encounter in Book 6?
A: *He descends into the underworld and receives a vision of Rome's future greatness.*

Q: Who is Dido, and what does her story signify?
A: *The queen of Carthage, who falls in love with Aeneas and commits suicide when he leaves her; her story represents the cost of destiny and Rome's future rivalry with Carthage.*

Q: What does Virgil say about empire in the epic?
A: *That Rome is called to "spare the conquered and subdue the proud"—a vision both noble and tragic.*

Q: How does the epic end?
A: *With Aeneas defeating Turnus in single combat, choosing duty over mercy.*

Q: What is the deeper meaning of Aeneas's journey?
A: *It prefigures the soul's pilgrimage from loss to purpose, from exile to eternal order.*

Q: Why is The Aeneid significant for Christian readers?
A: *It reflects the tension between earthly empire and the soul's longing for a true, heavenly homeland.*

Section XI | Dates To Live in Our Hearts

Unit I — What Is Man?

c. 70,000 BC – Burial of the dead in Shanidar Cave (Iraq)

c. 40,000 BC – Paleolithic cave paintings at Sulawesi and Chauvet

c. 30,000 BC – Venus figurines carved in Ice Age Europe

c. 15,000 BC – Lascaux cave paintings (France)

c. 13,000 BC – Cueva de las Manos hand stencils (Argentina)

c. 10,000 BC – Neolithic Revolution begins in the Fertile Crescent

c. 9500 BC – Construction of Göbekli Tepe

c. 5000 BC – Agricultural settlements at Çatalhöyük and Jericho

Unit II — The Rise of Order (Mesopotamia)

c. 3200 BC – Invention of cuneiform writing in Sumer

c. 3000 BC – Ziggurats built in Uruk and other cities

c. 2334 BC – Rise of Sargon and the Akkadian Empire

c. 2100 BC – Composition of the Epic of Gilgamesh

c. 2000 BC – Lament for Sumer and Urim written

c. 1754 BC – Code of Hammurabi inscribed

c. 1300 BC – Middle Assyrian Law Code developed

c. 1200 BC – Dialogue of Pessimism composed

c. 1100 BC – Poem of Erra and Ishum laments divine absence

c. 1258 BC – Treaty of Kadesh signed (Egypt and Hittites)

Unit III — What Is Freedom? (Egypt)
c. 3100 BC – Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt by Narmer

c. 2700–2200 BC – Old Kingdom and construction of pyramids

c. 2000 BC – Middle Kingdom literature, including Story of Sinuhe

c. 1550 BC – Beginning of the New Kingdom

c. 1353–1336 BC – Reign of Akhenaten and worship of Aten

c. 1300 BC – Composition of Book of the Dead

c. 1274 BC – Battle of Kadesh between Egypt and the Hittites

c. 1250 BC – Amarna Letters exchanged with foreign rulers

360 BC – Plato writes Timaeus, reflecting on Egypt's stability

450 BC – Herodotus writes about Egyptian customs in Histories

Unit IV — The Long Journey Home (The Odyssey)
c. 1200 BC – Fall of Troy (traditional date)

c. 1180 BC – Odysseus departs for Ithaca in Homeric legend

c. 1050 BC – Collapse of Mycenaean civilization

c. 800 BC – Homeric epics begin oral transmission

c. 750 BC – The Odyssey composed by Homer

c. 700 BC – Hesiod writes Works and Days and Theogony

c. 600 BC – Greek city-states revive after Dark Age

550 BC – Use of Greek alphabet widespread for poetry

490 BC – Marathon commemorates Greek martial virtue

Unit V — The Defense of Liberty (Persian Wars)
776 BC – Traditional date of first Olympic Games

594 BC – Solon reforms Athenian law

546 BC – Cyrus the Great conquers Lydia, expands Persia

508 BC – Cleisthenes establishes Athenian democracy

490 BC – Battle of Marathon: Athenian victory over Persia

480 BC – Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis

479 BC – Battle of Plataea ends major Persian invasion

472 BC – Aeschylus stages The Persians, earliest surviving play

450 BC – Golden Age of Athens begins

430 BC – Herodotus completes Histories

Unit VI — Athens at Her Height (Golden Age)
461–429 BC – Periclean leadership in Athens

447–432 BC – Construction of the Parthenon

440 BC – Sophocles writes Antigone

437 BC – Acropolis building program flourishes

c. 430 BC – Socrates teaches in the agora

428 BC – Birth of Plato

c. 399 BC – Execution of Socrates

c. 387 BC – Plato founds the Academy

384 BC – Birth of Aristotle

Unit VII — The Collapse of Virtue (Peloponnesian War)
431 BC – Peloponnesian War begins

429 BC – Death of Pericles from plague

427 BC – Plague of Athens continues

415 BC – Sicilian Expedition launched

413 BC – Sicilian Expedition ends in disaster

411 BC – Oligarchic coup in Athens

406 BC – Execution of Athenian generals at Arginusae

405 BC – Sparta wins at Aegospotami

404 BC – Athens surrenders; war ends

c. 395 BC – Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War circulated

Unit VIII — The Edge of the World (Alexander the Great)
356 BC – Birth of Alexander in Pella

343 BC – Aristotle becomes Alexander's tutor

336 BC – Alexander becomes king of Macedon

334 BC – Battle of Granicus; campaign begins

333 BC – Battle of Issus

331 BC – Battle of Gaugamela; defeat of Darius III

330 BC – Fall of Persepolis

326 BC – Campaign in India and Battle of the Hydaspes

323 BC – Death of Alexander in Babylon

Unit IX — The Cost of Freedom (Roman Republic)

753 BC – Traditional founding of Rome by Romulus

509 BC – Establishment of the Roman Republic

494 BC – Conflict of the Orders begins

451–450 BC – Twelve Tables codified

390 BC – Sack of Rome by the Gauls

340–338 BC – Latin War consolidates Roman power

264–146 BC – Punic Wars expand Roman dominance

216 BC – Battle of Cannae during Second Punic War

184 BC – Death of Cato the Elder

146 BC – Destruction of Carthage and Corinth; Rome rules the Mediterranean

Unit X — A Kingdom Not of This World
The Aeneid: Destiny, Sacrifice, and the Longing for a True Homeland

70 BC – Birth of Virgil in northern Italy

49 BC – Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon

44 BC – Assassination of Julius Caesar

42 BC – Battle of Philippi; defeat of Brutus and Cassius

31 BC – Battle of Actium; Octavian defeats Mark Antony and Cleopatra

27 BC – Octavian named Augustus; beginning of the Roman Empire

20 BC – Commissioning of The Aeneid by Augustus

19 BC – Death of Virgil; The Aeneid left unfinished but preserved

Section XII | Recitations

Recitation I — From the Book of the Dead (Egypt, Unit 3)
Q: What does the righteous soul say when it stands before the throne of judgment?
A:
"I have not committed sin.
I have not uttered lies.
I have not slain men or women.
I have not stolen.
I have not defiled the wife of any man.
I am pure. I am pure. I am pure."

(Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Ani)

Recitation II — From the Epic of Gilgamesh (Mesopotamia, Unit 2)
Q: What did Gilgamesh learn when he sought immortality?
A:
"There is no permanence.
Do we build a house to stand forever?
Do we sign a contract to hold for all time?
Only the gods live forever under the sun.
As for man—his days are numbered,
Whatever he may do, it is but wind."

(Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet X)

Recitation III — From Homer's Odyssey (Greece, Unit 4)
Q: How does Odysseus speak of home?
A:
"Even as I wander,
My heart longs for home and hearth.
Though Calypso offered me immortality,
My soul yearned for Penelope,
For the narrow bed,
And the roof that I myself had raised."

(Odyssey, Books 5 and 23, paraphrased from Fagles)

Recitation IV — From Virgil's Aeneid (Rome, Unit 10)
Q: What mission does Rome receive through Aeneas?
A:
"Others will cast bronze more tenderly,
Will draw forth living faces from the marble.
But you, O Roman, remember:
To rule the nations with power—
To spare the humbled,
And to strike down the proud."

(Aeneid, Book VI, lines 847–853, trans. Fagles)

Week 1

Weekly Logos | The Image & the Origins

This week, students begin with the most fundamental question: What is man? They will examine the uniqueness of the human creature through ancient burial, symbolic art, and the dawn of civilization. We will explore how early man revealed not mere survival, but soul—through his desire to create, to bury, to worship, and to remember. Even before the written word, we find traces of reason, order, and longing for God.

What Are We Assessing? | The Facts

- Major periods: Paleolithic vs. Neolithic
- Key early human sites: Göbekli Tepe, Shanidar Cave, Lascaux, Dolní Věstonice
- Defining Imago Dei and natural revelation
- The purpose of burial, art, and symbolic thought in early human cultureemerged in this era.

What Are We Asessing? | The Skills

- Locate major prehistoric sites on a map
- Distinguish symbolic behavior from utilitarian behavior
- Analyze images of cave art for meaning and expression
- Annotating Historical documents
- Use excerpts from Chesterton and Spitzer to compare theological and philosophical insights

What Are We Assessing? | The Truths

"Man is not a beast with tools. He is a worshiper with memory."

These truths unify every element of the lesson:

Man is made in the image of God, and his history begins in worship, not in tools

Even before revelation, man showed signs of a soul ordered toward beauty and the divine

True civilization begins in reverence, memory, and the search for truth

Our origins are not accidental—they are moral, spiritual, and meaningful

Assessments | Suggested Types

- Reflection Prompt: "What is man, and how do we know he is more than an animal?"
- Map Exercise: Identify and label Göbekli Tepe, Lascaux, and other key sites
- Cave Art Analysis: Annotate a prehistoric image and write a brief interpretation
- Reading Comprehension: Chesterton's "The Man in the Cave" with margin notes

Pacing | By Week

Day	*Focus*	*Homework*
Monday	Introduction to Origins and the Question of Man	Read Chesterton, “The Man in the Cave”; write margin questions
Tuesday	Imago Dei and Natural Revelation	*Read excerpt from Humani Generis; annotate key theological claims*
Wednesday	Cave Art and Burial: Symbol, Memory, and Worship	Choose one image of prehistoric art and write a 1-paragraph interpretation
Thursday	Göbekli Tepe and the Dawn of Worship	Complete map labeling; prepare oral recitation of Humani Generis excerpt
Friday	Seminar – “What Makes a Creature Human?”	Reflection journal: “What do I see in early man that I see in myself?”

Teacher Tips

Begin with Wonder: Invite students not just to learn about early man, but to marvel that they are his heirs

Use Images Thoughtfully: Show photos of cave art, megaliths, and burial sites slowly; pause to ask, “What does this mean?”

Draw Connections to Theology: Reinforce that Imago Dei is not a poetic phrase—it’s the foundation of law, dignity, and worship

Make Recitation Liturgical: Assign lines from Humani Generis as if they were sacred verses; let students feel their gravity

Avoid Modern Bias: Guard against the false belief that “primitive” means “ignorant”; show reverence for the intelligence of early man

Appendix

Essays In This Course...

Each of the three major essays in this course will follow the structure and spirit of our Classical Writing Curriculum at Our Lady of the Rosary. Students are expected to write with clarity, order, and persuasive force, employing the Classical Oration form:

-Exordium – The introduction that gains attention and builds ethos
-Narratio – Background/context, statement of facts/narration of events
-Divisio – Outline of major arguments
-Confirmatio – 3 Proofs & Sub-Proofs (body paragraphs)
-Refutatio – Address and refute opposing arguments
-Peroratio – The conclusion: moving the heart, restating the truth

Each essay must be a minimum of 4 full pages, MLA formatted, and include a bibliography with at least five primary sources and three scholarly secondary sources. This level of work prepares students not only for collegiate academic writing, but more importantly, for thoughtful, ordered argument in service of truth, which lies at the heart of classical education.

Prompt I

Explain how early man and the civilizations of Mesopotamia sought to understand human identity and preserve order.

Objective: Describe how symbolic thought, religious belief, and legal authority reveal the foundations of culture and civilization.

Sources: Units 1 & 2 sources (see above)

Prompt II

Explain how the the pagan view of the world is understood in the notions of Kleos and Nostoi.

Objective: In Homer's epic poem The Iliad, the theme of kleos (glory) emerges as the ultimate goal, or telos for the characters portrayed. While The Odyssey places a greater focus on the telos of nostoi (homecoming), kleos still plays an important and yet evolving role in the feats of Odysseus.

Sources: Units 3, 4, & 5 sources (see above)

Prompt III

Explain how the ancient civilizations studied this year reveal man's longing for order, justice, and the divine.

Objective: Describe how myth, law, kingship, art, and philosophy expressed the human desire for meaning—and how these desires pointed toward the coming of Christ and the City of God.

Sources: Any source in the course (see above)