

Foundation Document

Civilization

Approved by the FGEC, October 22, 2007

REQUIREMENT PURPOSE

The university's Mission Statement affirms the importance of "a broad university education . . . which will help students . . . understand important ideas in their own cultural tradition as well as that of others." This is elaborated in the *Aims of a BYU Education*, which states that each student will seek to understand "the development of human civilization" and to gain "a general historical perspective, including perspective on one's own discipline." Within this historical perspective, students will acquire an "appreciation of the artistic, literary, and intellectual achievements of human cultures." The Civilization requirement helps students achieve these aims.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The two-semester sequence, which divides at about the Italian Renaissance, is designed to provide a systematic foundation and historical framework for other University Core courses and to enrich the student's major program. Further, it is intended that the two-semester sequence will provide a reasonably common experience for all BYU students.

Students who complete the Civilization requirement will:

- demonstrate a broad general understanding of the sweep of human history and the roles of individuals, peoples, and cultures in establishing civilization as we know it
- show a precise knowledge of human events, ideas, and accomplishments generally recognized to be formative and fundamental to the history of civilization
- appreciate representative cultural works that have helped establish idealized relationships of humankind to the divine, to one another, and to nature—and that have attempted to define and explain beauty as necessary to the well being of the individual soul as well as of the larger society
- evince preparation for lifelong engagement with and appreciation of world history—and of philosophy, literature, science, or the arts

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

All courses satisfying the Civilization requirement have the following characteristics:

1. **Two-Semester Sequence.** Each course will be a **two-semester sequence** at the 200 level, typically numbered 201/202, with each semester comprising a minimum of 3 credit hours. Whenever feasible, the **first semester** will cover the history of civilization from earliest recorded antiquity through about the sixteenth century CE; the **second semester** will extend from about the sixteenth century CE to the present.
2. **Broad in Approach and Focus.** Civilization courses must not be limited to a single national civilization or culture; neither will they be limited to the subject matter of a single academic discipline or to the study of a single kind of work, whether textual (including scientific or mathematical documents) or visual or from the performing arts. Instructors will develop and teach courses in as catholic a manner as permitted by their training, abilities, and interests. There are two general models on which Civilization courses may be fashioned. The **first**

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model emphasizes primary works, studied in whole or in part, with appropriate attendance to the aesthetic and intellectual scope and the historical context of each work. The **second model** emphasizes historical development and variety within and among civilizations, pointing to representative primary works as markers of cultural development and variety. Within either of these models, Civilization courses may be either Western or global in approach. If the former, instructors are strongly encouraged to take account of non-Western cultures and works as they bear upon the West; if the latter, there must be treatment of Western civilization sufficient to a sound fundamental understanding of its emergence and development.

3. **Chronological Arrangement.** Civilization courses must be organized chronologically, beginning with earliest recorded antiquity and ending with the present. Each two-semester course will provide the student with historical perspective and a sense of change and continuity over time. Courses must neither omit, nor compress so far as to deform or dislocate, large expanses of the historical record. All courses must follow one of two chronological models: *(a)* chronological presentation of all course materials, from antiquity to the present, through the two semesters; or *(b)* chronological presentation of course materials within specific thematic categories, where each thematic category features a chronological arrangement of the materials comprising it.
4. **Shared Themes and Coverage.** In order to provide a somewhat universal experience for all BYU students, regardless of the particular Civilization courses in which they enroll, all Civilization courses will engage shared themes, and all will provide similar representational coverage of the history of civilization, drawing conscientiously from and representing conscientiously the variety of the “Works and Creators” list (printed and periodically updated as an appendage to the present document).

Among the thematic questions guiding both instructor and student engagement with course content are the following: *What is knowledge? What is a human being? How are human beings related to the divine? How are human beings related to one another? How are human beings related to nature? What is beauty? Why is beauty indispensable to individuals and society? How is beauty cultivated and expressed through science, mathematics, philosophy, history, and the arts? How are human culture and progress best measured?*

To adequately facilitate meaningful consideration of these and other questions, **first-semester** courses should include at least one primary work from each of the following broadly defined periods: *(1)* the era from ca. 2500 BCE–700 BCE, including the Egyptian and Babylonian periods during which Old Testament texts were compiled, Hinduism emerged, the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations of pre-Grecian antiquity flourished, the Homeric epics were composed, and Rome was established; *(2)* 700 BCE–250 BCE, marked by the flowering of Classical Greek culture, the career of Alexander the Great, the birth and expansion of the Roman Republic, the development of Indian and Chinese cultures, and the emergence of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism; *(3)* 250 BCE–150 CE, when the Roman Republic was transformed into the Roman Empire and Roman culture reached its zenith, when Christianity was born, and when most texts comprising the New Testament were written; *(4)* 150 CE–475 CE, a period incorporating the later Roman Empire and its decline, the rise of the Byzantine Empire, India’s classical age, and China’s “Middle Period”; *(5)* 475 CE–950 CE, including the flowering of the Byzantine Empire, the birth of Islam, the emergence of Japanese and Korean cultures, the dawn of early Medieval European culture, and (in the Americas) the flourishing of pre-Columbian cultures; *(6)* 950 AD–1300 AD, the era of the High Middle Ages in Europe and of classical Japanese and Korean cultures; and *(7)* 1300 CE–to about the sixteenth century CE, including pre-Renaissance and Renaissance Europe and the emergence of classical African cultures.

Second-semester Civilization courses should include at least one primary work from each of the following broadly defined periods: **(1)** from about the sixteenth century CE–1650, incorporating late-Renaissance Europe, the Reformation, and the foundational history of Europeans in the Americas; **(2)** 1650–1800, including the European Enlightenment, the Ottoman Empire, European colonialism, and the emergence of pre-modern Japan and Korea; **(3)** 1800–1850, incorporating European/American Romanticism and the height of western European colonialism; **(4)** 1850–1900, marked by worldwide industrialization and economic transformation, Victorian idealism, and the emergence of pre-Modernist ideals, including impressionism, French symbolism, Cubism, and naturalism; **(5)** 1900–1945, the era of Modernism, of world war, and of the burgeoning international influence of the United States; **(6)** 1945–1985, the era of Postmodernism, including postcolonialism and economic imperialism, and of increasing international attention to and gravitation towards democracy and civil rights; and **(7)** 1985–present, the contemporary age.

SUMMARY

Because the history of civilization is the story of men and women as they have sought to understand themselves and their world, it is also the story of men and women as individuals—as moral and intellectual beings to whom a concept of the divine is accessible and for whom cooperative, nurturing human society is both desirable and necessary. It is a story preserved by individuals through artifacts—written texts, creations in the visual and performing arts, discoveries in the sciences—valued and loved by their creators or discoverers themselves and by their fellows.

We seek to understand this story by asking probing, faithful questions about such artifacts and the individuals and cultures that produced them. For example: How was love dissected and celebrated by Sappho, by John Donne, by Emily Dickinson? What conceptions of God and society were expressed in Suryavarman II's Angkor Wat or Abbot Suger's Saint-Denis? What principles did Thucydides, Ibn Khaldun, and Edmund Burke derive from their study of history? How did the scientific insights of Galileo, Newton, Mendel, Darwin, Freud, or Einstein change our understanding of ourselves and our universe? How did Geoffrey Chaucer, Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy, or William Faulkner shape their respective societies into works of art? How is our understanding of the divine and of the religious life augmented through knowing the teachings of Confucius, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Mohammed, Gandhi, or Martin Luther King? How did men and women like Plato, Pythagoras, Virgil, Michelangelo, Murasaki Shikibu, Marguerite de Navarre, Shakespeare, J. S. Bach, Martin Luther, Adam Smith, Marie Curie, Mary Cassatt, Rabindranath Tagore, Frank Lloyd Wright, or Duke Ellington change and shape the world we now occupy? Why do we continue to honor the lives and accomplishments of all these individuals?