

The Life and Legacy of Alexander the Great



Course Description

This course examines the life and career of Alexander the Great and explores the rise of Macedonia and Hellenistic Period. You will be encouraged to think critically about a variety of sources of evidence from the ancient world (e.g., textual, archaeological, artistic, numismatic), and from later tradition as well. We will consider the legacy of Alexander the Great and judge whether he is worthy of the immortality he has achieved. Some of the topics we will consider include:

- The historiographical problems of establishing the truth to Alexander's accomplishments and associated stories in order to arrive at a "real" Alexander.
- The strategical lessons that can be learned from Alexander's military campaigns, and what we can extrapolate from these lessons that can be applied to our everyday lives.
- The lasting effects of his of his victories and how it shaped subsequent historical events.
- The long-term impact on the diversity of people incorporated, briefly, within his empire

We will also consider his reaching impact far into the future and examine a legacy that reaches us today. We will consider such things like the Medieval Alexander tradition and how he is presented in pop culture and Hollywood movies.

Learning Objectives

- Gaining familiarity with the main figures, events, processes, and phenomena of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods of Ancient Greece and understanding where they fit on a timeline.
- Comprehending ancient source material, the basis of our understanding of the past.
- Fine tuning the ability to apply lessons learned from history to our contemporary world.
- Learning to use technology in communicating well researched, substantive content.

Readings and Materials

J. Romm, *Alexander the Great: Selections from Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius*. Hackett Publishing. (Romm)

P. Freeman, *Alexander the Great*, Simon & Schuster (Freeman)

R. Waterfield, *Dividing the Spoils: The War for Alexander the Great's Empire*, Oxford University Press. (Waterfield)

Readings Noted in the Tentative Course Schedule

Optional Reading

M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest. A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*. Second Edition.

G. Shipley, *The Greek World After Alexander*.

Assignments

Class Attendance and Participation (15%)

Weekly Discussion Posts (20%)

In Class Debate: Who Killed Philip II (20%)

In Class Discussions (15%)

Critique of Alexander (10%)

Presentation (TikTok or YouTube Video Highlighting an Aspect of Alexander's Life) (20%)

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Week 1	Introduction		
Week 2	Peloponnesian War The End of the Greek Classical Period and the Rise of Macedonia	Weekly Discussion Posts (Why are “primary” vs. “secondary” sources crucial to Alexander studies? The problem of fragmentary sources v. long narratives.)	Freeman, pp 1-38
Week 3	The life & death of Philip II (Father of Alexander the Great)	Weekly Discussion Posts (Who were the Macedonians, especially in relation to the Greeks? Why was their monarchy’s dynastic politics a key to their success or failure? Who preceded Philip and Alexander in the dynasty?)	Bosworth, Conquest and Empire, Prologue Diodorus the Sicilian on Philip, 1995: 20-24; 39-41; 43-45; 49-59 (PDF Online) Assignment Packet
Week 4	Class Project The Evidence for Alexander the Great The Early Life of Alexander the Great Alexander’s boyhood and education. The influence of his tutor Aristotle.	Philip II’s kingship: what were the building blocks of his remarkably successful reign?	Freeman, pp 39-68 Plutarch 1998: 312-24 (sections 1-15: boyhood & early actions as king) (PDF Online)
Week 5	Securing the Throne; Battle of the Granicus River	Weekly Discussion Posts (His struggle for the throne; who or what enabled him to win it? What were his initial aims?)	Freeman, pp 69-196 Arrian 1971: 41-77 [early conquests to Granicus River] (PDF Online) Plutarch 1998: 324-28 [sections 16-18: Granicus and Gordium] (PDF Online)

Week	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Week 6	<p>Conquest of Persia</p> <p>The Gordion knot: fact, fiction, folktale? All of the above?</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Posts (The massacre at Thebes. What were A.'s motives? Was he justified? Were the "rights" of Theban citizens violated? At Troy: why does a military campaign start with religious pageantry? Alexander and the Greeks: on what bases were some submissive and other resistant to his royal authority? First battle with Persians at Granicus River: What really happened? Are the sources consistent? Aftermath of the battle: can we reconstruct A.'s aims and motives for conquest?)</p>	<p>Romm xviii-xxi(top) + Chapters 3 & 4</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 328-330 [secs. 19-20] [Issus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 101 – 128 [Gordium to Issus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 330-38 [secs. 21-28] [Issus to Egypt] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 144-56 [siege of Gaza and entry into Egypt] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 345-52 [secs. 35-41] [Babylon and Persia] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 172-81 [Babylon and Persia] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 352-56 [secs. 42-47] [Darius and Bessus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 181-200 [Darius and Bessus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Curtius 1984: 26-49 [Gordium to Issus] (PDF Online)</p>
Week 7	<p>Battle of Gaugamela</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Posts (Strategy of the battle at Gaugamela: what were the keys to success? When did Darius attempt to reconcile with Alexander? Did his wife's death and mother's feelings influence the two leaders' relations? Of what and over whom is Alexander now the sovereign? Does he understand the Persian monarchy?)</p>	<p>Diodorus 17.53-61 [Gaugamela] (13 pp.) (PDF Online)</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 339-45 [secs. 29-34] [Egypt to Gaugamela] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 156-72 [march into Mesopotamia; Gaugamela] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Curtius 1984: 70-91 [Gaugamela] (PDF Online)</p>

Week	Topic	Assignment	Reading
<p>Week 8</p>	<p>Alexander's pursuit of Darius and Darius' death; Alexander's pursuit of Darius' usurper, Bessus.</p> <p>Marching East in Bactria, Conspiracies, Triumph and Tragedy in India, and India's Dead End.</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Posts (Were key members of A.'s Macedonian-Greek entourage disloyal? Why did Alexander decide to cross the Hindu Kush, enter the Indus River Valley, and invade India (modern Pakistan?)</p> <p>In-class conspiracy Discussion of: Philotas & Parmenio and Cleitus.</p>	<p>Plutarch 1998: 352-56 [secs. 42-47] [Darius and Bessus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 181-200 [Darius and Bessus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Curtius 1984: 92-97 [entry into Babylon]; 107-108 [wine at Persepolis]; 119-21 [feasting]; 127-29 [sex with Amazon queen] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Romm Chapters 5 - 8</p> <p>Freeman, pp 197-260</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 356-64 [secs. 48-55 [conspiracies] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 212-27 [conspiracies] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Curtius 1984: 131-53 and 176-81 [conspiracies] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 201-213 and 227-39 (PDF Online)</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 364-72 [secs. 56-65] [in India] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 255-66 [march into India; preparing to battle king Porus] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 266-91 (PDF Online)</p> <p>Curtius 1984: 203-220 (PDF Online)</p> <p>Diodorus on the battle at the Jhelum (PDF Online)</p>

Week	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Week 9	Alexander's Sexuality	Weekly Discussion Posts (What can we say about Alexander's Sexuality? Would he even understand sexual identity as we internalize it today?)	<p>An Atypical Affair? Alexander the Great, Hephaestion Amyntoros and the Nature of Their Relationship by Jeanne Reames-Zimmerman</p> <p>Alexander the Great and Hephaestion: Censorship and Bisexual Erasure in Post-Macedonian Society</p> <p>Interpreting Alexander III of Macedon's "Sexuality" in the Ancient Greco-Macedonian World by Mikayla Kitchen</p>
Week 10	Death and Immortality	Weekly Discussion Posts (Was the march through the Pakistani (Gedrosian) desert a moral or immoral action on Alexander's part? What caused Alexander's Death: alcohol? disease? assassination? Something Else?)	<p>Freeman, pp 290-330.</p> <p>Plutarch 1998: 372-81 [secs. 66-77] [from India to Babylon] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 331-352 [march thru Gedrosia and into Carmania] (PDF Online)</p> <p>Diodorus 17.87-103 (PDF Online)</p> <p>Arrian 1971: 353-67 (PDF Online)</p> <p>Curtius 1984: 241-45 (PDF Online)</p> <p>The Alexander Romance (Stoneman 1991): 148-59 (PDF Online)</p>

Week	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Week 11	Aftermath of Alexander	<p>Weekly Discussion Posts (What were Alexander's motives for the mass marriages between Macedonians and Persians at Susa? What was Alexander's vision by his raising of 30,000 Persian boys in the military culture of Macedonia? What was his goal by integrating Persians into the Macedonian army? How is this different from Cyrus the Great?)</p> <p>In Class Discussion: Where is Alexander's Tomb.</p>	<p>Curtius 1984: 248-57 (PDF Online)</p> <p>Romm 2011: 34-56 (The Ghost on the Throne)</p> <p>Waterfield, pp 1-56</p>
Week 12	The Wars of the Succwssors	<p>Weekly Discussion Posts (In the wake of Alexander's death, could the Athenians regain their lost democratic freedom in the Lamian War? What was Aristotle's fate? What happened to Olympias, Rhoxane, and Alexander's two sons?)</p>	Waterfield, pp 57-196
Week 13	<p>The Last of the Successors</p> <p>Hellenistic Society</p>	<p>Weekly Discussion Posts (When the dust settled, which leaders and kingdoms emerged in the Near East, Macedon and Greece to form a new "Hellenistic" world?)</p>	Waterfield, pp 197-212

Week	Topic	Assignment	Reading
Week 14	Alexander the Great in Popular Culture	Weekly Discussion Posts (How often in Western history has Alexander embodied the ideals of military victory and imperial expansion? How does Alexander's value shift as we cross cultural lines from West to East, and from the modern to postmodern worlds?)	
Week 15	Alexander the Great in Popular Culture	Weekly Discussion Posts and In Class Discussion (Critique of Alexander)	
Week 16	Review and Presentations		